

## **Rabbit Housing**

### **Cages and Accessories**

Cages should be at least 2 ft x 2 ft for small rabbits. They should have plenty of room to move around and stretch out with areas for food and water. If you have more than one rabbit, larger cages are required.

Wire cages with plastic bottoms are best. Plastic-bottomed cages tend to last longer as they do not rust, and wire bottoms can be very painful to bunny feet. Treat wire cages with vinegar, as the galvanized wire is potentially toxic to rabbits.

Bedding should consist of shredded newspaper or hay. Litter boxes should have either a recycled paper product (Carefresh or Yesterday's News) or corn cob. Wood shavings can cause liver and respiratory illnesses, so we do not recommend them for any pet. Clay litters expand in the stomach and can cause gastrointestinal blockages, so we never recommend clay litter for rabbits, guinea pigs, or other small furry friends.

Water bottles are the easiest for keeping clean, fresh water available for rabbits. However, if the bottles are outdoors, they often grow algae. Clean bottles weekly with a mild dish soap, rinsing well before refilling with filtered or bottled water. If algae problems develop, let the bottle soak in a solution of bleach water (1 part bleach to 6 parts water). Rinse the bottle several times to removing the bleach before giving it back to your rabbit.

### **Keeping Cool**

Rabbits are very heat sensitive, and should not be in weather above 85° F without a way to stay cool. Outside rabbits will naturally dig a cool home for themselves underground, so this should NOT be discouraged.

You can set up a shaded area that has plenty of ventilation (to prevent buildup of ammonia smells from urine) and a mister. Do not allow the water to spray directly onto the rabbits. You do not want the area too wet -- just enough mist to cool the air. Be sure to raise any cords so that the rabbits cannot chew on them. You can also get a box fan that doubles as a swamp cooler at Home Depot for about \$100, but these work best in small areas and during the dry summer months (not the monsoon season.)

Setup 2-3 frozen gallon jugs of water around for the rabbits to lie against. This is a great, inexpensive way to keep rabbits cool. You will need to check these jugs daily several times a day, and change them out with fresh jugs as they will melt quickly during summer.

### **Exercise and Play**

Rabbits should be let out of their cages at least 3-4 hours daily for exercise. You can let them hop around inside a small room of your house, but be careful of carpet, furniture, and electrical cords, as they have a natural tendency to chew on everything.

It is best to wrap electrical cords with plastic cord protectors (several layers work best) or use wood panels to cove outlets and cords. You can use cardboard boxes as well, though rabbits will chew on them and you will need to replace them regularly.

Rabbits are prey animals, meaning that they are food for predators such as hawks, owls and dogs. If you let your rabbit play outside, provide shelter for protection from predators. Dogs, cats, and rabbits can get along, however you never want to leave a rabbit unsupervised with a dog or cat.