



Rabbits do best with larger spaces to live and play in. In this guide, we'll share recommendations on how to give your bunny a home that makes them feel like the king or queen of the castle!

Indoor Locations

We recommend that domestic rabbits be kept indoors for several reasons: it protects them from our harsh climate, predators and environmental elements, such as gardening sprays and air pollution.

Rabbits are sensitive to high temperatures, so it's important to monitor their well-being on hot days. Enclosures should be kept out of direct sunlight and in a room without drafts or extreme temperature shifts. The best temperature for your bunny is 26°C and lower.

Rabbits are social creatures and benefit from spending time in a space with you. Having their enclosure in a high-traffic area of the home will provide them with more chances to socialize with you.

Tip: If your rabbit's enclosure is in a high-traffic area, it's a good idea to place a liner underneath their cage, to protect the floor and prevent debris from spreading, as rabbits can be a bit messy!

Enclosures

Enclosures generally refer to cages or pens, but these are not your only options! Consider an entire rabbit room (that's rabbit-proofed!) where your rabbit can freely roam, using baby gates or exercise pens in a section of a room, or using large dog crates which tend to be larger than rabbit cages.

Most commercial rabbit enclosures have a plastic bottom with wire-frame sides and a roof. These need to be regularly maintained and monitored for any damage to help prevent injury to your rabbit.

Rabbit housing should provide a comfortable environment through appropriate space, airflow and temperature. Enclosures like aquariums, with solid walls, don't provide enough airflow, even if the top of the is open, off or unblocked.

What to Consider

Size

The more room the better! Minimum requirements are just that. If your rabbit spends a lot of time inside its habitat, a larger space is preferred and will give them more room to zoom in. You will also need to consider the size of your rabbit, as larger breeds require even more space.

In an ideal space, a rabbit should be able to

- lie down and comfortably stretch out in all directions.
- move at least four body lengths forward, without touching the end of the cage.
- stand on their back legs and NOT have their ears touch the top of the enclosure.



With multiple rabbits living together, you'll need a larger habitat. This space needs to provide appropriate room for both bunnies to move freely and for two sets of feeding bowls, litter boxes and hiding areas -- one for each rabbit.

The space should be large enough so both rabbits can stretch out without touching and be able to hop around without blocking each other's path. Again, the more space the better!

The bars of the cage must be a width that your rabbit's head cannot squeeze through.

Multiple Levels

Rabbits are a prey species, so hiding spots and lookout options will help them to feel more secure in their environment. Platforms that let them perch and look around from multiple levels are a great addition to any rabbit space because they encourage exercise, which helps maintain healthy bones.

While you can purchase cages that include platforms, you can also improve your rabbit's existing environment by adding your own. This can include buying platforms and huts to add on or using sturdy furniture secured to the ground like stools, stacking cardboard boxes or even adding a cat tree made of rabbit-safe materials.

Tip: Be mindful of the height when adding platforms to your rabbits' space. Make sure they can't jump out of their enclosure and aren't at risk of falling if the platform is too high.

Materials

- Enclosures must be made of materials that can't be destroyed by your rabbit's teeth and are easy to clean.
 - Wood may tempt your rabbit to chew and is not as easy to clean as plastic or metal.
- Floors should be solid and non-slippery.
 - Rabbits don't have paw pads, so they can slip on plastic cage bottoms. Wire bottoms can be harmful and uncomfortable to your rabbit's tender feet.

Other features to consider when looking for a rabbit cage

- Doors: Consider things like the number and location of doors, direction doors open in, and size of the doors. Will your arms and your rabbit fit through it?
- Modifications: Can add-ons be attached or removed easily, such as play pens and platforms?
- Transport: Does the space collapse to move? Are there wheels on the solid base and do the wheels lock or is there only a handle to move the cage?
- Cleaning: Are there ridges or parts that would be hard to clean? How easy is it to disassemble the cage? Does the tray slide out or detach? Also consider features that help to keep your home cleaner, like urine guards and deeper trays to better contain messes.



