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SUPPLY LIST



HOUSING

CAGE

Specs

Cages must be a minimum of 12 square feet per rabbit. Be sure there is enough room for your rabbit to stretch out, hop 3 - 4 times across the length of the habitat, and stand on their back legs without touching the roof.

Temperature

The temperature inside the cage should always be between 65° and 80° F with the humidity between 30% and 70%.

Material

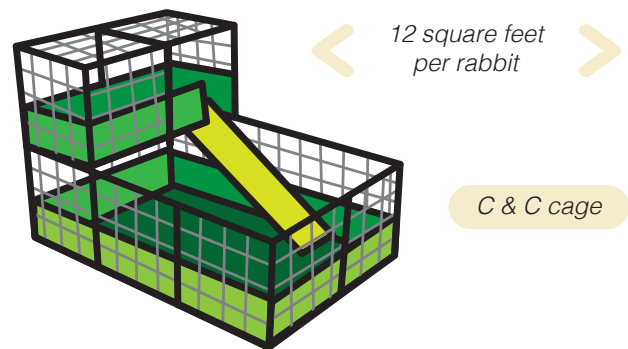
Most rabbit cages you find in the stores are much too small on their own. It is recommended to either build your own cage or expand your cage with fencing or an exercise pen.

Location

Pocket pets should never be housed outside as they are vulnerable to predators, parasites, and weather conditions.

Examples

One of the best cage options is a homemade cage called a C&C (cubes and coroplast) cage. They are fairly easy to make and are quite inexpensive compared to cages sold at pet stores. They are also very easy to clean and provide appropriate space. The bigger the better! If you decide to put in a ramp to add a second story, make sure it is long with a gradual incline and traction on the bottom so your rabbit can easily use it.



Free-Range

Some rabbits do well free-range in the house or in their own room once they have been litter box trained, as long as the area has been rabbit-proofed.

BEDDING

MNPPR strongly recommends avoiding all wood-based beddings due to the general sensitivity of pocket pets. We like to use fleece to line the cage and cover any exposed wire floors, then use unscented paper bedding as litter placed in a litter box. When the fleece is soiled, simply throw it in the wash and replace it as needed. Most rabbits can be trained to use a litter box, which can make cleaning even easier.



fleece



pelleted paper



soft recycled paper



shredded paper



HOUSING

FURNISHINGS

Essentials

It is recommended to have two bowls that are difficult for your rabbit to flip over, one for pellets and one for water. Ceramic or steel is ideal for ease of cleaning. Water bottles are only recommended as a last resort as rabbits tend to strongly prefer using bowls and may not drink enough water if only a bottle is available. Be sure to also provide lots of chew toys, at least one shelter/hide, and at least one bed. Some people choose to litter train their rabbits. If you do, be sure to incorporate at least one litter box that is large enough for your pet to sit in comfortably.

Variety

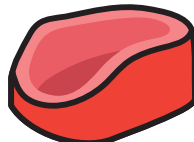
It is important to provide a variety of toys, beds, and fun stuff you can rotate to keep your rabbit interested. Good examples include toilet paper tubes, fiddlesticks, tunnels, bird toys, bits of fabric, hay huts, cardboard, and treat balls. Visit the homemade toys tab on our website for more ideas.



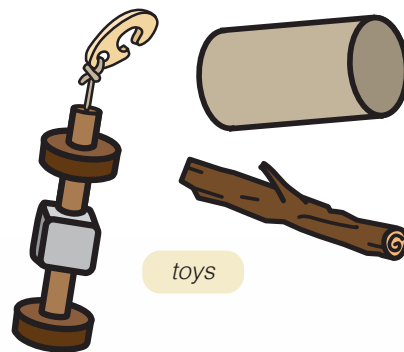
water bowl



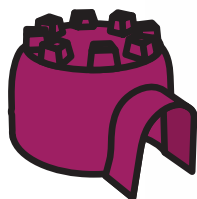
food dish



beds



toys



hides



litter box



FEEDING

DIET

Hay

Rabbits' digestive systems require a constant supply of hay to function properly. An unlimited supply of timothy hay, orchard grass, and/or meadow grass should be available for them to eat at all times. Adult rabbits should not be given alfalfa since its calcium content is too high and can cause stones to form. Place hay in the litter box to encourage use and hay consumption.

Leafy Greens / Fresh Vegetables

Each day, offer about 1 cup of veggies per 2 lbs of body weight per rabbit. The bulk of this should be leafy greens, such as romaine, green leaf, or red leaf lettuce. Iceberg lettuce should never be given as it can cause diarrhea.

