

# RABBIT CARE INFORMATION

**Diet FRESH VEGETABLES:** It is recommended that rabbits be fed plenty of fresh vegetables from the time that they start eating and throughout life. Feed vegetables daily. Here are a few suggestions:

- basil
- escarole
- beet greens
- mustard greens
- bok choy
- mint
- broccoli (including leaves)
- parsley
- brussel sprouts
- pea pods
- carrot & carrot tops
- peppermint leaves
- celery
- raddichio
- cilantro
- radish tops
- clover
- raspberry leaves
- collard greens
- red leaf and romaine lettuce
- dandelion greens and flowers
- watercress
- dill

**PELLETS:** Rabbits should be fed fresh, good quality pellets. If possible, purchase pellets from a feed store. If you switch from one brand of feed to another, do it gradually to avoid upsetting the rabbit's digestive system. (Many pet supply stores keep food in their warehouses for many months prior to when it is placed on their shelves and often their food is already stale.) You should not purchase more than a 6 week supply of food at a time or it will become spoiled/rancid and can cause the rabbit to stop eating. Call around until you find a feed store that will sell small quantities like 5 or 10 pounds or share purchases with a friend who has a rabbit.

Recommended analysis: Protein: 16% - 18% for young rabbits. Fiber: 18% minimum, the higher the better. Do NOT purchase a feed that is medicated (popular with breeders) or supplemented with bits of dried fruit and seed—it is VERY high in sugar and fat.

Pellets should be available 24 hours a day for rabbits under 6 months old. After 6 months of age pellets should be reduced to 1/4 cup per 5 pounds of body weight (but hay must be part of the diet, see below).

**HAY:** A constant supply of good quality hay must be available 24 hours a day. It has been documented that plenty of roughage, especially hay, will reduce problems with hair balls and other blockages, which can be deadly to rabbits. If you want your rabbit to live to his or her full life expectancy of 8 - 10 years (16 years maximum) you must provide hay. Alfalfa hay may be fed until the rabbit is 6 months old, after that age you should switch to a grass or timothy hay, or you may feed timothy hay under 6 months of age to avoid making that change. Hay is cheaply available at feed stores, and some horse stables. Placing a bunch in a litter box works well for most bunnies.

**WATER:** Fresh water should be available at all times! Change bowls and/or bottles at least once a day even if they are not totally empty! Water bottles are recommended because they are easier for the rabbit to drink from and cannot be overturned. Wash bottles frequently to remove any buildup of scum.

**MISCELLANEOUS TREATS:** One thing to avoid is sugar, as it increases the bad bacteria in their intestines and can cause disease resulting in diarrhea and loss of appetite. Most rabbits love bananas. Keep all treat amounts small! •In all cases, rabbit diets should only be altered GRADUALLY! This is especially true for young rabbits. •Housing You will get the most enjoyment from your rabbit--and visa-versa--if he/she lives in your home with you. People sometimes confine rabbits to a life in an outdoor hutch because they do not realize what wonderful house pets they can be. With a little training, your rabbit can be a delightful INDOOR companion.

**CAGES IN GENERAL:** Rabbits were not designed to live on wire floors. Living on wire floors can cause a condition known as sore hock to develop on their feet. Cages with wire floors were designed for the convenience of breeders who were looking for an easy way to clean up after the most rabbits in the least amount of time. Cages with wire floors must have a piece of plywood, cardboard, Plexiglas or carpet that the rabbit can sit and lay on. If you try carpet and the rabbit chews it, immediately replace it with something else.

