

RABBITS™

All About America's Favorite Pet Rabbits

3 | Editor's Note: Rabbit Rules
By Laura Doering, Editor

Rabbits love their routines. I often wake to the sound of a weeble-wobble toy being violently tossed around, courtesy of my rabbit, Mr. Buns. The toy throwing is his not-so-gentle reminder for me to get out of bed and get him his banana slice. I must admit, he has me well-trained.

If I short-change his traditional 1/4-inch slice, soon there's another clattering of thrown toys. And, if I fail to deliver this morning treat altogether, I'm met with the ultimate bunny dis – a loud thump of disapproval.

4 | Meet Your Match
Open your heart and your home to the right rabbit for you.
By Audrey Pavia

The time had come. My husband Randy and I were ready to adopt a rabbit. It had been years since I shared my life with a bunny, and I was desperate to have one of these sweet creatures back in my home again.

Because so many rabbits are in need of good homes, we opted to adopt a bunny from a local rescue group. We soon discovered that we should bring home two rabbits, since rabbits generally live longer, happier lives when they live with at least one other bunny.

12 | Life With A Rabbit
A happy home is a hop away.
By Roxanne Willems Snopek

What's quieter than a cat, as playful as a dog and cuter than a basket of spring chicks? A rabbit, as Alberta, Canada, residents Angela Hall and her daughter Madeleine discovered. "Skeezix is a French lop, utterly adorable," said Hall. But rabbits have other advantages: they can be litter-trained, just like cats, but they don't have the overpowering feline odor. They are less emotionally demanding than other pets, although they still have individual personalities and become very responsive to their owners.

20 | Nutrition Advice Every Bunny Can Appreciate
Hay! You need more than carrots and lettuce to keep a rabbit healthy.
By Karla S. Rugh, DVM, Ph.D.

If you believed cartoons, feeding your rabbit would be as simple as tossing it a few carrots every day. In the real world, it's a bit more complicated – there's no single "perfect" food for your bunny. There are ways, however, to dish up everything your friend needs for growth, health and just plain feeling good.

30 | Rabbit Real Estate
Fall into the rabbit hole and check out the perfect pet palace.
By Wendy Bedwell-Wilson

Lana Lehr's bunnies, Muggins and Cassidy, settled into a sweet situation in their Maryland home. Their living space spans a bedroom, bathroom and hallway – all bunny-proofed, of course. Not bad for a couple of rescued rabbits. It didn't start out so sweet, however.

"When I adopted Muggins, I brought him home, set up his condo and let him loose in his room and hallway," said Lehr, founder and managing director of RabbitWise Inc., a nonprofit rabbit welfare organization. But Muggins didn't know what to do with that space.

40 | Silly Human, Play Is For Rabbits

Toy tosser, romper-stomper or hid & seeker? Find your pet's play style.
By Suzanne Trayhan

Jake and Daisy are both large, white bunnies with pink eyes. Some people have trouble telling them apart. Spend a few minutes watching them, however, and it quickly becomes clear that they are as different as night and day.

Daisy loves to run around the living room, and jump onto the couch, as if to survey her kingdom. Then she jumps down and races around the living room floor, hopping through tubes and doing bunny dances along the way. When in her cage, Daisy runs up and down the levels in her three-story condo.

48 | Bunny Meets Bunny
Rabbit bonding is much more than a meet & greet.
By Ifsha Buttitta

If one bunny is a job to behold, imagine how nice it would be to see your companion rabbit snuggling and grooming with one of its own. But how do you know if it will be love at first sight or a match made in hell when you introduce a new rabbit into the picture? While there is no sure way to predict what will happen when two rabbits meet, there are some rules that make bunny introductions go smoothly – and safely – as possible.

52 | 10 Conditions Your Rabbit Can't Tell You About
Know what you can do – and when to call a vet.
By Sharon Vanderlip, DVM

Good news! Rabbits can live for several years when they receive the best of care and, fortunately, great health care is easy and inexpensive to provide! However, rabbits are more delicate and fragile than they appear. When illness strikes or an accident happens, the medical consequences are often quite serious. Early detection of health problems and immediate veterinary care are the keys to successful recovery.

60 | Your Rabbit's Hurt... Now What?!
These first-aid basics can save your pet's life.
By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

The unthinkable happened; your wonderful pet rabbit was just injured in an accident in your home, and it is bleeding from a gash. Do you know how to administer first aid? Do you own a first aid kit? If so, do you know where it is? Is your regular rabbit veterinarian available for emergencies, or do you need to contact an emergency clinic that treats rabbits? (Not all emergency facilities will see less-traditional pets like rabbits.) Hopefully, you were able to answer yes to all these questions. If not, let's put you on the right path.