Pellets

Rabbits weighing 1 - 4 pounds should be given 1/8 cup pellets daily. Rabbits weighing 5 - 8 pounds should be given 1/4 cup pellets daily. Rabbits weighing 8 - 10 pounds should be given 1/2 cup pellets daily. Rabbits weighing 12 pounds and up should be given 3/4 cup pellets daily. Speak with your vet to determine if the pellet amount you are feeding is appropriate for your pet. Do not feed alfalfa hay or pellets to adult rabbits as they are high in calcium and can cause bladder stones. Pellets are not a substitute for hay! MNPPR prefers to use Oxbow brand pellets.

LEAFY GREENS

75% OF DAILY FRESH FOOD

<i>arugula</i>	<i>mustard greens</i>
<i>basil</i>	<i>parsley</i>
<i>bok choy</i>	<i>red leaf lettuce</i>
<i>dandelion greens</i>	<i>romaine lettuce</i>
<i>dill</i>	<i>spring greens</i>
<i>endive</i>	<i>swiss chard</i>
<i>green leaf lettuce</i>	<i>turnip greens</i>
<i>kale</i>	<i>watercress</i>
<i>mint</i>	<i>wheatgrass</i>

VEGETABLES

15-25% OF DAILY FRESH FOOD

<i>bell peppers</i>	<i>cucumber</i>
<i>broccoli</i>	<i>radicchio</i>
<i>brussels sprouts</i>	<i>spinach</i>
<i>carrots</i>	<i>summer squash</i>
<i>celery</i>	<i>zucchini squash</i>

<i>apples</i>	<i>mango</i>
<i>bananas</i>	<i>melons</i>
<i>berries</i>	<i>nectarines</i>
<i>cherries</i>	<i>peaches</i>
<i>kiwi</i>	<i>pears</i>

UNSAFE FOODS

<i>avocado</i>	<i>dairy</i>	<i>meat</i>	<i>onion</i>	<i>rhubarb</i>
<i>chocolate</i>	<i>garlic</i>	<i>nuts</i>	<i>potato</i>	<i>tomato leaves</i>



EXERCISE & SOCIAL NEEDS

EXERCISE

Activity

Rabbits are naturally crepuscular, meaning most active at dawn and dusk, so spending time with them during these times can be the most rewarding. Rabbits require at least four hours of free-range playtime every day, even if they have a very large habitat. This includes running around, exploring, and playing with their humans.

Play

Some fun things to try with your rabbit are making a maze, playing chase with a toy, creating an obstacle course, and hiding food for them to find. Never chase your rabbit to get them back in their cage. Instead, tempt them back to bed by placing treats in their cage.

Wheels and Balls

Never use a wheel or exercise ball for your rabbit. These items can cause injury to your pet's back, feet, or toes.

Pet-Proofing

Make sure to pet-proof before play by covering outlets and cords, putting away anything you don't want chewed on, moving houseplants, blocking any small space you cannot reach into such as under the fridge, and securing other pets in a different area or room. Exercise pens can be extremely useful in keeping your pet secure while providing lots of room to run.

SOCIAL NEEDS

Mental Stimulation

Rabbits are very social, smart animals who can be prone to boredom and weight gain if they are not offered a variety of toys, regular exercise, and additional mental stimulation. They love spending time with their humans, playing games, and investigating.

Bonded Buddies

Rabbits are herd animals and will be happiest when living with other rabbits. It is strongly recommended to keep a minimum of two rabbits at a time. Unaltered rabbits should be kept only with other rabbits of the same sex. MNPPR strongly advises spaying or neutering your rabbits.



EXERCISE & SOCIAL NEEDS

BONDING WITH YOUR RABBIT

Key Components of Training

TRUST

PATIENCE

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

CONSISTENCY

REPETITION



Tips

Every time you approach your rabbit's habitat, bring a small treat for your pet so they learn to associate you with pleasant things and look forward to your visits. Never feed treats through cage bars since this can encourage your rabbit to nip fingers. Offer treats with an open palm when possible.

Speak softly to your rabbit and call them by their name so they get used to your voice and learn their name.

Spend time around your rabbit in a location that allows them to come to you if they want to be pet but gives them space to leave if they don't feel like being touched. For example, sitting on the floor while you do something else.

When approaching your rabbit to pet them, get down to their level (lay on the floor flat). Never chase your pet or they might confuse you with a predator and become fearful.

Coax your rabbit in and out of their cage rather than picking them up. Most rabbits get extremely anxious if they are held and can cause injury to you or themselves.

The more time you spend with your rabbit, the sooner they will become comfortable with you.



