



Archie's Exotic Pet Rescue

www.archiesrescue.ca

Rabbit Living Space Care Sheet

Rabbits are active animals and require more space than frequently considered. Rabbits are also fragile and require permanent indoor housing space to keep them safe, healthy, and properly socialized. Here are some tips for keeping your domestic rabbit (or rabbits) healthy and happy!

Home Base

Rabbits require daily exercise! Ideally, bunnies get their exercise in one of two ways:

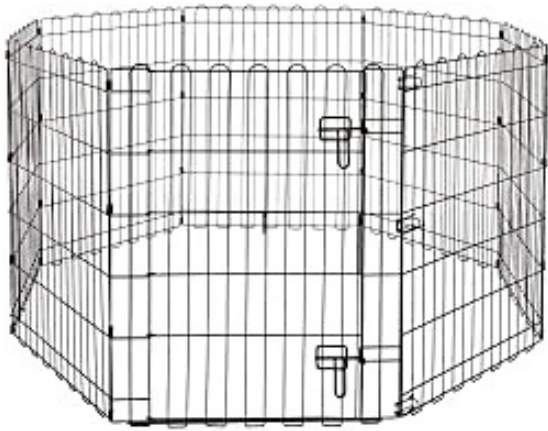
1. They are entirely free-roaming. This means that they have open access to the house (or part of the house) like a cat does. This requires detailed bunny-proofing (see below).
2. They are partially free-roaming. This means that they have daily access to the house (or part of the house) under supervision.

Rabbits are prey animals; therefore, it is very important for them to have continual access to a consistent "home base," like a burrow.

A rabbit's home base should have all their necessities within it:

- litter box
- hay feeder (optional, as hay is most often placed directly in the litter box)
- water bowl (water bottle dispensers are NOT recommended)
- food dish (optional, as food pellets can be distributed in multiple methods)
- "boredom buster" toys

Rabbits need to be able to hop, run, jump, periscope, and stretch out fully when lying down within their home base. Traditional cages are rarely large enough for rabbits—we strictly advise against them! A large pen is recommended, as it



can be closed to keep the bunnies in, if necessary. At minimum, rabbits should have a 16 square foot enclosure, ideally a 4' x 4' square or circle. Archie's Rescue supplies 36" high x-pens (exercise pens) for fosters/adopters. This height should prevent rabbits from jumping over the sides, although larger breeds or more

adventurous rabbits may need taller sides (42") and smaller breeds or less exuberant (lazy!) rabbits may be fine with shorter sides (24"-30"). X-pens with a gate is preferable as they allow easy access to refill hay, water, food, litter box changes, and it allows bunnies easy in-and-out for roaming time.

Bunny pens need to be in a living area where rabbits can be adequately socialized, yet also rest, feel safe, and are protected from temperature extremes and would-be predators (other house pets or young children).

Flooring

Rabbits, unlike cats and dogs, do not have pads on their feet. Their paws are slippery and sensitive—some may be prone to sore hocks. Therefore, it is important that rabbits have something beneath them that provides traction and comfort. Other considerations are digging/chewing behaviors and "accidents" (more info under Litter Box below).

1) Carpet is most often what people have in their homes. If your bunny's home base is in a carpeted area, it is recommended that you watch for digging and chewing behaviors. Some rabbits are perfectly fine living on carpet, while others may destroy it. (Berber is definitely ideal over pile carpets, but still not indestructible.)

If your neutered/spayed bunny is still prone to destructive behaviors, here are some options to cover carpeted areas (see more ideas under Bunny Proofing below!):



- heavy jute-type rug
- large outdoor mat
- large tarp folded to the desired size, covered with a sheet or blanket
- piece of linoleum or other waterproof flooring

Not all of these are indestructible, but they will help protect the carpet. It is recommended that you have an additional soft item over top/available, such as an old blanket or towel. This gives your bunny something to "dig," to burrow under, or cuddle up on. Some ideas for waterproof or washable surfaces include Ruggable rugs and high chair splash mats.

