

SPCA of Wake County

Bunny Care Packet



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The SPCA of Wake County
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SPCA of Wake County Contacts

General Questions

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Rabbit Proofing Your Home

❖ Rabbit proofing one's home involves three things:

- Preventing destruction of your property
- Protecting your companion rabbit(s) from harm
- Providing safe and fun chewing alternatives for your rabbit

❖ Why is rabbit proofing your home so important?

- Preventing rabbits from chewing on electrical cords is of utmost importance since rabbits can be badly burned or electrocuted. The consequences of biting into an electrical wire are too severe to risk relying on training alone. Instead, you must take caution to move the cords safely out of reach. Some ways of doing this follow.

❖ Keep electrical cords out of reach

- Spiral cable wrap. Radio Shack sells something called "spiral cable wrap." It costs about \$3 for 10 feet and works like a charm. You wrap the electrical and phone cords in this spiral plastic sheath and the rabbits don't seem to want to chew them any more – perhaps because the wrap has the effect of thickening the cords so they no longer are bite-sized.
- This stuff is very flexible so the cords are still manageable after wrapping. It works well with cords that you might have in the middle of the room or might move quite often, such as vacuum cleaner, phone, video game, extension, lamp and other cords. I keep my portable computer cord wrapped this way, and it's not too bulky.

❖ **Plastic tubing** (similar to that used in fish tanks, or with "swamp coolers") from a hardware or aquarium store can be slit lengthwise with a blade and the wire can be tucked safely inside. A harder, black, pre-slit type of tubing is also available.

❖ **Decorative gold and wood-grained wire-concealers** that stick to the base of walls come in strips, corners, etc., so they can follow the shape of the wall. This is a more costly and time consuming method than the clear plastic tubing above, but is more permanent, and rabbit proof, as well.

❖ Of course, wires can be run under, behind, or above furniture and carpets in order to keep them out of bunny's reach.

❖ **Keep your rabbit from eating house plants**

- Many house plants are toxic. Putting them on high furniture may not keep a rabbit away. Hang them from the ceiling, but watch for falling leaves! If you are unsure which plants may be toxic, the House Rabbit Handbook has a complete list of poisonous plants (indoors and outdoors).

❖ **Protect baseboards and wooden furniture**

- If a rabbit insists on chewing baseboards, edges of chairs, etc., a board can be put over the places of temptation, making them inaccessible while also providing an acceptable chewing surface. This method should be combined with training your rabbit not to chew on these items.

❖ **Protect upholstered furniture and beds**

- Upholstered furniture and beds that are several inches off the ground are wonderful places for rabbits to hide underneath. However, some will burrow up into the soft underside and make a nest. A flat cardboard box or frame of 2x4s, smaller than the area of the future base will keep the rabbit out, and won't be seen from human level.

Information Courtesy of:

House Rabbit Society is a non-profit rescue and education group. www.rabbit.org

Housing Your Rabbit

❖ Is it OK to keep my rabbit in a cage with a wire floor?

- Rabbits were not designed to live on wire floors – they're hard on their feet (which have no pads on them, like cats and dogs). You can find cages with slatted plastic floors, which are more comfortable, or you can use a solid floor. As long as your rabbit has a litter box in the corner that he chooses as his bathroom, there shouldn't be much of a mess to clean up.

❖ What size cage is best?

- Bigger is better! A cage should be at least 4 times the size of your bunny – more if he is confined for a large amount of the day. You can build or buy your rabbit a two-story “condo” with the floors connected by a ramp – they love this!

❖ Can my new bunny run loose 24 hours a day?

- An untrained rabbit probably should be kept in a cage while you're not home to supervise and at night when you sleep. Rabbits are crepuscular, which means that generally they sleep during the day and during the night but are ready to play at dawn and at twilight. Be sure to let them out during the evening when you are home, and if possible, in the morning while you get ready for work.

❖ What can I do to make the rabbit's cage time more enjoyable?

- A cage should be seen as the rabbit's “nest,” a special place where he can feel safe and secure. Make the nest enjoyable and she will enjoy being there, even when the cage door is open! Keep it stocked with baby toys, a synthetic sheepskin rug, a piece of wood attached to the inside (like a baseboard), and when you put him to bed at night, a nice veggie or fruit snack.