**TRAINING:** An untrained rabbit can and probably should be kept in a cage or confined to a room while you're not home to supervise, but they must be let out for at least several hours each day, both to exercise, and to have social interaction with you and/or your other pets. Also, the more they are let out, the faster they will learn proper behavior through discipline. Younger rabbits tend to get into more mischief and must be watched and disciplined more closely. As time goes on and their behavior improves, more freedom may be given. If you don't want to confine your rabbit to a cage, a clean, rabbit-proofed room may be used. Rooms that are generally easy to rabbit-proof are the bathroom, laundry room, kitchen, and bedroom. Eventually, when you feel you can trust your rabbit, free run of the house can be given. But first, you must

inspect every room extremely carefully for any exposed wires and other dangerous objects (like plants) that could be harmful to your rabbit. You may have to deny access to one or more rooms if bunny proofing is difficult or impossible (such as a computer room). But the more space your rabbit has, the more delightful you will find him/her as a pet and companion. See rabbit proofing section for information on how to rabbit proof your house.

**RABBITS OUTSIDE:** It is a joy to watch rabbits play outside, but certain precautions must be taken: • Do not let your rabbit onto grass that has been sprayed with fertilizers or pesticides. Always supervise your rabbit while outside. It only takes a few seconds for a dog to jump a fence and attack or frighten the rabbit (literally) to death. • Under no circumstances should a rabbit be left outside after dark, even in the middle of cities. Predators such as possums, raccoons, coyotes, dogs, and occasionally even a cat will attack a small rabbit. Even if you have an enclosure that is very secure, a rabbit can die of fight while a predator attempts to break in - even if the attempt is unsuccessful.

#### Litter Box Training

Hay is highly recommended as the most foolproof method for the litterbox training. Simply put a layer of litter in the bottom of a large kitty litter box and nice bunch of hay on top of that. The rabbits will sit in the box and eat the hay in the front and go the bathroom in the back (it is very natural for them to graze and go at the same time and they usually take to it immediately). If this method is used, do not put hay in any other place! This will only confuse your rabbit as to where he/she is supposed to go. Use organic dust-free kitty litters such as Cat Country, Care Fresh, or Nature Fresh. Not only are they better for your rabbit, but they vacuum easier, and are easier to dispose. **DO NOT USE CLAY LITTERS**--some rabbits like to eat litter, and clay can be harmful. **NEVER** use a clumping litter made for cats--it will clump in the bunny's digestive tract if eaten. Whichever material you choose, make sure to change the litterbox regularly to keep it clean. (During training, you may want a slightly 'dirty' litter box to help teach the rabbit where he/she is supposed to go. If you are constantly cleaning it, they'll think that it's supposed to stay clean and won't use it. Also, the scent in the box is another attraction for them to continue to use it). Confine the rabbit to a small area (without carpeting is preferred) with the litter box. Do not give the rabbit access to any other room until he/she is always urinating in the litterbox. Stay in the training rooms for as long as possible to observe its behavior. If the rabbit has an accident outside of the box, wipe it up immediately with a paper towel and then place the rabbit in the litter box. This will teach the rabbit that the urine belongs **IN THE BOX!** If the rabbit deposits any droppings on the floor, immediately pick both the rabbit and the droppings up and put them into the litterbox. Pet your bunny while he/she is sitting in the box and say good bunny. When you have to leave, put the rabbit back into its cage or enclosure with the litterbox. When the rabbit is using the litterbox all of the time, you can then let them out into other rooms.

#### Rabbit Proofing Your House

**WIRES:** Rabbits love to chew electrical wires, telephone wires, TV antenna wires, etc. These wires can be covered by a plastic tubing available at most hardware or electronic stores (spiral cable wrap at Radio shack for example). This tubing goes by several different names including polycon tubing, plumber's tubing, vacuum tubing and "stuff to cover my wire" and comes in various sizes, thicknesses, and types of plastic (some are hard while others are soft and easily bendable). Some wires can be taped up on the wall and the tubing won't be necessary, but check for hidden places that the rabbit may be able to get to that you can't see such as under a bed or behind furniture.

**CORNERS:** Some rabbits will chew on the corners of wood, walls, or windows. This is one reason to be patient and observe them before they can be allowed the run of the house. If they find a favorite spot to chew, you can purchase hard plastic corner protectors from hardware stores to affix over the area.