If your bunny has serious digging/chewing concerns, and you are unable to adequately cover a carpeted area, consider temporarily placing your bunny's home base in a linoleum/hard flooring area (such as the dining room, kitchen, or bathroom) for 2-3 weeks. This can assist in training them out of their digging habits, and you can transfer them back to a carpeted area, keeping an eye out for destructive behavior.

2) Hard floors, such as vinyl, are ideal when dealing with rabbits, as they can't be destroyed as carpet can. It is just important to remember that they need to have a soft item, such as a rug, old blanket, towel or sheet, under their feet for traction, comfort, and digging/burrowing activities.

Litter Box

This is one of the most important accessories that a rabbit can have! By keeping the majority of their "mess" within a litter box, rabbits remain healthier for longer and are less maintenance than un-litter-trained bunnies.

A rabbit litter box can be created using any plastic container, usually a cat litter box from the dollar store. Larger rabbits and bonded pairs benefit from a larger container or multiple litter boxes.

Inside a rabbit litter box, there are two main components:



- An absorptive material on the bottom. Archie's Rescue recommends hardwood fuel pellets, found in most hardware stores, because they are super-absorptive, last longer than a paper-based "litter product," and are incredibly affordable! A 40-pound bag should last at least a month for a single bunny and costs only \$7! Just pour/scoop a thin layer to cover the bottom of the litter box. Depending on the size of your bunny and how much they drink, you can change a litter box that uses hardwood pellets only once or twice a week!
- Hay! Rabbits like to eat while doing their "business," so this is how bunnies are generally trained to use a litter box. Hay is a rabbit's main food source; therefore, more hay will have to be added morning and night! Some hay will become inedible due to rabbit waste—alternatively, a hay feeder can be placed at mouth-height above the litter box. (Hay is much more affordable, and much better quality, if you purchase it directly from a farmer! Archie's Angels Rabbit Rescue also provides affordable hay)

Some bunnies are naturally tidy, while others become tidy after they are spayed/neutered. It is important to note that there are USUALLY some poops outside of the litter box, especially when bunnies transition! This may settle within a few days, but if it remains a concern, try the reinforcement steps below. It is



important to remember that bunny poops are basically dry hay balls—very easy to clean up! We pick them up with our fingers (or sweep them up with a brush and dustpan) and throw them into the litter box. When they are "golden" and easy to break apart, it is a sign of a healthy diet in your bunny. Bunny poops make great fertilizer, too!

When it comes to urine, some bunnies may have triggers that cause them to "go" outside of their litter box, like certain smells or changes to routine. Senior bunnies tend to have accidents due to failing systems or difficulty getting to/into their litter box.



If your bunny just needs litter box training reinforced, you may wish to consider temporarily confining them to a smaller area that is covered with multiple litter boxes. You can start removing the extra litters in 2-3 weeks to see if the behavior improves and then slowly open up their space again.

Hiding Places

Since rabbits are a prey species, they love to have places to hide. If possible, give your rabbit access to safe hiding places. This can be as simple as a box with two holes cut out of it: an entrance and an exit. As a bonus, rabbits can jump on top of them!

To keep hiding places feeling safe for your rabbit, never trap or remove rabbits from them.