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Litter Training Your Rabbit

By nature, rabbits choose one or a few places (usually corners) to deposit their urine and most of their pills. Urine-training involves little more than putting a litter box where the rabbit chooses to go. Pill-training requires only that you give them a place they know will not be invaded by others. Here are some suggestions to help you to train your rabbit to use the litter box.

❖ Does age make a difference?

- Older rabbits are easier to train than younger rabbits, especially babies. A rabbit's attention span and knack for learning increases as they grow up. If you have a baby, stick with it! And if you are deciding whether to adopt an older rabbit, or litter train your older rabbit, go for it!

❖ Does Spaying/Neutering make a difference?

- When rabbits reach the age of 4-6 months, their hormones become active and they usually begin marking their territory. By spaying or neutering your rabbit, he will be more likely to use his litter box (as well as be much healthier and happier).

❖ What types of litter should I use?

- House Rabbit Society recommends organic litters, made from alfalfa, oat, citrus or paper. (Some brands to look for: Care Fresh, Cat Country, Critter Country). Stay away from litters made from soft woods like pine or cedar shavings or chips, as these products are thought to cause liver damage in rabbits that use them. CatWorks litter has been linked to zinc poisoning. Another approach is to place a handful of hay in each box, or to simply use hay as litter. Obviously, you need to change the hay fairly frequently (daily), since your rabbit will be eating it.

❖ Cleaning and Disposal

- Clean litter boxes often to encourage your rabbit to use them. Use white vinegar to rinse boxes out – for tough stains, let pans soak. Accidents outside of the cage can be cleaned up with white vinegar or club soda. If the urine has already dried, you can try products like “Nature's Miracle” to remove the stain and odor. To dispose of organic litters, they can be used as mulch, or can be composted. Rabbit pills can be directly applied to plants as fertilizer.

❖ Pills vs. Urine

- All rabbits will drop pills around their cages to mark it as their own. This is not failure to be litter-trained. It is very important for your rabbit to identify the cage as her property so that when she leaves the cage for the bigger world of your house, she will distinguish the family's area from her own and avoid marking it. To encourage this, make the rabbit the king of his cage. Try not to force him in or out of it – coax him. Do not do things to his cage that he doesn't like, or things to him that he doesn't like while he's in the cage.

❖ **What's the actual method?**

- Start with a box in the cage, and one or more boxes in the rabbit's running space. If she urinates in a corner of the cage not containing the box, move the box to that corner until she gets it right. Don't be concerned if your bunny curls up in his litter box – this is natural. Once she's using the box in the cage, open her door and allow her into her running space. Watch her go in and out on her own. If she heads to a corner where there's no box, or lifts up her tail in the characteristic fashion, cry "no" in a single, sharp burst of sound. Gently herd her back to her cage and her litter box, or into one of the boxes in her room. Be careful, however. You don't want to make the cage or the litter box seem like punishment. A handful of hay in the box makes it a more welcoming place. After she first uses the box, praise her and give her a favorite treat. Once she uses the box in her room a couple of times, you're well on your way, as her habits will be on their way to forming. As she gets better trained in her first room, you can increase her space. Don't hurry this process. If the area becomes very big, or includes a second floor, be sure to include more litter boxes, so as not to confuse her. Remember, as she becomes more confident and uses fewer boxes, you can start to remove some of her early, "training" boxes. Get your rabbit into a daily routine and try not to vary it. Rabbits are very habitual and once a routine is established, they usually prefer to stick with it.

❖ **How many litter boxes?**

- The more, the merrier, especially if your rabbit is a bit of a slow learner, or is especially obstinate about where she wants her box(es) to go. As her habits improve, you can decrease the number of litter boxes.