**FURNITURE:** For items like chair legs, kitchen cabinets, baseboards, etc., a product called Bitter Apple (available at pet stores) can be applied to the area being chewed. This product has an extremely awful flavor and should deter any further chewing. Unfortunately, for some reason, a few rabbits may like the taste. In this case, try Tabasco or another hot sauce. Blocks, baskets, boxes, and other toys (see Toys section) should also be kept around the house to give the rabbits something to chew rather than your furniture. Just make sure that the material is natural and has not been painted, stained, varnished, or treated with any chemicals (no plywood, press boards particle board, pressure treated wood, etc.).

### Toys

A bored rabbit is a destructive rabbit. Digging or chewing the carpet and chewing forbidden objects are just two examples. Whether inside the cage or out, your rabbit needs plenty of toys to keep him/her from getting bored. Following are a few examples of suitable toys:

- Toilet paper rolls & paper towel rolls
- Rubber balls (unless they chew on them)
- Cardboard boxes with openings or doors cut in the sides

- Untreated straw baskets of any size
- Natural wood blocks (no pressure treated wood, plywood, particle board, press board, etc.)
- Canning jar rings
- Rolled oats box with ends cut off
- Rice mats (available at Pier I Imports)
- Soft drink can with a few pebbles inside for noise
- Wire ball with bell inside (available at most pet stores in the cat section)
- Baby toys such as rattles and giant key rings
- Hanging bird toys with bells
- Things to jump up on (they like high places where they can look around)
- Cardboard molds for concrete posts available at hardware stores

### Discipline

**NEVER HIT A RABBIT!** Not only is it cruel but they don't get the message anyway. They can also become very angry and aggressive if provoked. When you find your rabbit displaying undesirable behavior, try one or more of the following:

- "NO"
- Thump your foot like a fellow rabbit
- Whistle loudly
- Shout loudly

### Rabbit Behavior

**BUNNY HOP/DANCE:** A sign of pure joy and happiness. This "dancing" includes leaping and/or spinning in the air, racing around, etc.

**CHINNING:** Rabbits rub their chins (which contain scent glands) on items to get their scent on them. This indicates that the items belong to them and also defines their territory. The scent is undetectable to humans.

**THUMPING OR STOMPING:** The bunny is either frightened, mad, or sensing danger (real or imagined).

**TEETH GRINDING:** Soft grinding indicates contentment and is usually heard when petting the rabbit. Loud grinding can indicate pain and is usually heard during an illness.

**CIRCLING YOUR FEET:** Usually indicates sexual behavior (even when neutered) but basically means "I love you".

**PLAYING:** Rabbits like to push or toss objects around. They may also race madly around the house, jump on and off the couch, and act like a child that had too much sugar.

**GRUNTS:** Usually angry - watch out or you could be bitten.

**SPRAYING:** Unneutered males will mark female rabbits and their territory in this manner. Unspayed females can also spray.

**TERRITORIAL DROPPINGS:** Droppings that are not in a pile, but scattered, are signs that this territory belongs to the rabbit. This will sometimes occur upon entering a new environment or if another rabbit is brought into the house, and may be temporary or ongoing. Droppings in piles indicates that the rabbit needs more litter box training.

**DON'T TOUCH MY STUFF:** Some rabbits do not like when you rearrange their cage as you clean and may grunt, charge or even nip you when you try. They are creatures of habit and once they get things just right, they like them to remain that way.

**SHRILL SCREAM:** Hurt or dying.

**FALSE PREGNANCY:** Even though a rabbit may not be pregnant, unspayed females may sometimes build a nest and pull hair from their chest and stomach to line the nest. They may even stop eating as usually occurs the day before they give birth.

**BITING:** Rabbits usually do not bite, but if one does, it must be stopped immediately. If a rabbit bites, it is usually not because it hates you, there are many reasons within a rabbit's social structure that bring about a bite. A rabbit may also accidentally bite while tugging at your pant leg. Whatever the reason, if you get nipped, you must immediately let out a shrill cry. Rabbits do this when they are hurt. Since they usually do not intend to hurt you, they will be surprised that you have cried out and will usually stop the behavior after a few times.