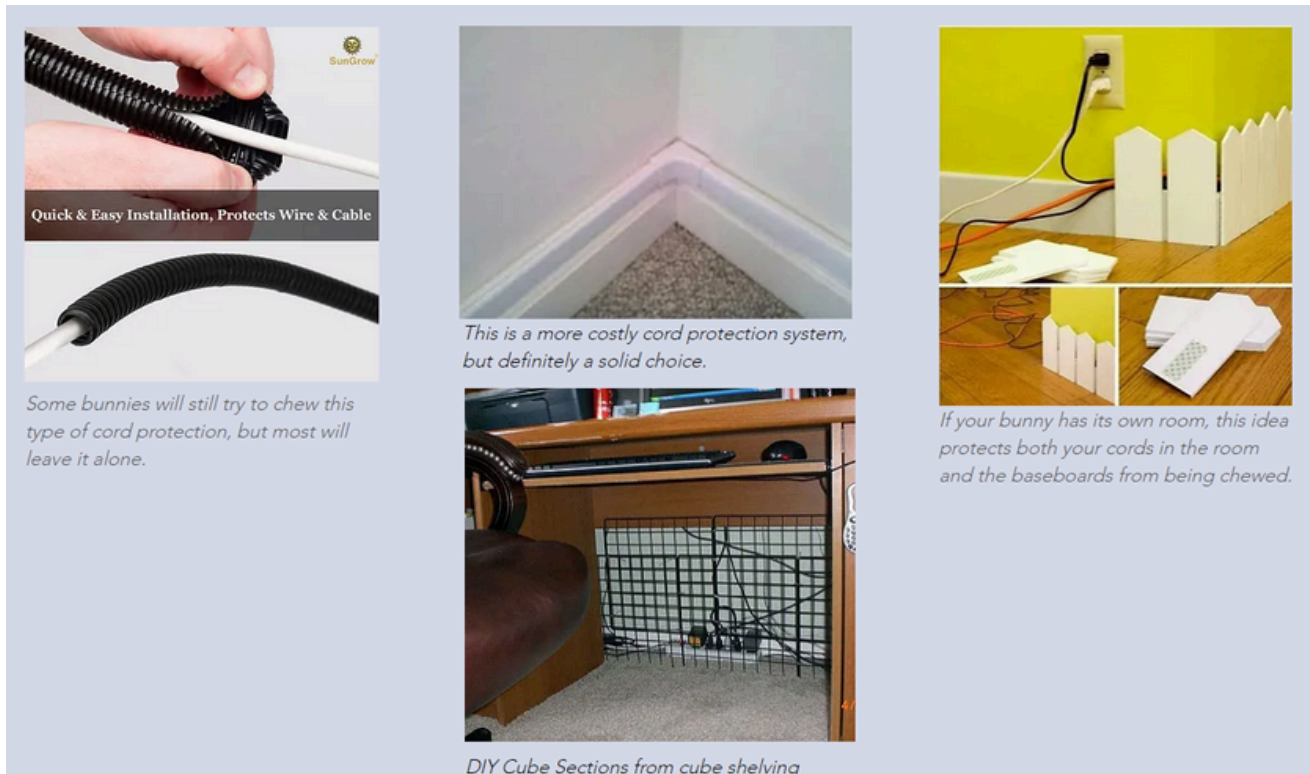
If you have more than one rabbit together, e.g. a bonded pair, there should be at least one hiding place per rabbit, preferably with an extra one, so that all your rabbits can hide at the same time. Ensure hiding places have two entrances/exits—this will prevent dominant rabbits from becoming territorial or aggressive towards subordinates inside. At least one hiding place should be large enough for all rabbits to rest together. If you keep different-sized rabbits together, you can even make one hiding place that has an entrance large enough for the smaller rabbit, but too small for the larger rabbit. This ensures smaller rabbits can escape from their larger companion for some alone time.

Bunny Proofing

Pet rabbits love to dig and chew. (Rabbits aren't alone in this—cats and dogs may do this, too!) In order to protect your house rabbit as well as your home you'll need to bunny proof. Rabbits are susceptible to a number of household dangers. Make sure their living space is safe and secure by removing dangerous plants they might chew on, and hide all of your cords.

Wire Covers and Flex Tubing

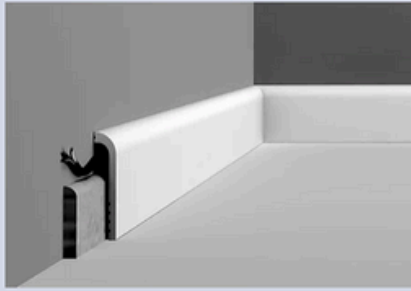
Wires are one of the main targets of bunnies. Their sharp teeth can slice through your wires quickly, damaging your favorite lamp or worse, electrocuting your rabbit. It is best to cover wires with hard plastic sleeves or flex tubing. These can be purchased at any hardware, home improvement or electronics store. Even better is to keep all wires out of the reach of your bunnies.



