



New Rabbit? How To Help Bunny Settle In



Things to get ready: (tick list)

- Carrier** (for transporting rabbit home and to veterinary surgery etc).

Cat boxes are ideal, although ensure it does not smell of cats as this will scare the rabbit

- Cage and Exercise Run**

If using a second-hand hutch ensure the previous occupant did not die suddenly as this could indicate VHD, and the virus could be passed on



- Newspaper**

For lining cage/bed to absorb any urine

- Bedding**

Straw or hay. This should be swapped for fresh bedding two to three times a week

- Bowls** (water and food)

These should be heavy ceramic that cannot be tipped over or nibbled to create sharp edges. Metal water bowls that attach to the bars to prevent tipping are also available. Water bottles are recommended to reduce risk of contamination.



- Hay**

Plenty of Timothy or Meadow Hay. This should make up 75% of bunny's diet

- Pelleted food**

This prevents selective feeding and essential for a balanced diet



- Fresh food**

Dark green vegetables and herbs, as well as the occasional carrot are most bunnies' favourites!



- Toys**

Many different types of rabbit toys are available to suit different personalities! You do not need to spend very much- bunnies can even find flowerpots, an old scarf or empty toilet rolls fun! A digging box is also a good idea if you want to discourage digging in undesirable places!



- Litter Tray and Litter** (if using)

Please ask if you would like advice on litter training your bunny



It is advisable to read up on rabbits beforehand so you know what to expect.

These days there are many resources available for rabbit owners, and plenty on house-rabbits if your rabbit is going to join you indoors.

When you get your bunny home:

- Firstly prepare the housing so that it is ready for the rabbit when it arrives, including putting the food and water in place.
- Put your rabbit into its housing immediately upon arriving home, and leave it alone to calm down and become familiar with its new environment for a few hours. Moving to a new home is stressful for rabbits, particularly if they are young and have left their mother and litter-mates for the first time.
- Once it has settled you can approach its cage or housing and talk to bunny so that it gets used to you without becoming anxious. This is the first step in building your relationship.
- After repeating this a few times open the house or allow access from the cage to the exercise run and allow the rabbit to come out and explore if it would like.
- 24 hours after arriving, your bunny should be settled in its new home and will be starting to become familiar with you, and, as you have introduced yourself slowly, to trust you! This is the time to begin handling.
- Rabbits do not really like being off the floor, and may struggle when lifted. Support your rabbit properly, NEVER picking it up by the ears. Perseverance is the key, as the more you handle your rabbit the more it will become used to it. Being able to get close to your rabbit is essential for carrying out the checks that you need to make as part of being a responsible rabbit owner, and ensuring the health and welfare of your pet, (See over sheet)

- To begin with limit yourself to stroking bunny's head and cheeks until you are more used to each other, as this is where they are more comfortable being touched.

Checking Routine:

Bottom	Twice daily	Should be clean with dry fur. No redness, urine staining or poo present around the tail. Flystrike is an emergency
Coat	Daily	Apart from during the moult, the coat should lay flat and smoothly, feel soft and not coarse. If the coat is scurfy or sparse then a vet should be consulted. Rabbits use the inside of their paws to clean their face, if the fur here is wet or crusty this may be due to your rabbit cleaning a runny eye or nose, and a vet should be consulted.
Nose	Daily	The nose should be clean at all times. Sneezing is usually due to eye problems, and these will need addressing by a vet
Ears	Daily	Should be clean, without any wax. The bunny should not be shaking its head or scratching its ears, this is a sign of a problem.
Eyes	Daily	The eyes should look the same on both sides and not be bulging, swollen or weeping. Runny eyes can often be caused by poor teeth.
Hocks	Daily	There should be no bald areas, redness or sore areas.
Teeth	Weekly	You will be able to check the front teeth at home, by lifting up the lips. Check that the teeth line up and are nice and short, and that there are no cracked or broken incisors, bad breath or lumps around the jaws which can signal abscesses. Poor dentition can lead to a variety of further issues. Not eating for 12 hours or more is an emergency
Nails	Monthly	Can be trimmed as necessary if long. A nurse will be happy to show you how. Never trim within 5mm of quick as this will cause pain; clipping the quick will cause bleeding that may take a long time to stop.
Bodyweight	Monthly	It is important to assess whether your rabbit has lost weight, potentially a sign of illness, and to ensure they are not getting too fat which can lead to other problems.

Please phone the Practice if you have any queries, we are more than happy to help.