

Hidden Mountain Rabbitry's Rabbit Care Packet

This is a sample guide to best prepare you for caring for your new rabbit and to help make the transition as smooth as possible.

This is a fairly basic packet and is, by no means, everything that you will need to know to care for your bun for its whole life. There is a lot that you will learn as you go. It's just my hope that this packet will serve as a good guide for you.

THE BASICS:

- Please keep in mind that moving is stressful for rabbits, so for the first day put your rabbit in its new cage and leave him/her alone. Only hay and water should be offered this first day. It may take a few days for your new rabbit to settle down and start eating normally again.

- Please be careful when Googling information on rabbits. There is a lot of bad information out there written by people who don't truly know what is best for rabbits. We always recommend talking with a reputable breeder as they usually have years of knowledge and hands-on experience.

Hidden Mountain Rabbitry offers lifetime support for your rabbit, but you can also find a wealth of good information in some of the rabbit groups on Facebook.

We highly recommend staying away from The House Rabbit Society and Facebook groups that are strictly pet rabbit oriented. We are in no way implying that pet owners are bad, but in those groups, you will find a lot of people who do things just to make themselves feel better versus what is actually good for their rabbits.

- **NEVER EVER** pick your rabbit up by his/her ears. This is extremely painful and can damage the cartilage in the ears. You can pick your rabbit up by the scruff if you support the rabbit's hind end with your other hand.

Ideally, you would pick your rabbit up under the stomach (not all rabbits allow this...it takes some training), tuck the rabbit's head under your arm towards your armpit, and curl your arm around the rabbit's body like you're cradling a football.

FEEDING/WATERING:

Hidden Mountain Rabbitry sends transition feed home with each and every rabbit sold. This is just one more way that we give your new bunny its best shot at a long and healthy life.

- Sample Feed Transition Schedule: Feed $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of provided pellets once daily for 2 days. After 2 days, cut back to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup provided pellets and add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of your brand for 2 days. Slowly decrease provided pellets a little every day until rabbit is 100% on new feed.

Give free choice hay throughout the whole process.

Transition should take a minimum of one week. 10+ days is ideal. But whatever you do, **DO NOT transition to new feed all at once.** Rabbits have very delicate systems and suddenly changing feed can make them very sick. Throughout the transition, keep a close eye on your rabbit for any signs of sickness (heavy breathing, bloated stomach, not eating/drinking, etc.)

- Pellets Feeding Guide:

If your rabbit is under 5lbs at adult weight, 1/4 - 1/2 cup daily is all that is needed.

If your rabbit is 5-10lbs at adult weight, 1 cup daily is all that is needed.

If your rabbit is above 10lbs, 1 1/2 cups daily should be sufficient.

- Always have hay available (great for digestion and keeping teeth trimmed naturally).

- **Please avoid any store-bought treats as they are packed with things that aren't rabbit safe.**

- **NEVER FEED ICEBERG LETTUCE!!** It's a popular rabbit treat, but can actually be very bad for your rabbit.

- You can find a list of rabbit safe treats and medicinal herbs in a few different places:

www.facebook.com/hiddenmountainrabbity

www.riseandshinerabbity.com/2012/06/09/medicinal-herbs-for-rabbits/

www.riseandshinerabbity.com/2012/02/26/safe-food-list-for-rabbits/

- If your rabbit ever stops eating, check water first. Some water bottles get plugged, and rabbits will usually stop eating if they can't get any water.

- Apple Cider Vinegar with the "Mother" is great for rabbits! It has a long list of health benefits, such as healthy coats, reducing shedding, controls urine odor, and much more.

Mix 1-2 Tablespoons per gallon of water. I do a rotation of 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off.

- Black Oil Sunflower Seeds (BOSS), is great for keeping a rabbit's coat nice and shiny along with providing fat, protein, fiber, and Vitamin E.

This should only be fed sparingly as it is a "hot" feed.

Here at Hidden Mountain Rabbitry, we typically only feed BOSS throughout the winter months and right before a show. Each rabbit will only get a maximum of 1TBSP per day.

- Rolled Oats are a great daily supplement to feed your rabbits. You can also feed them Old Fashioned Oats if you don't have access to rolled out. But whatever you do, you never want to feed your rabbit Quick Oats.