Enclosure Supplies and Layout

Setting up a habitat for your rabbit can be a fun and bonding experience. It's rewarding to watch them explore and use the items you've given them to enjoy life in your home.

Bedding

Rabbits love to chew, so make sure that any bedding or floor coverings used are rabbit safe. We recommend lining the floor with bedding that can absorb waste and messes and is also rabbit safe. You can line the floor with hay, paper products or straw and grass mats. Your rabbit may also enjoy having a soft surface, like a towel or blanket to rest on or create a burrow in.

Food & Water Bowls

These should be easy to clean and disinfect, but not easy to knock over. Ceramic bowls are recommended, as they are sturdy and have a good weight. There are also weighted bottom bowls, designed to be untipable.

You can purchase bowls that clip or hook onto cage bars, as this will prevent them from being tipped over. If you find your rabbit always knocks over their water bowl, you may want a water bottle with a metal tube for sipping instead to attach to the side of the enclosure.

We recommend providing your rabbit with two water sources. Having both a sipper and bowl is a good idea for variety and safety -- this will give them a water source even if they spill their bowl. To reduce the risk of bacterial growth, regularly clean the bowls and refresh water twice daily.

***Tip:** Do NOT add vitamin mixes or other elements to your rabbit's water. It can make the water taste strange, which will discourage them from drinking.*

Litter Boxes

Litter boxes should be kept in one corner of the cage, as far away from their sleeping and feeding area as possible. It should also be big enough for the rabbit to comfortably sit and move around. Triangle-shaped boxes, which fit in corners, are commonly marketed for rabbit cages but larger rectangle boxes meant for cats can provide more space and work well with rabbits.

When setting up your litter box

- Line the bottom of the litter box with about an inch layer of paper-based pellets, newspaper, compressed sawdust pellets, wheatgrass-based pellets or aspen wood litter.
- Avoid using materials like pine or cedar shavings, sawdust, and clumping litter, clay-based litter as these pose health risks to rabbits.
- Rabbits tend to graze and use their litter box at the same time, so you can encourage your rabbit to use the box by placing a handful of hay on top of or near the litter.



Hay

Hay is important to keep a rabbit's digestive system and teeth healthy, so should always be available. Providing timothy hay and a variety of other grass hays high in fibre -- like oat and brome hay -- in your rabbit's hay rack will keep them happy and healthy.

Tip: Alfalfa hay is nutritionally different than grass hays and should be fed in limited amounts. Check with your vet about the kind and amount of hay your rabbit needs.

Hiding Spots

As a prey species, rabbits need to be able to take cover to help them feel secure. Providing hutches, tunnels and boxes are great ways to give them a place to hide.

When setting up hiding spots

- Hutches should be tall enough to allow your rabbit to rest underneath without hitting their head.
- Tunnels can be purchased or made using cardboard boxes, tubes, and even PVC pipes.
- If you have more than one rabbit together, make sure to give them each a hiding area and another spot large enough to fit *every bunny* at once, in case they want to cuddle!

Cleaning

Rabbits like to dig, chew, and forage and some love to toss their toys around. This means they can be a bit messy. To keep your rabbit's home safe and comfortable, we've included a table below for things to maintain daily and what to do during a weekly deep cleaning.

Daily	Weekly
Change food, water and hay twice a day	Fully clean and disinfect enclosure
Spot clean messes like water spills or waste outside the litter box	Clean and rotate toys
Check the water sipper for clogs	Replace fabrics like towels and blankets
Scoop litter box add fresh hay	Clean and replace litter box
Wash food and water bowls	
Remove and replace dirty bedding	

Tip: Spaying/neutering your rabbit reduces urine spraying and keeps their home cleaner.

Did You Know?

You can also ask us general behaviour questions by emailing:

askthespecialist@edmontonhumanesociety.com

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