HANDLING & GROOMING

SAFE HANDLING

Picking Up Your Rabbit

Most rabbits tolerate, but do not enjoy, being picked up and feel safer on the ground. Only pick up your pet if necessary. Talk to your pet and let them sniff your hand before attempting to pick them up so they know it's you. Always use two hands when picking up your rabbit. One hand should support the rump while the other supports the chest and hold them close to your body. Waiting for your rabbit to come to you before picking them up is a great way to develop trust. Never pick your rabbit up by the scruff, ears, leg, or tail - this is very painful and harmful to your pet!

GROOMING

Nails

Rabbits need their nails trimmed about every 4 - 5 weeks. To do so, hold the rabbit still, cover the toe with your finger so only the nail is exposed, and use pet nail trimmers to clip the clear part of the nail. If you accidentally clip the pink vein (or quick) dip your pet's foot in styptic powder to stop the bleeding. It can be helpful to have a second person holding the animal, to give them treats, and to keep sessions short. Alternatively, view our events page on our website for our nail trim clinic dates and we can do it for you!

Dental Care

You do not need to brush your rabbit's teeth but you must provide plenty of chew toys so they can wear down their teeth naturally. Check your pet's teeth regularly to make sure they are not overgrown or misaligned and take them to the vet if symptoms of dental issues present themselves so they can be trimmed by a professional.

Bathing

Rabbits can go into shock from stress and hypothermia if bathed. If your rabbit is ill, old, or has a disability that prevents them from properly cleaning their own bottom they may require a "butt bath" which involves only getting the rear end damp enough to clean any mess from it. If your rabbit gets dirty, simply use natural baby or pet wipes.

Brushing

Long-haired rabbits must be brushed multiple times a day and short-haired breeds about once a week. All rabbits go through a molting cycle around every 3 months where they will shed large chunks of their fur at once and need additional brushing. Without regular brushing, rabbits can develop hairballs causing GI stasis.



HEALTH

GENERAL INFORMATION

Lifespan

Depending on the breed, rabbits live an average of 8 to 12 years.

Reproduction

All rabbits should be spayed or neutered between 4 and 8 months of age since they can start reproducing between 3 and 6 months old. Alteration can also help curb bad behavior such as mounting and urine marking.

Routine At Home Health Checks

At least once a week, spend some time examining your pet's fur, skin, and teeth for any physical changes such as lumps, wounds, overgrown teeth or nails, poor coat quality, etc. If any abnormalities are found, it is a good idea to make an appointment with your veterinarian for assessment, as any health concerns can progress quickly.

Annual Exam

All rabbits should have a yearly veterinary exam to ensure they stay in good health. As of late 2021, rabbits should be annually vaccinated against Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV2), a viral infection that is spread via the eyes, nose, and mouth. It is recommended that, even once your rabbit has the vaccine, you continue to practice biosecurity precautions. This disease is not expected to go away as it is present in wildlife populations and it is very hearty and can live a long time in the environment.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS

Like all pocket pets, rabbits are very good at hiding when they get sick so if you see any of the following signs get in contact with your veterinarian immediately:

ANY BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

LETHARGY

DEFENSIVE AGGRESSION

DISINTEREST IN INTERACTION

TEETH GRINDING

CHANGES IN EATING/DRINKING

HEAD TILT

DISINTEREST IN TREATS

POOR COAT QUALITY

CHANGE IN FECES



HEALTH

COMMON ILLNESSES

Dental Problems

Because a rabbit's teeth continue to grow throughout its life, they need to be constantly worn down by grazing hay and nibbling chew toys. If a rabbit does not have the correct diet or if their teeth are not properly lined up they can grow out of control causing pain, abscess, difficulty eating, GI status, and eventually death. This is called malocclusion and can require x-rays, tooth filing, or abscess removal under anesthesia. *Symptoms include drool or saliva build-up on their face, bad breath, decreased appetite, weight loss, lumps on their face, and change in bathroom habits.*

Gastrointestinal Stasis

Rabbits have very sensitive stomachs that can become blocked. Eating a high fiber diet with lots of hay, slowly introducing new foods, proper grooming to prevent hairballs, and daily exercise that keeps the gut moving are all ways to prevent GI stasis from occurring. If your rabbit shows any signs of having a blocked gastrointestinal system, take them to the vet immediately as without treatment it can be deadly. *Symptoms include a lack of eating, lack of drinking, not defecating and/or small, stringy, misshapen droppings, lethargy, or hunched over in a secluded area.*

