



# ARL

ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE OF IOWA, INC.

## Checklist for new adopters

### Housing

Provide a roomy cage, six times the size of an adult rabbit. A wire dog crate makes a great cage for a rabbit. Wire dog crates have a large front opening, and do not have a wire bottom, which can be uncomfortable on a rabbits' feet. A front opening door is preferable for a rabbit to come in and out on his own. Door must be large enough for litter box to fit through. Provide toys in cage.

If you aren't using a wire dog crate you will need a resting board to cover part of cage floor (piece of cardboard, wood, or carpet) for rabbit's comfort. Slatted floors are more comfortable than wire floors. Litter box fastened inside cage to re-enforce litter box training.



Provide a heavy pellet bowl or clip-on feeder for food and a water bottle or crock for water. If rabbit tends to get wet chin from a water bowl, switch to a water bottle.

### Running Space

*Indoors:*

Gradually increase freedom. Bunny-proof electric cords. Place second litter box outside cage. Let rabbit have access to cage (leave door open with water and food inside). Clean small litter box once a day - clean cage tray and floor covering once a week or as needed.

*Outdoors:*

Fenced patio, porch or wire playpen (with floor), daytime only, with supervision.

### Food

Rabbit pellets and fresh water should be available daily. Fresh vegetables and fruit should also be a part of the daily diet, along with hay, (for fiber and nutritional value): grass, clover, and oat. Provide straw for chewing needs, and wood, cardboard, grass mats, untreated wicker, and other safe chewables for chewing and entertainment. Wood is nice if it is wired to the side of the cage.

Alfalfa should not be given to rabbits over 6 months of age. Straw is not a substitute for hay, as it does not have the nutritional value of hay.

For digestion, try the following:

Papaya enzymes/multiple enzymes (especially Prozyme for prevention of fur-block and enteritis). These are available for purchase at the ARL's Animal House store.

### **Handling and Socializing**

If rabbit struggles violently, either restrain him against your body or squat down and release him. Fighting him may injure him. Prevent him from jumping from heights. Encourage a routine until he returns to his cage willingly.

Demonstrate to the rabbit that you are the source of affection, treats, freedom, and anything else he likes. Pet him on the broad area on top of his nose. Try short sessions several times a day. Avoid situations in which you have to chase him. Never punish a rabbit: distract or remove him from chewing or digging destructively. Give him something he can play with.

Rabbits readily develop habits - good or bad - and can be influenced by humans.

### **Health and Grooming**

- Regularly check eyes, nose, ears, teeth, weight and droppings. Notice any behavior change.
- Avoid stress, heat, and sudden temperature changes. 85 degrees and above can be life threatening to a rabbit.
- Find an experienced rabbit veterinarian before a problem develops.
- Groom with flea comb.
- Brush away excess fur.
- Clip toenails.