**RABBITS AND OTHER NON-RABBIT PETS:** Rabbits can get along great with other pets. Cats, dogs and rabbits often become good friends. Cats and rabbits often naturally get along fine. Contrary to expectations, the rabbit is often quite dominant over the cat. Careful control of your dog is necessary during early introductions.

**COMPANIONS:** Rabbits love the company of other rabbits. If you have one bunny, think about getting him/her a companion (males are usually good with only females, but females can be friends with males or other females). Sometimes when 2 rabbits meet, it is love at first sight. Most of the time however, it takes longer for 2 rabbits to become friends. The easiest combination to bond is neutered male/spayed female.

## Grooming

**SHEDDING:** Because of their constant shedding, rabbits need to be brushed at least weekly. In addition to removing loose hair, this weekly brushing session helps prepare them for the multiple daily brushings that they must undergo during their heavy sheddings. Rabbits will shed in different ways some rabbits will take a couple of weeks or more to lose their old coat, while others will lose theirs all in one day. These rabbits cannot be neglected once they start shedding. A very large percentage of the hair can often be removed by just pulling it out with your hands. Most rabbits are afraid of the water; don't bathe them as they can break their back if they fight wildly. Fine tooth "flea combs" made for cats work very well to comb out loose rabbit hair.

Bald spots on rabbits are quite common when they are shedding. If you notice bald spots during your rabbit's shedding season, do not be alarmed, the hair will begin to grow back within a week or two.

**NAILS:** Rabbits' nails can grow to be very long and sharp and can be uncomfortable for both you and the rabbit. If the rabbit has light colored nails, the quick (the portion of the nail containing the blood) is highly visible making them very easy to trim - just clip the nail right before the quick.

Dark colored nails make it much more difficult to see the quick, and therefore, harder to trim the nails. A scissors or guillotine type nail clipper available from any pet or pet supply store is suitable. People are often afraid to clip the nails for the fear that they will cut the quick and draw blood. If bleeding occurs, it can be stopped by one of the following methods: apply flour to the area by dabbing it on with your fingers and applying pressure (the flour will help clot the blood), apply pressure to the nail with a cotton ball, or use a product called Qwik Stop which is available at most pet shops. Your veterinarian will also clip nails for you. They should be checked every 4 to 6 weeks. **NEVER DECLAW A RABBIT**--it is unsafe, inhumane, and is not recommended for rabbits (or any other animal for that matter).

**ANGORA & OTHER LONG HAIR RABBITS:** These types of rabbits are truly wonderful to look at but require MUCH MORE attention than short haired rabbits. They must be groomed daily to prevent matting of the fur and, of course, hairballs.

Grooming also provides an excellent opportunity to give your rabbit a quick overall check-up (see health check section). This includes checking teeth for misalignment (malocclusion), eyes and nose for any discharge, condition of fur and skin, etc.

## Health

**RED URINE:** Rabbits' urine varies in color from clear to yellow to brown to bright red. This is usually not a cause for alarm UNLESS there are additional signs such as sitting and straining to urinate, loss of appetite or a temperature. When you see red urine, don't panic; just keep your eyes open for other signs that may indicate a problem. The red color will usually be gone in a day or two but can last for a much longer time. Actual blood in the urine would look like urine with red specks. If you're in doubt, don't risk your bunny's health -- have your vet test for blood in the urine.

**HAIRBALLS:** Rabbits shed their hair every three months alternating heavy and light. Because rabbits are very clean and are constantly grooming themselves and/or their companions, they ingest a great deal of hair. Over time, this hair may build up and block the stomach exit causing the rabbit to starve to death while its stomach appears fat. Unlike cats, rabbits cannot throw up a hairball when it threatens their health; this is the largest cause of problems and deaths in rabbits! The first sign of a hairball or blockage of any kind (such as carpet) is a loss of appetite. Their droppings will also get smaller and will often be strung together or will contain hairs or pieces of carpet fiber. The rabbit's stomach will then become bloated as it loses weight on its way to starving to death.