Urinary Tract Infections

Like many animals, rabbits can develop urinary tract infections that are painful and if left untreated can create a life-threatening blockage in the urinary tract. Prevention includes ensuring your rabbit always has a supply of fresh water and avoiding feeding any rabbits over the age of 8 months alfalfa hay or pellets. If an infection does develop, a round of antibiotics from your vet should be able to clear it up. *Symptoms include darkened or beige-colored urine, bloody urine, or frequent urination in small amounts.*

Respiratory Infections

Rabbits can easily develop respiratory infections that can turn into pneumonia. To avoid this keep your pet's cage away from drafts, clean it often, use fleece bedding, provide as large of a habitat as possible, and keep stress low. *Symptoms include sneezing, eye or nose discharge, lack of appetite, and lethargy.*



BEHAVIOR

Rabbits have a very complex hierarchy social system and communicate through a wide variety of sounds, behaviors, and body language. Below are a few of the most common sounds and behaviors you might see. For a more comprehensive list check out “The Language of Lagomorphs” at language.rabbitspeak.com.

VOCALIZATION

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Grunting	Kazoo-like sound.	<i>Anger, displeasure, or defense.</i>
Soft Teeth Chattering	Softly grinding their teeth.	<i>Pleasure or contentment, purring.</i>
Hard Teeth Chattering	Loudly grinding their teeth.	<i>Pain.</i>
Clucking	Hiccup-like sound.	<i>Content and relaxed.</i>
Shrieking	Piercing, high pitched squeal.	<i>Extreme fear or pain.</i>

BODY LANGUAGE

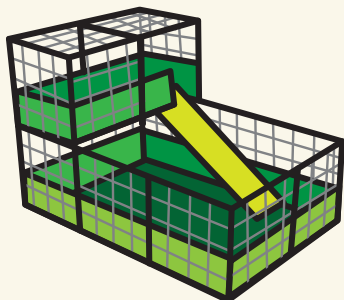
BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Binkying/Popcorning	Hopping, bouncing, leaping, and running.	<i>Happy and having fun.</i>
Flopping	Suddenly falling over on their side.	<i>Happy and relaxed.</i>
Thumping	Stomping their hind leg loudly on the ground.	<i>Annoyed, displeased, or defending their territory.</i>
Scent Marking	Rubbing their chin on things.	<i>Marking that item as their own.</i>
Mounting	Climbing on top of another rabbit.	<i>Either a sexual or dominant behavior.</i>
Nudging	Pushing on you with their nose before lowering their head.	<i>Wanting to be petted.</i>
Fighting Stance	Getting up on their hind legs and boxing with their front paws, charging, biting.	<i>Extreme annoyance or defending their territory and wanting whatever is stressing them out to leave.</i>



RABBIT SUPPLY CHECKLIST

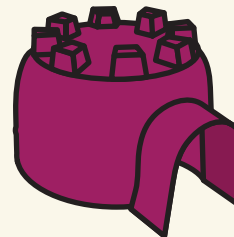
CAGE

12 square feet per rabbit minimum.



SHELTER

Rabbits like to hide in shelters when they are nervous or relaxing. Wood or grass huts, cardboard boxes, etc.



WATER BOWL



FOOD DISH

Ceramic is best to prevent chewing.



BEDDING

Fleece.



BED

A dog or cat bed, a small animal bed, or extra fleece.



FOOD

A rabbit's diet should consist of three parts: hay, greens, and pellets. MNPPR recommends Oxbow brands. Do not feed alfalfa as a staple hay to adult rabbits.



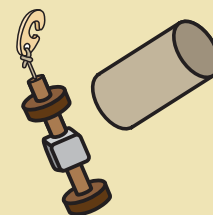
CHEW TOYS

Wood, lava, etc.

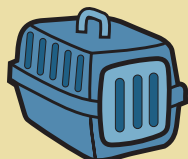


ENRICHMENT

Be sure to provide your pet with lots of fun toys. Check out our homemade toys page for ideas.



PET CARRIER



LITTER BOX

Optional.



LITTER

For the litter box. MNPPR strongly recommends avoiding all wood-based beddings due to the general sensitivity of pocket pets. Only use *unscented* paper litter.



pelleted paper



shredded paper



soft recycled paper



DISCLAIMER AND CREDITS

DISCLAIMER

All information shared by MN Pocket Pet Rescue is researched, up to date, and accurate to the best of our ability. We are not a licensed veterinary organization and do not intend to present ourselves as such. All educational material contains our best recommendations for care specific to each species. However, all animals are different and some may have unique needs. MN Pocket Pet Rescue does not assume any liability for the well-being of any animal not under our care. Always use your best judgment and follow veterinary recommendations whenever necessary. If you have any questions or find inaccurate information please contact us.

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