We feed our rabbits 1TBSP of Oats daily all year round. The only time a rabbit does not get Oats is if the rabbit is overweight.

Oats are great if you need to help a rabbit gain more weight.

- Remember that hay is an essential part of your rabbit's diet. Rabbits can do fine without hay, but it's great for fiber, digestion and to keep their teeth naturally filed down.

We recommend only feeding Timothy or Grass Hay.

Rich hays such as Alfalfa are high in calcium and can do more harm than good.

- This may seem like common sense, but your rabbit will need access to **clean, fresh** water 24/7.

Here at Hidden Mountain Rabbitry, we use water bottles and an automatic watering system (depending on the time of year). Your rabbit is guaranteed to know how to use a traditional water bottle that can be found at any pet store, Tractor Supply, or Walmart. We use the water bottles that have the ball style nipples, not the barbed style.

If you bought an older rabbit from us, there is a good possibility that your rabbit is also trained to drink from the barbed style nipples and to also drink from a bowl. If you bought a younger rabbit, they are most likely only accustomed to the ball style (they will likely be trained to use the barbed style if you bought a young rabbit that was born between May and November).

TOYS/EXERCISE/SOCIALIZATION:

- Rabbits are very social creatures, but rarely get along with other rabbits. Your rabbit will need love and attention from you so he/she doesn't get depressed.

- Exercise is important for good mental health, and if you have your rabbit inside, it can be easily litter trained. We don't have much experience with litter training, so I recommend looking for articles online or posting in some rabbit-oriented groups on Facebook.

-Toys are also great for rabbits and they can be as simple or as complicated as you want them to be.

Cardboard rolls (toilet paper/paper towel rolls), pinecones, and wood blocks (made from untreated woods) are only a few examples of safe toys. Walmart or any pet store will also have toys you can pick from.

HOUSING:

- **ALWAYS** make sure your rabbit's living environment is clean!!!

- Wire cages are best for rabbits as long as they have a resting mat (found at Tractor Supply or pet stores), ceramic tiles (found at Lowe's), or even cardboard. If they don't have a resting area of some sort, they may get sore hocks.

- If you have wooden hutches, you must work hard to keep the hutch clean and dry. They can develop urine scald which comes from them sitting in dirty cages and it requires a lot of extra care to treat.

- If your rabbit is outside, make sure that it is dry and sheltered from sun, wind, rain, and snow.

- When considering bedding, you want to steer clear of Cedar. Cedar bedding can cause all kinds of skin problems and respiratory issues.

Here at Hidden Mountain Rabbitry we prefer chopped straw, but we also use shredded paper and in the past we've used pine chips and shavings.

GROOMING:

- Keep your rabbit's nails trimmed regularly. I trim a minimum of once a month and use toe nail clippers.

There are YouTube videos to show you how to trim nails.

- Bathing your rabbit is extremely stressful for him/her and should **only** be done in an emergency situation.

Your rabbit will be able to keep itself clean without any help so long as it's healthy and its living environment is kept clean.

If you ever feel like your rabbit needs a little cleaning, you can spot clean by using baby wipes.

If your rabbit has the plush, velvet fur (Rex or Mini Rex), you never ever want to get the fur wet (especially if intending to show the rabbit down the road). Water will ruin the rex fur.

DISEASE/FIRST AID:

Most rabbit ailments can be treated at home. Vet visits are stressful for rabbits, and in all honesty, if it can't be treated at home or it's bad enough to need a vet, then it's most likely too late.

Rabbits are also considered "exotic" pets, so most of your "normal" vets can't treat them.

Here are some basic first aid things you can keep in mind to keep your rabbit healthy and to avoid an outrageously expensive vet bill.

- If your rabbit has wounds you can use Blu-Kote, Vetericyn, or even just plain old Neosporin (the kind **without** the pain killer).

- How to treat Coccidiosis: The Coccidiosis parasite is naturally living in your rabbit and if it flares up, can cause death. It very rarely presents with outside symptoms. Because of this, I do a preventative treatment in the Spring and Fall. With an outbreak, you may notice some discomfort, rabbits not as eager about eating, and they may appear sunken in around hips. Coccidiosis is EXTREMELY contagious, so all rabbits must be treated.