Special Concerns:

❖ Kicking litter out of the box

- Some rabbits love to kick their litter out of the box. You can get a covered litter box (with a hood) to help solve this problem. You can also try experimenting with different litters.
- Urinating over the edge of the litter box
- A second problem is that rabbits often back up so far in the litter box that the urine goes over the edge. Again, a covered litter box can solve this problem. Another solution would be to get a dishpan or other type of tub with much higher sides. Still another solution would be to get a “urine guard” to place around the back of the cage, to keep the litter from spraying outside of the cage.

❖ What to do if your rabbit insists on using another spot?

- Compromise. If your rabbit continually urinates in a spot where there is no litter box, put his box here he will use it, even if it means rearranging his cage or moving a table in the living room. It is much easier to oblige him than to try to work against a determined bunny!

❖ What should I do if my rabbit starts dribbling all over her cage instead of using the litter box?

- Dribbles usually indicate a bladder infection. Get your bunny to a rabbit veterinarian who will probably put her on an antibiotic. If the dribbling stops, you know that there was a problem. (Watch out for antibiotics given by veterinarians not familiar with rabbits as companion animals!)

Information Courtesy of:

House Rabbit Society is a non-profit rescue and education group. www.rabbit.org

Bunnies at Play

❖ Toys are important because they provide:

- Mental stimulation. Without challenging activities to occupy your rabbit when you're not at home, your rabbit, especially a solitary rabbit, will get bored. This could lead to depression and/or excessive destruction. The creative use of toys can extend your rabbit's life by keeping him interested in his surroundings, by giving him the freedom to interact with those surroundings, and by allowing him to constantly learn and grow.
- Physical exercise. Your rabbit needs safe activities to keep her body in shape as well as her mind. She needs things to climb on, crawl under, hop on and around, dig into, and chew on. Without outlets for these physical needs, your rabbit may become fat or depressed, or may create jumping, chewing, or crawling diversions with your furniture.
- Bunny proofing for your home. Toys are not just for your rabbit; they also keep your house safe. By providing your rabbit with a selection of toys chosen to meet her age, sex, reproductive status and temperament, you have fulfilled most of the requirements of bunny-proofing your home.

❖ What are good bunny toys?

- If you find your rabbit ingesting plastic or cardboard toys, switch to a different type of toy that the rabbit is not interested in eating.

Some good toys to start with:

- Paper bags and cardboard boxes for crawling inside, scratching, and chewing. Bunnies like them much more when there are at least two entry points into the boxes.
- Cardboard roll from paper towels or toilet paper
- Untreated wicker baskets or boxes full of: shredded paper, junk mail, magazines, straw, or other organic materials for digging
- Yellow Pages for shredding
- Cat toys: Batta balls, and other cat toys that roll or can be tossed
- Parrot toys that can be tossed, or hung from the top of the cage and chewed or hit
- Baby toys: hard plastic (not teething) toys like rattles and keys, things that can be tossed
- Children's or birds' mobiles for hitting

- “Lazy cat lodge” (cardboard box with ramps and windows) to climb in and chew on. Also, kitty condos, tubes, tunnels, and trees
- Nudge and roll toys like large rubber balls, empty Quaker Oat boxes and small tins
- “Busy Bunny” toys
- Plastic Rainbow slinkies
- Toys with ramps and lookouts for climbing and viewing the world
- Dried out pine cones
- Jungle gym type toys from Toys R Us
- A (straw) whisk broom
- A hand towel for bunching and scooting
- Untreated wood, twigs and logs that have been aged for at least 3 months. Apple tree branches can be eaten fresh off the tree. Stay away from: cherry, peach, apricot, plum and redwood, which are all poisonous
- Untreated sea grass or maize mats from Pier One or Cost Plus
- Things to jump up on (they like to be in high places)
- Colorful, hard plastic caps from laundry detergent and softener bottles. They have great edges for picking up with their teeth, make a nice “ponk” sound when they collide, and the grip ridges molded into the plastic make a neat “rackety” sound when rabbits dig at the cap. The caps are nice for human-stacks-on-the-floor and bun-knocks-down kind of games. Note: Be sure not to choose caps from caustic material bottles (e.g. drain uncloggers, bathroom cleaner bottles) since a residue of the cleaner might remain no matter how much washing off you do.