To prevent blockages, regular brushing and combing is a must. Also, feed unlimited hay EVERY DAY (do not give the small compressed hay blocks as the fiber is too small and therefore ineffective), plenty of exercise (in order to help the hair that they do ingest to pass through the system), and a papaya, dried papaya, papaya pills, pineapple, or dried pineapple (these all contain papain/bromelain which help break down the hair) are all very important in preventing hairballs. Petromalt, Femalt, or Laxatone (all available in most pet stores) may also be used as hairball preventative, especially during heavy molting, but should be used carefully as they may cause diarrhea.

Treating the first signs of a blockage is controversial, but the first thing to do is to get them to eat as much roughage (hay, tree branches, blackberry vines (stickers and all), etc.) as they will plus plenty of GREEN veggies. And remove all pelleted food. As mentioned before, blockages can be VERY DANGEROUS--if it persists, please take your bunny to a qualified vet.

**SPAY/NEUTER:** Why spay/neuter? 80 to 95% of unspayed female rabbits will get uterine or ovarian cancer between two and five years of age, and a very high rate of males will get testicular cancer. Spaying or

neutering your rabbit will give him/her the potential life span of eight to twelve (or more) years of age. Also, upon reaching sexual maturity, rabbits will often display such undesirable behavior as spraying, chewing, fighting with other rabbits, etc. In most cases, neutering totally eliminates this behavior. When the time comes to have your rabbit neutered, it is **EXTREMELY** important to make sure that your vet is knowledgeable and experienced with the procedure and with rabbits in general. A rabbit neuter or spay can be dangerous or even life threatening if improper technique or general anesthesia is used. If the rabbit is older, tests may need to be done to assess liver and kidney function prior to surgery. Most vets that treat "exotics" will treat rabbits. Please question the vet carefully about their experience with rabbits before you take you bunny.

**TEETH:** Rabbit teeth are constantly growing. This is why they are always chewing--to help keep the teeth the proper size. Some rabbits however, have misaligned or "maloccluded" teeth which means that their teeth do not wear down properly and continue to grow. A rabbit with this condition needs to have his/her teeth clipped periodically so that they can eat. Your vet can do this for you or can show you how to do it yourself. Very rarely, a bunny will need to have his/her front teeth removed due to extreme malocclusion--these rabbits do just fine as long as you cut up their food into small pieces. The misalignment of the front teeth can be easily seen, but the back teeth may need to be checked by your vet. One indication -4- that the back teeth may be a problem is a wet chin that is caused by drooling. Teeth should be checked at each grooming session.

**CEDAR & PINE SHAVINGS:** Contrary to popular belief, these are **VERY BAD** for rabbits and other animals. "Aromatic hydrocarbons from cedar and pine bedding materials can induce biosynthesis and hepatic microsomal enzymes which are known to cause liver disease" (quoted from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services guide for the care of laboratory animals). Use organic kitty litter (Carefresh, Cat Country, Nature Fresh, etc.) for your rabbit's litter box, it can be recycled into your veggie garden! **DO NOT USE CORN COB FOR RABBITS**--if they eat it, it can get lodged in their stomach and create a serious blockage. **NEVER** use the scoopable Mushable powdery cat litter--rabbits can eat this and become extremely, even fatally, ill.

**SNEEZING:** Sneezing may or may not be a sign of trouble. If sneezing is accompanied by a runny nose and/or runny eyes, a vet should be seen immediately, especially if there is also a loss of appetite. If the rabbit is sneezing but has no other symptoms and is eating well, it may be allergies or even nothing at all, but keep a close eye out for the development of any other symptoms and keep in touch with your rabbit vet.

