

Living with Rabbits

Have you ever considered a rabbit for a pet?

Rabbits are really, really cute!

- *Rabbits come in all shapes, sizes, and colors*

Bunnies have up ears or lop ears. They can be active or lazy, friendly or aloof. Each individual rabbit has its own special personality.

- *Lifespan*

Rabbits can live to be 12 years old, and they can be healthy and active well into their senior years.

- *Communication*

Rabbits are unique. They do not bark or make other sounds. They often communicate fear or warning by thumping their feet. A bunny that enjoys petting will make a soft purring sound by rubbing its teeth together. Rabbits mark everything as theirs by rubbing their chins on it. This is a scent we cannot detect. It is highly amusing to watch your rabbit chin your shoes, your furniture, even you!

- *Health*

Rabbits need to be spayed/neutered. As with all companion animals this allows them to relax and bond with their families. It eliminates many unwanted territorial behaviors and improves litter box habits as well as eliminating overpopulation and unwanted litters. It also increases their lifespan by preventing certain cancers that are more common after the age of five.

- *Litter box training*

Rabbits are easily trained to use a litter box. If their box is maintained and clean they have little odor.



- *Housing*

Rabbits need to be housed indoors. An inexpensive pen can be built to your size restrictions with a tarp, carpet, and wire storage cube panels. Wild rabbits live in protected areas or underground. Your rabbit needs to be comfortable, protected, and part of your life. **An outdoor hutch does not provide shelter from the weather or predators.**

- *Exercise*

Rabbits need exercise and interaction with you every day. They love toys. Inexpensive or free ones are plentiful. An upside down cardboard box with holes in both ends makes a perfect rabbit "garage." They climb through it, sleep inside it, and chew it up. Stuffed toys (without eyes they can remove and swallow), toilet paper tubes, and hard plastic baby toys all make great rabbit fun.

- *Nutrition*

Rabbits require free-choice hay to maintain digestive health. Most often the hay is put on top of the litter in their box. They are perfectly content using the box for both functions. This makes it extra important to change the box as needed to provide fresh hay at all times. Rabbit diet is comprised of a limited amount of pellets, unlimited amounts of hay and a selection of greens daily. Always have fresh water available.

- *Digging and chewing*

Rabbits love to dig and chew. It is recommended that you "rabbit proof" the area your rabbit will be free in. Electrical cords can be covered. Digging corners can be covered with a carpet square. If you provide proper toys for digging and chewing activities it will be much easier to teach your rabbit to respect your areas.

- *Social habits*

Rabbits are social and enjoy the company of people and other animals. A bonded pair of rabbits are absolutely darling as they groom and care for each other. Many rabbits live peacefully with cats, gentle dog breeds, and guinea pigs.

- *Handling*

Rabbits are prey animals in nature making them timid with rough or uncertain handling. They are happiest when their feet are on solid ground and few enjoy being

carried around. This makes them a questionable choice for small children. Rabbits prefer you to sit on the floor so they can play with you or just sit quietly for petting.

- *Medical considerations*

Rabbits are considered an exotic in the world of animal medicine. They need to see a veterinarian who is specially trained. Unlike other companion animals, rabbits do not need vaccinations and are not susceptible to, nor carriers of common animal illnesses. They do need to be seen annually for a general physical and dental exam. Their teeth continue to grow throughout their lives and need to be monitored for proper wear. Rabbits also need regular nail trims.

- *Family time*

Extracurricular activities provide socializing for rabbits and their families and help strengthen the bond, build confidence, and provide exercise for everyone.

- *Rabbit agility*

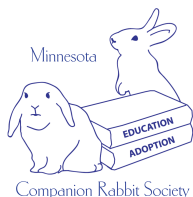
MCRS has a large Rabbit Agility program, which teaches rabbits and their handlers to work together as a team over intricate obstacle courses.

- *Hoppy Hour*

Hoppy Hour is offered at several locations. This is a social time for the rabbits to play with each other and work the room for attention from all the doting families.

- *MCRS*

MCRS has a large number of volunteers and their rabbits who participate in educational events at major festivals as well as many smaller events. We have an active therapy team who visit seniors in care centers, schools for special needs, and health care events by invitation. The large network of rabbit owners involved with MCRS share information through our activities, events, and our website. If you have a question, problem, or new idea, you are never alone.



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The Minnesota Companion Rabbit Society (MCRS) is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization whose primary goals are education and adoption. By educating the public and assisting humane organizations, MCRS works to reduce the number of unwanted rabbits and improve the lives of companion rabbits. Through adoption, MCRS helps rabbits from area shelters and animal control facilities find permanent homes.