Information Courtesy of:

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What to Feed Your Rabbit

- ❖ In recent years many veterinarians and house rabbit caretakers have come to the conclusion that commercial pellets, particularly when fed in large amounts, may not be the best choice for all rabbits. After all, pellets were developed for breeders as a concentrated source of nutrients. They contain all the vitamins and minerals a rabbit requires in a palatable form that keeps for many weeks, is easy to feed, and is (compared to dog or cat food) extremely inexpensive.
- ❖ Most house rabbits are spayed or neutered, live indoors with minimal environmental stress, and can expect to make it to six to twelve years of age. In these rabbits, the concentrated nature of pellets can lead to obesity and its attendant medical problems.
- ❖ The following amounts should be considered as maximums (Brown 1994):
 - 5-7 pound of body weight: ¼ cup daily
 - 8-10 pound of body weight: ½ cup daily
 - 11-15 pound of body weight: ¾ cup daily
- ❖ It is equally important to make sure that fresh grass hay is available to the rabbit at all times, and that fresh vegetables be given in larger amounts than has previously been recommended (up to 2-4 cups a day). Actually, because of the problems usually associated with the overfeeding of pellets, some rabbits do better if they receive no pellets at all. Instead, they eat several cups of fresh veggies a day and all the grass hay they want. Other rabbits still eat pellets, but receive significantly less than the above amounts, with an increase in the amount of vegetables offered. These more extreme measures are particularly helpful for overweight rabbits that need to lose weight safely. Treats should be limited to small (1 tsp.) amounts of fresh fruit. Most starches should be avoided, since too much carbohydrate has been associated with enteritis.

Suggested Vegetables

- ❖ Select at least three kinds of vegetables daily, with one each day that contains Vitamin A, indicated by an *. A variety is necessary in order to obtain the necessary nutrients. Add one vegetable to the diet at a time. Eliminate if it causes soft stools or diarrhea.
- Alfalfa, radish & clover sprouts
- Basil
- Beet greens (tops)*
- Bok choy
- Broccoli (mostly leaves/stems)*
- Brussels sprouts
- Carrot & carrot tops*
- Celery
- Cilantro
- Clover
- Collard greens*
- Dandelion greens and flowers (no pesticides)*
- Endive*
- Escarole
- Green peppers
- Kale (!)*
- Mint
- Mustard greens*
- Parsley*
- Pea pods (the flat edible kind)*

- Peppermint leaves
- Radicchio
- Radish tops
- Raspberry leaves
- Romaine lettuce (no iceberg or light colored leaf)*
- Spinach (!)*
- Watercress*
- Wheat grass

(!) = Use sparingly. High in either oxalates or goitrogens and may be toxic in accumulated quantities over a period of time.

Suggested Fruits

- Apple (remove stem and seeds)
- Blueberries
- Melon
- Orange (including peel)
- Papaya
- Peach
- Pear
- Pineapple
- Plums
- Raspberries
- Strawberries

Sugary fruits such as bananas and grapes should be used only sparingly as occasional treats. Bunnies have a sweet tooth and if left to their own devices will devour sugary foods to the exclusion of healthful ones.

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Medical Concerns

❖ Red Urine

- Rabbits' urine varies in color from clear to yellow to brown to bright red. This is usually not a cause for alarm unless there are additional signs such as sitting and straining to urinate, loss of appetite or temperature. When you see red urine, don't panic. Just keep your eyes open for other signs that might indicate a problem. If in doubt, you can have your veterinarian test to see whether there is blood in the urine.

❖ Amoxicillin Danger

- Never let a veterinarian give your rabbit amoxicillin. It is a pink liquid antibiotic that smells like bubble gum. Amoxicillin is very dangerous for rabbits, and has killed many more than it has helped. Any penicillin-based drug can be dangerous for your rabbit, so try to find a veterinarian who is knowledgeable about rabbit-safe antibiotics, and who is familiar with the safer drugs such as Chloramphenicol, Tetracycline, sulfa-drugs based like Spectra or TMS, or enrofloxins such as Baytril or Cipro.