68 | Grooming Advice Your Rabbit Can Live With
The experts divulge 17 grooming tips to make your rabbit look & feel fabulous.
By Susan Shen

The time to lay the groundwork for grooming your pet rabbit, according to Gregory Rich, DVM, of West Esplanade Veterinary Clinic in Metairie, La., is as soon as you bring it home. Handling a young rabbit properly and consistently promotes the bond between you and your pet, and it makes grooming much easier.

Consistent grooming has nothing to do with vanity and everything to do with promoting good health. Brushing and combing, for example, removes dead hair your rabbit would otherwise lick and swallow. Rabbits rival cats in terms of keeping their coat spotless with consistent self-grooming, which means they also ingest a lot of hair. If the rabbit's diet is not high enough in fiber, the hair it ingests can be devastating. Rabbits, like cats, are susceptible to hairballs. "Unlike cats, rabbits can't vomit. The hairball just sits in the stomach," Rich explained, "and they develop gastrointestinal stasis," a potentially fatal condition.

76 | Life Stages
Know what to expect each step of the way.
By Farrell R. Clancy

Remember when your sweet, adorable little boy or girl turned into a raging Tasmanian Devil around age 12? If your rabbit is around 4 months of age, you may be wondering the same thing about its sudden transformation. Your bunny may go from cute and cuddly to, "Don't touch me. I'm busy. I want to explore," said Marcy Schaaf, Director of Save a Bunny

(www.savebunny.com), the San Francisco/Marin chapter of the House Rabbit Society. Don't worry – you haven't done anything wrong; it's just the hormones. If females aren't spayed and males aren't neutered, such adolescent behaviors can last up to a year. This article will help prepare you for this and other challenges you may encounter in each phase of your rabbit's life.

84 | Listen Closely: Your Rabbit Is Talking To You

There's something behind that thump, grunt and nudge.

By Michelle Karras

Those new to rabbits might not realize that rabbits have some rather peculiar behaviors and have their fair share of interpersonal drama. For example, Kathy Forst of Illinois shares her home with six bunnies. "We try to pair them off for companionship, yet this does not always work," she said. When Forst tried to pair off Jessica with Gucci, Jessica was too territorial. She would mount Gucci and then throw front punches at him along with aggressive pouncing. "Our fear was that Gucci would be the aggressor, but the opposite happened," said Forst.

94 | Let's Talk About Litter

Faster than a speeding pellet, your rabbit can be litter-trained in no time.

By Caroline Charland

Companion rabbits of yesteryear were often thought of as messy creatures best kept outdoors so their droppings and urine could be more easily swept up or hosed down. What many didn't realize back then was that a rabbit's bathroom habits are, in fact, amendable for life inside a home.

100 | Hopping Through History

Holding king's court, marooned on islands, revered by many – the rabbit as we know it was a journey in the making.

By Bob D. Whitman

The original homeland of the European rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus* – the ancestor of our domestic rabbit – is the Iberian peninsula, which comprises both Spain and Portugal. Separated from the rest of Europe by the great Pyrenees mountain range, this Mediterranean climate of warm summers, cold winters and little precipitation has loosely compacted and well-drained soils easily dug for burrows, which makes for an ideal habitat for rabbits to thrive.

106 | Show Me The Bunny!

Rabbit showing is more than just a show, it's a community.

By Nikki Moustaki

"When you attend your first rabbit show, expect to be overwhelmed," said Lynn Franks of California, breeder of French Lops. "I remember going to my first show and almost turning around and going home. I wasn't sure I was ready for such an experience. I had obtained my first French Lops at a church auction. I thought I was bidding on the goats, and when I got to the pay desk, they brought a trio of the biggest rabbits I had ever seen." To her surprise, Franks became the owner of two bucks and a doe. "The man who donated them signed me up for my first show and sent me on my way."

Whether you end up at a rabbit show by accident (perhaps wandering in from the goat auction!), or you've always dreamed of boasting the top bunny, there's a lot to know about participating in this family sport. Perhaps you're wondering why anyone would show their rabbits at all. What's it all about?

116 | Carry On

Beat the heat (and buckle that seat). Follow these tips for safe travel.

By Anastasia Thrift

Packing the car for a trip to the vet or, better yet, a vacation destination? Make sure every member of your family (rabbits included) travels safely.

Start with the right type of carrier. "A dog or cat carrier will work, if it's not too big," said Lisa Paul, DVM, of Banfield Hospital in Colorado. This means large enough to fit your rabbit, but not much bigger. In case of an accident, smaller cages prevent rabbit passengers from being jostled.

118 | Body By Bunny

Furry feet, dewlaps and peg teeth? Rabbits have 'em – find out why.

By Sari Kanfer, DVM



No doubt about it, rabbits are cute! But all the way from its wiggly nose to the tips of its toes, each adorable part of a rabbit's body has a job to do. In many ways, rabbits are like other animals – but mostly they are their own unique selves.

126 | Photo Celebration

128 | Resources