**PARASITES:** Rabbits can get the common dog or cat flea, but be very careful about the products you use to treat the home and yard as well as the products you use on your rabbit. If the yard is treated, do not allow your rabbit on it for at least a week and then water it thoroughly to wash off any residual chemicals. If use of chemicals is absolutely necessary, look for products that are safe for young kittens.

A mite that lives on the skin dander of rabbits, will cause your rabbit to scratch, and if left untreated, will eventually cause thick crusts to develop on the rabbit's body. Your vet can administer a drug called ivermectin to eliminate this problem.

Ear mites cause rabbits to shake their heads frequently and scratch their ears. If left untreated, a middle ear infection could develop which may cause a problem with their balance. Ivermectin is also recommended for ear mites.

An internal parasite called coccidia can infect the small intestines. Symptoms can be a loss of appetite to chronic diarrhea and occasionally death. Testing for coccidia is as easy as taking a fecal sample to your vet during the rabbit's annual check-up.

If your rabbit is free of any of these parasites, it is unlikely that they will get them as long as they are kept inside, their home is clean and they are not exposed to other animals who may carry these parasites.

**AMOXICILLIN DANGER:** **NEVER** let a vet give your rabbit amoxicillin (an antibiotic that is pink in color and smells like bubble gum). Amoxicillin and other forms of penicillin kill the "good" bacteria in the rabbit's intestines and can cause other organs to malfunction. There are other antibiotics that can safely be given to rabbits such as Chloromycetin, Tetracycline and Baytril. Occasionally a rabbit cannot tolerate an antibiotic (signs are a loss of appetite, diarrhea, and others) and another may have to be tried instead. If your vet says that just this once amoxicillin will be okay or that they have no other antibiotic to dispense--**FIND ANOTHER VET!**

**SURGERIES:** Food and water should **NOT** be removed from a rabbit the evening before surgery! Ignore this direction if given by the front office staff and discuss with your vet if the instructions come from him/her. Not only do you want to do the right thing for your rabbit but you need to educate him/her for future rabbits this vet may see. Rabbits cannot throw up and possible vomiting is the reason that food is

removed from cats and dogs. It is harmful to rabbits and causes a longer recovery time if food and/or water is denied them. The rabbit should also be tempted to eat as soon as it awakes from surgery to assist with the recovery process. After surgery, offer lots of things you would normally consider "treats" in order to help them begin eating again.

### **Health Checkups**

A simple checkup, as outlined below, should be given to your rabbit every 6 to 8 weeks. This does NOT take the place of a full physical exam which should also be given by your vet once a year (more if the rabbit has a condition that requires monitoring). Regular checkups are necessary for the health and longevity of your rabbit.

**EYES:** Rabbits can sometimes have a little bit of crust-like substance in the corners of their eyes; this is nothing to worry about and can be wiped clean with a cotton ball or tissue. If the eyes have a pussy discharge, the rabbit will need to be taken to a vet immediately. Other than that, their eyes should be clear and bright with no sign of discharge from their tear ducts. Note: The smaller dwarf breeds seem to have eyes that protrude more than their larger cousins. You will often find a strange substance that floats on the surface of their eyeballs. Because of the shape of their eyes, they are frequently unable to wash this material (hair and moisture) and you will need to remove it for them. NEVER use human eye drops such as Visine! If necessary, you can purchase a hypo-allergenic eye wash or Artificial Tears from the drug store and use ONE drop of that in each eye to wash the material to the corner. Often, a tissue or cotton swab can be used to gently lift the material off of the eye without using an eye wash (this should be done daily).

**EARS:** Check inside each ear for wax or dirt build-up. If ears do not appear clean, see a vet. **NOSE:** Look for moisture or discharge around the nasal cavities or for a snotty substance inside. Even if you don't hear sneezing, if you see a slightly moist nose, check the insides of each front leg for dirty spots. Rabbits will wipe their nose with the insides of their front paws and can easily mask the early signs of pasteurella (snuffles) problems.