❖ Cedar and Pine Shavings

- These are very bad for your rabbit and other pets. The aromatic hydrocarbons produced from softwood beddings can cause both respiratory and liver damage in rabbits and other small animals. Use organic litter in the litter box and put newspaper in the cage tray.

❖ Teeth

- Rabbits' teeth can be misaligned. This condition is known as malocclusion, which means that a rabbit's constantly-growing teeth are not wearing down properly. If the misalignment is bad, the teeth will need to be clipped periodically so that the rabbit can eat. Your veterinarian can do this for you, or can show you how to do it at home. Usually malocclusion just strikes the front teeth, but occasionally, the back teeth can also be misaligned. One indication of this is a wet chin that is caused by drooling. If this is the case, your rabbit will need his molars trimmed by a veterinarian on a regular basis.

❖ Hairballs

- Rabbits shed their hair every three months. Every second shedding is light, followed three months later by a heavy shedding. This is an important factor in rabbit deaths. You need to brush and comb your rabbit to get the hair off of them when they start to shed. Rabbits groom themselves like cats and will ingest all of the loose hair, which they cannot vomit as can cats. For this reason, besides regular grooming, they must have constant access to fresh hay every day, as the fiber helps the hair pass through the digestive system. You can also give your rabbit cat hairball preparations such as Petromalt or Laxatone once a week when not shedding and

daily during their molt. Finally, daily exercise is another important factor in the prevention of hairballs.

❖ **Surgeries**

- Food and water should not be removed from a rabbit the evening before surgery! Any change in diet can upset a rabbit's sensitive digestive tract and cause problems in post-operative recovery. One of the reasons some veterinarians recommend removing animals' food before surgery is the possibility that they may vomit. Rabbits cannot throw up, thus this is not a concern. After surgery, make sure the rabbit's cage is clean, and check her incision site daily for swelling or discharge. Do everything you can to get your rabbit to eat again as soon as possible after returning home. If your rabbit has not eaten for 48 hours after surgery, consult your veterinarian.

❖ **Bacterial Infections**

- The first indication of an infection may be a runny nose or eye, sometimes a high temperature, sometimes a rattling sound from the lungs or (rarely) a coughing sound. It is important to see your veterinarian as soon as the first symptoms of any infection appear, as they are more easily cured when caught in the early stages. The bacteria you may hear the most about is called Pasteurella. This used to be a major problem, but with the newer antibiotics, this bacteria can often be eliminated. And, if not totally eliminated, it can be controlled with the use of long term antibiotics. Most of the symptoms described are quite common for many types of bacteria. So it is important to have your veterinarian do a culture to determine exactly what is being treated.

❖ **Digestive Problems**

- The following symptoms require that you see your veterinarian immediately. Diarrhea – as in human children, can be fatal in rabbits. Rabbits have various kinds of diarrhea, if it's runny, messy and smelly, it's easy to identify. A more subtle form of diarrhea (which does not require the urgency of runny diarrhea) is when the droppings appear to be normal, but "squash" when you touch or sweep them up. You may also see "clumpy" diarrhea. This will be the consistency of silly putty, with normal round droppings mixed in. Diarrhea usually requires antibiotics from your veterinarian. Other signs to watch for are loud tummy growling, small and/or misshapen droppings, or no droppings at all. See your veterinarian if any of these symptoms appear (Veterinarians often misdiagnose this problem as being a hairball.).

Primary Author(s): Sandi Ackerman

Sources: HRH, various articles from the HRJ

Information Courtesy of:

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Why You Should Spay & Neuter Your Rabbits

❖ **Altered rabbits are healthier and live longer than unaltered rabbits**

- The risk of reproductive cancers (ovarian, uterine, mammarian) for an unspayed female rabbit is virtually eliminated by spaying your female rabbit. Your neutered male rabbit will live longer as well, given that he won't be tempted to fight with other animals (rabbits, cats, etc.) due to his sexual aggression.

❖ **Altered rabbits make better companions**

- They are calmer, more loving, and dependable once the undeniable urge to mate has been removed. In addition, rabbits are less prone to destructive (chewing, digging) and aggressive (biting, lunging, circling, growling) behavior after surgery.