Baseboard Protection

Baseboards and moldings are also frequently chewed by some bunnies. You can protect your baseboards by covering them with plastic guards, 1x4s (or furring strips) found at your local hardware store. More ideas in the images below.





Removable plastic baseboard covers with electrical wires/cords that can be fed through the top. When you move, it can be removed leaving the baseboards in good condition.



Build your own accordion paneling to fit the rooms your bunny has access to.



Self-Adhesive flexible baseboard covering that can be painted.



Again, the use of the DIY Cube Storage panels that can be placed around the room where baseboards and cords might be accessible.

How To Prevent Your Rabbit From Digging/Chewing At The Carpet

Rabbits are natural burrowers, which means digging is a natural behavior for your rabbit. This is especially true of female rabbits. In the wild, the female rabbit digs the new tunnels to nest in, with her litter of baby bunnies. You won't "cure" a rabbit's digging habit, but you can discourage it with hard flooring or try to divert their attention and protect the vulnerable areas of your house.

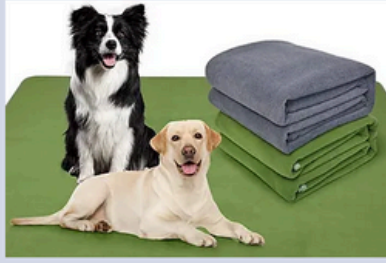
If you can, keep your rabbit in rooms with hardwood flooring and use area rugs that you won't mind if your rabbit digs at. But if that's not possible, the first thing to do is to put something down to cover the carpet, especially in the corners of rooms and around doorways.

Plastic mats are going to be the most durable way to prevent your rabbit from getting at the carpet. But you can also use smaller bath mats or even just plain old cardboard. Position pieces of furniture in corners to keep your bun away from these tempting digging spots.





Rabbits tend to like digging and chewing carpets in corners, or underneath furniture.



Ex-Large Washable Pet Pee-Pads laid down over the carpet areas your bunny likes to dig or chew.



Washable Pet Pee Pads are great for bunny pens, too.



Rubber /Vinyl Mat Roll that can be cut up and placed in corners or other spots that your rabbit likes to dig or chew. Works Great!



A variety of brands have Bitter Apple sprays that will deter and teach your bunny not to chew wherever it is sprayed.

Make Items Taste Bad to Your Bunny
Bitter sprays (such as Grannick's Bitter Apple spray) can also be a useful chewing deterrent for items you can't protect. Spray this regularly on fabric furniture, decor, area rug edges, and other items to help discourage your bunny from chewing them by making these items taste bad. There are also lotion or cream options if you need something other than a spray.

Furniture Protection

Not all bunnies chew the furniture around the house, but those that do seem to like certain items over others. There is the sofa (wood parts & fabric), the bed (wood parts & fabric), wooden furniture (usually legs and low lying shelves).

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**Bunny-Proofing Under The Couch
a la The Fluffy Group©**



DIY solution to keeping your bunny from damaging your sofa around the edges or underneath the sofa & carpet.



Furniture Leg Socks can be purchased in colours such as brown, black, grey and white.



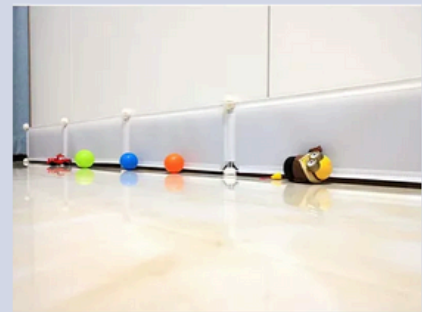
Protect your upholstered bed frame, or keep your bunny from going under the bed, by attaching DIY Cube Storage panels.



Self-Adhesive corner protection can be used on the bottom 12" of wall corners, square like furniture legs, low wooden shelves, and more.



Protect our wood furniture legs by taping them with clear packaging tape, cardboard folded around and taped, or with furniture leg socks.



Toy Blockers are a good idea to use around a sofa, or anything that has a bit of space that your bunny can get under.