**TEETH:** Make sure that they are properly aligned and not maloccluded. The top teeth should be directly in line with the bottom teeth with a very slight over-bite. If the top teeth are extremely long and actually hang over the bottom, it is likely that your rabbit is maloccluded and will need higher teeth clipped (see Teeth under Health section above). **CHIN:** Check the underside of their chin for a waxy type of buildup from their scent gland. If you find this condition, you can try to wash it off with warm water, but it will often be mixed in with their hair and will need to be cut off with cuticle scissors. Rabbits that often drink from bowls can sometimes get dermatitis, so also look for redness and irritation.

**FEET:** Check the soles of each rear foot for worn hair and for sores. This is usually the result of living on a wire floor but can also be due to an overweight rabbit sitting on hard surfaces. It is very easy for pasteurella or other infections to start in these sores so see a vet right away if they are found!

**NAILS:** Check and trim nails as needed (see Nails under Grooming section). If you find a broken nail, make sure it has healed properly since these are prone to infection. It is common for a rabbit to break a nail and it is usually nothing to worry about unless it becomes infected.

**FUR AND SKIN:** Fleas: Look for products that are safe for kittens. DO NOT use powder or spray on the rabbits head! As with any insecticide, if there is a negative reaction of any kind (such as diarrhea) discontinue use immediately. Dandruff: Is it dandruff or is it fur mites? If you can only see flakes, it is almost impossible for you to tell without a microscope. A sure sign of mites is what will look like white scabs or a crust on the skin and it will often start around the neck area. In addition' your rabbits can become very thin with bald spots as the mites become worse. You can also see very thin hair and dandruff caused by scratching due to flea infestation.

**GENITAL SCENT GLANDS:** In addition to the scent glands under their chins, rabbits also have much more powerful scent glands on both sides of the genitals. This are needs to be checked and will probably always need cleaning. Sometimes you'll find just a few moist flakes from dried skin, but more often you'll find a very dark brown, hard, waxy type of build-up. Either of these can be easily removed with a cotton swab dipped in water or vaseline. If this substance is not cleaned and allowed to remain, the area could become infected.

The rabbit may have to be turned on its back to do this. Keep one hand pressed firmly on the stomach so that he/she cannot suddenly flip over and injure their back. Use your fingers to find the genitals and then to separate the area directly adjacent to the genitals. When you find the scent glands and separate the overlapping skin, the dark substance will become visible. If your rabbit ever has a "skunky" smell--it's time for a cleaning.

**LUMPS & BUMPS:** This is also a good time to inspect your rabbits body all over: legs, the stomach, head, butt, between the legs, etc. Both male and female rabbits will have nipples on their stomachs, but other

than that, if you feel any strange lumps or bumps, have a vet check them out. Just as with humans, the earlier you find and treat a problem, the easier it is to cure. All of the above are simple things to check, but sometimes it may be easier with two people. If check-ups are done every two months', you'll begin to know your rabbit well enough so that you can spot a problem in the early stages.

### **Recommended Publications**

#### **The House Rabbit Handbook, 3rd edition: How to Live with an Urban Rabbit**

\$12 incl. shipping & handling. To order, send the \$\$ to:

Drollery Press

1524 Benton St.

Alameda, CA 94501

companion **The House Rabbit Journal** (\$18 yearly subscription)

Box 1201

Alameda, CA 94501

### **Rabbit Care Videos**

**Your First Rabbit** (30 min.) \$23.95 incl. s&h

**Rabbit Exam** (20 min) \$23.95 incl. s&h. Intended for practitioners, this video can also be valuable reference for staff health-advisors who recommend medical professionals.

**Introducing Rabbits** (to each other and other animals). (30 min.) \$23.95 incl. s&h. A guide to P.O. introducing rabbits to your over companion animals.

All of these videos can be ordered from: (501) 521-4631

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1524 Benton St.

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### **The Internet**

The House Rabbit Society has a very informative web site at <http://www.rabbit.org>

Maryland, DC, Northern Virginia Chapter: <http://www.rabbitsinthehouse.org>