



RABBIT HOUSING (INDOOR VS. OUTDOOR)

Proper housing is just as important as nutrition, exercise and enrichment for your pet rabbit. Even if you plan on allowing your rabbit(s) the run of your house, they will need to be contained at night or when you are away for long periods of time. They will also need a space to exercise that is much larger than their cage.

INDOORS VS. OUTDOORS – which is best? AWA believes rabbits are companion animals. We promote the importance of indoor housing and highly recommend adopters house their bunnies indoors. There are many more risks to housing rabbits outdoors, including weather extremes, wildlife, external parasites, and stress from environmental noises. Indoor life has some hazards, but these are manageable and easily avoided given attention to detail and cage placement; as well as “rabbit proofing” your home for rabbits that are free to roam.

SHOPPING LIST

1. **Cage or habitat:** It’s important that your rabbit’s cage is large enough. Small cages can lead to weight gain, back problems, muscle wastage, other health issues and/or behavior issues like cage chewing. The recommended dimensions for an indoor hutch/cage is at least 6ft x 3ft x 3ft and, if they do not have the run of the house, then they will need an exercise area of 8ft x 4ft x 3ft in addition to their cage. It should be fairly easy to clean and able to be moved if needed. Placement of the cage should be in an area that is quiet, cool and away from drafts and away from heaters or radiators. It should be near a window that lets in natural light as well. It shouldn’t be near anything that the rabbit could pull in and chew on (curtains, bed skirt).
2. **Bedding:** Your rabbit’s bedding should not contain clay, zinc, pine or its oils, or anything that could harm the rabbit. Recommended bedding includes newspaper, paper pulp bedding (Yesterday’s News), wood pellets, paper pellets, shredded cardboard and hay.
3. **Food and water containment:** A shallow ceramic dish is fine for pellets. You can choose either a water bottle or dish for the rabbit’s water. Hay can be put into a hay feeder or hay ball.
4. **Toys:** You can either purchase or create your own toys, or both. It is important to make sure that whatever the toys are made of is safe for the rabbit. Treated wood, items with parts that create a choking/foreign body ingestion hazard, and anything that can cause damage to the mouth are to be avoided completely.

CLEANING THE CAGE

Daily:

- Remove any uneaten veggies, treats, greens, hay and/or pellets
- Wash food bowl and empty water bottle, rinse, fill with water and return to holder on cage
- Remove any used or unused enrichment items, as well as any food-based enrichment, saving enrichment items that can be re-used and washing those that can withstand washing
- Remove, dump and clean out litter box
- Spot clean any wet areas and remove fecal matter from bedding

Weekly:

- Remove all accessories/furniture/boxes from cage
- Remove all bedding from cage
- Wipe cage down well with hot water, using vinegar on any urine deposits
- Wash/disinfect feeding dishes, water bottle, hay rack/ball and litter box with hot water and only periodically, with a disinfectant but rinse well. When cleaning wood parts do not use chemicals.
- Clean any toys or furnishings that have become soiled, throwing out those that cannot be cleaned.