Corid is a liquid or powdered medicine that can be found at Tractor Supply or other farm store. I have only ever used the liquid version.

Mix 1 teaspoon of Corid per gallon of water every day for 5 days. It will need to be mixed fresh every 24 hours.

Corid is starting to become ineffective as a treatment though, so we recently started using Di-Methox which was prescribed by our vet. Use 10mL of Di-Methox per gallon of water every day for 9 days. Re-treat again in 3 weeks. Water needs to be mixed fresh again every day like with the Corid.

- Always keep baby gas drops on hand. If you notice your rabbit has a bloated/swollen stomach, give it one full dropper of baby gas drops a few times a day until bloating goes down. Gas drops are also good for helping with blockages.

- Snot is very rarely a good sign in rabbits.

Rabbits do sneeze on occasion, and they do get allergies just like we do, but sneezing accompanied by snot is usually a sign of something more.

Green snot is typically allergies or a sign that something is caught in your rabbit's nose.

You should quarantine and watch closely to make sure that your rabbit does not get worse, and also keep an eye on your other rabbits to make sure that it's nothing contagious.

White snot is never good. It almost always indicates Pasteurella (which is similar to an upper respiratory infection). It's another one of those pesky diseases that almost every rabbit has been exposed to at one point or another. Most will never show signs, though.

If your rabbit shows white snot, you need to quarantine immediately and follow strict quarantine procedures.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for Pasteurella. You can treat the symptoms, but your rabbit will always be a carrier that will spread it to other rabbits.

If you want to be certain about what your rabbit has, do a search for PavLabs and request a kit so you can send in a nasal swab for testing. There are other treatable conditions associated with white snot, but the only way to know for sure is to test.

- Choke usually presents with green liquid coming from the mouth and nose along with the rabbit gasping for air.

There is a rabbit Heimlich maneuver you can perform!

A few different methods:

1. "Hold the rabbit firmly, providing ample support for head and neck. With their nose pointing downward, firmly and gently apply pressure upwards against the diaphragm. Make a smooth movement that starts mid abdomen and sweeps upward toward their ribcage. This will apply pressure against the lungs, and by using the force of that air trying to get out, dislodge the item in the trachea. Having the buns's head pointed down will help it not fall right back into place again." - Stephan Flores
2. "Choking episodes fortunately are rare, but if they occurred, I'd probably recommend thoracic compressions (slap both sides of the chest simultaneously, causing exhalation of air rapidly, like a cough). Bunny thorax expands side to side, not front to back, so side compressions are best, and relatively safe. Hope this helps." - Mark Burgess DVM
3. "Personally not fond of this even though I have done it on a choking bunny. I do think there is danger of doing more harm than good with this method." Centrifugal Swing. "I have had more success with back "pounding" with a cupped palm, while bunny is held with head lower than torso, to dislodge food. Where the real problem lays is not in the stuck piece of pellet or hay or whatever but in the instant and copious amount of mucus produced by the choking rabbit. This needs to be suctioned out fast and the only way to do that is with your mouth. I have saved three buns now by alternating "pounding" with suction." - Lisa. B

When in doubt, search for videos on YouTube that demonstrate the rabbit Heimlich.

- And don't forget about this extremely helpful link!

There are so many ways to treat rabbits naturally without drugs and medication. This is, by far, the best list I've found.

www.riseandshinerabbitry.com/2012/06/09/medicinal-herbs-for-rabbits/

The most important thing to remember is to love and enjoy your new rabbit! Please don't forget that if you ever need to give up your rabbit, I will take the rabbit back no questions asked. (No refunds though.)

You can always get a hold of me through the Facebook page or website. I am available anytime to help you with any questions or problems you may have with your rabbit.

www.facebook.com/hiddenmountainrabbitry

www.hiddenmountainrabbitry.weebly.com

I hope this packet has been helpful for you and I wish you the very best with your new rabbit!! Again, please don't hesitate to reach out if you need help with anything!

-Emily Hostetter

Owner of Hidden Mountain Rabbitry