❖ **Avoidance of obnoxious behavior**

- Un-neutered male rabbits spray, and both males and females are much easier to litter train, and much more reliably trained, after they have been altered.

❖ **Altered rabbits won't contribute to the problem of overpopulation of rabbits**

- Over 15 million adorable dogs, cats, and rabbits are killed in animal shelters in this country every year. In addition, unwanted rabbits are often abandoned in fields, parks, or on city streets to fend for themselves, where they suffer from starvation, sickness, and are easy prey to other animals or traffic accidents. Those rabbits who are sold to pet stores don't necessarily fare any better, as pet stores sell pets to anyone with the money to buy, and don't check on what kind of home they will go to. Many of these rabbits will be sold as snake food or as a pet for a small child who will soon "outgrow" the rabbit.

❖ **Altered rabbits can safely have a friend to play with**

- Rabbits are social animals and enjoy the company of other rabbits. But unless your rabbit is altered, he or she cannot have a friend, either of the opposite sex, or the same sex, due to sexual and aggressive behaviors triggered by hormones.

❖ **Spaying and neutering for rabbits has become a safe procedure when performed by experienced rabbit veterinarians**

- The House Rabbit Society has had over 1,000 rabbits spayed or neutered with approximately .1% mortality due to anesthesia. A knowledgeable rabbit veterinarian can spay or neuter your rabbit with very little risk to a healthy rabbit. Don't allow a veterinarian with little or no experience with rabbits to spay or neuter your rabbit.

The Case for Multiple Rabbits

Over the years, HRS volunteers have found few generalizations that can safely be applied to all rabbits. The more rabbits we meet, the more exceptions we find. Only one truth remains unchallenged: Rabbits are not meant to live in solitude, away from members of their own kind.

❖ Why a second rabbit is a good idea

- The need for companionship is so deeply ingrained in rabbits that centuries of domestication have had little impact. Like humans and many other creatures, European wild rabbits (ancestors to our domestic rabbits) need to live in groups. A community or warren consists of as many as one hundred individuals working together to create, maintain and peacefully share a network of tunnels. Their lives include daily cooperation to find food, watch for and warn of predators, and protect, raise, and teach their young.
- The need for companionship can be met partially by a human, but once you live with a bonded pair or trio you will see that even the most devoted human cannot quite fill the bill. Bonded pairs are rarely out of each other's sight. Humans will never be completely fluent in Rabbit. Rabbits talk to each other constantly, not so much with sounds as with movements. There are large movements such as dancing and grooming, and there are quite small communications of breath and slight shifts in position. You can sense some of this quiet conversation by lying on the floor beside two talkative rabbits. The bond between human and rabbit also can be deep and joyful. In fact, the closer we become to our rabbits, the more clearly do we understand their need for a friend of their own kind.
- Fortunately for all of us, what's good for the bunny is very good for her human. HRS Colorado Chapter Manager Nancy LaRoche writes, "Pairs are much easier to care for, get into far less trouble, are happier, and tend to relate better to people. Boredom leads to bunny-in-trouble, and pairs don't get nearly as bored because they are so busy relating to each other. Many adopters have told me, if anyone doubts that pairs get into less trouble and relate better to people, tell them to call me! If I had known how much easier two rabbits would be, I'd never have gotten just one.
- Boredom and depression are common symptoms of loneliness in rabbits. These are accompanied by destructiveness and hyperactivity in some rabbits (generally the smaller breeds), withdrawal in others.
- By adopting your new friend from a shelter or rescue group you can save two lives, which feels even better than saving one.

❖ Exceptions to the Rule

- Okay, so I lied. Even this almost constant, almost universal truth about rabbits does not apply to every single rabbit under the moon. How can you determine whether your bun is one of these

rarities? You must ask other rabbits to tell you. Read the how-to series of articles in the *House Rabbit Journal*, and set up a few introductions. If you find that Thumper really does not share your interest in living with rabbits, please consider a non-rabbit non-human friend for him. This is especially important for rabbits who are home alone much of the time. The solitude of an empty apartment would be unnatural even for the wild animals that we label as solitary. As she goes about her daily business, even a solitary animal like an orangutan is surrounded by other living creatures. Don't let a busy schedule give you the guilts about quality time your rabbit is missing. Think guinea pigs. Think cats. Some bunnies coexist contentedly with a feathered friend. Cross species introductions, in which territorial issues are muted, run a swifter and easier course than rabbit/rabbit situations. There may be somewhere a rabbit who is truly deeply solitary, but I have not met one in ten years of living with rabbits.

- There are some medical reasons for not adopting a second rabbit. Rabbits of opposite sexes who are not spayed/neutered should never be with one another. In addition to being good preventive health care, altering allows for smooth introductions and loving long-term relationships between same-sex partners as well as male/female pairs. We have discussed spay/neuter in many previous articles and consider it a cornerstone of medical and behavioral health for all rabbits. Rabbits that are not altered will produce more rabbits, adding to the overpopulation problem. An un-neutered rabbit who is too elderly for surgery, or a neutered individual who is frail or sick may not be able to handle the stress of an introduction to another rabbit, but may be a good candidate for a guinea pig friend.
- Two rabbits are generally not more expensive than one. Pellets, hay, fresh fruits and vegetables, and litter-shopping for two will put little additional strain on the budget. The exception is medical care. Both must be spayed/neutered, and even if you start with a spayed/neutered pair, one or both rabbits may become ill and require veterinary care.

❖ **If rabbits crave companionship, why are introductions often so difficult?**

- Having introduced other companion animals to members of their own species (dogs, cats, guinea pigs), I've often wondered why rabbits require such particular strategizing and supervising. Could it be because their capacity for emotional relationships is so intense? The introduction can be as dramatically hostile as the marriage is devoted. Wild rabbits do not initially welcome strangers with friendly greetings but rather defend the warren against any newcomers.
- Introductions are often difficult for the supervising human. I have attended many introductions over the years, and only the firsthand observation of the happy peaceful outcome of these skirmishes has reduced the stress level for me. If you're not fortunate enough to be an HRS fosterer, the next best thing is the video "Introducing Rabbits." This shows in detail the process by which rabbits that start out as implacable enemies are transformed into inseparable friends.
- As we have seen over and over, once they make it through the introductory phase, the bonded

pair become devoted to each other -- so much so that care must be taken when one rabbit dies, leaving a grieving survivor. Bereaved rabbits often accept a new friend more readily than a rabbit that has never had a partner, a tribute to both the resilience and the sociability of rabbits. However, you may wish to spare your rabbit the heartache, and the illness that sometimes accompanies it, by introducing a third rabbit to your pair. This is a primary reason for having a threesome, but there are other benefits for you and for the rabbits. As with pairs, the only real increase in expense is medical care. The pleasure of observing and participating in interactions among rabbits increases exponentially with the number of animals present.

❖ **Your rabbit has enough affection to spare for all ...**

- Will my rabbit give all his affection to his new friend and have none to spare for his human? Remember that large warrens of rabbits live peacefully in close quarters.
- There are special bonds among individuals, but no one is excluded. Will you love your resident rabbit less when you have two – or more -- with whom to share your days?

Information Courtesy of:

House Rabbit Society is a non-profit rescue and education group www.rabbit.org

House Rabbit Resources

❖ Building a Cube Cage

- www.rabbitnetwork.org/articles/NIC.shtml
- www.cavycages.com

❖ Supplies – Online

- www.leithpetwerks.com
- www.busybunny.com
- www.bunnybytes.com
- www.oxbowhay.com
- www.bunnybale.com
- www.sweetmeadowfarm.com
- www.americanpetdiner.com

❖ Supplies – Local

- www.animall.org
- www.phydeauxpets.com
- www.sesignsupply.com – coroplast for cube cage flooring

❖ Information resources

- www.rabbit.org

Local Vets Specializing in Rabbit Care

- Avian and Exotic 919-844-9166 www.avianandexotic.com
- Dixie Trail Animal Clinic 919-781-5977 www.dixietrailanimalclinic.com
- Bowman Animal Hospital 919-847-6216 www.bowmananimalhospital.com