

## The Perfect Rabbit Home (As Seen By Rabbits)

Few, if any of us (myself included), are able to provide **all** elements of the perfect rabbit home. Time, space, and money are limited resources for most of us. You may already have human children. Your floor plan — or prized possessions — may make it impractical to give your rabbit access to your entire home. Your budget may not allow you to build the perfect salad or offer your “senior” rabbit monthly acupuncture therapy. Your geographic location may limit your veterinary care options. Your job may demand that your rabbit spend time at home alone. Nevertheless, after interviewing some of the world’s most pampered rabbits and the humans who are owned by them, I offer my vision of the perfect rabbit home.

### Family Makeup



Rabbits do best either in all-adult families or families with children who are disciplined and enjoy quiet forms of play. Loud activities, commotion, and sudden movements — in other words **normal** childhood behavior — can be terrifying to a rabbit. For the safety of both rabbit and child, parents need to carefully supervise their children’s interaction with the family rabbit. Improper handling can cause serious injury to the rabbit, child, or both.

Rabbits are happiest in homes where humans spend a lot of time. A regular household routine is a plus, but not required. Retired people who do not travel and people who work from their home provide some of the best homes for companion rabbits.

In the perfect rabbit home, the rabbit is allowed to decide who his non-human companions will be. If he wants another rabbit as a companion, he should be allowed to choose him or her — he will not be any happier with an “arranged marriage” than you would be! If your rabbit does **not** want to share his home with another rabbit, he may enjoy the companionship of other animals in your home, including dogs or cats. Introduce your rabbit carefully to all other animals — including other rabbits — and supervise their interactions carefully until you are 100% sure it is safe to leave them alone. You may have a rabbit who simply prefers human companionship — if

so, be prepared to develop a very deep bond with him.

### Accommodations



In the perfect rabbit home, the rabbit is allowed to go wherever the humans are, but also has his own space. The rabbit is allowed to decide whether to spend time with other family members or retreat to his cage or room. He knows that when he is in his “space” all family members will know that he wants quiet time alone and will respect his privacy. Family members should not reach into his space to pull him out and, equally importantly, the housekeeper should not attempt to clean his space when he is in it. A good housekeeper waits until her rabbit is visiting elsewhere to clean!

All rooms in the perfect rabbit home should be completely bunny-proofed. Electrical, phone, and computer cords should be hidden or securely covered for the safety of the rabbit and the electronic equipment. Dangerous plants should be removed or placed well beyond your rabbit’s reach. Edible plants, along with books, papers, clothing, shoes, and other possessions should also be placed out of your rabbit’s reach **unless** you want him to chew them!

In the perfect rabbit home, the humans appreciate the rabbit’s unique decorating touches. He may wish to customize the shape and texture of furniture and moldings. Or he may decide that corners should not be carpeted or that the wallpaper really needs to go.

The perfect rabbit home is clean enough to keep the rabbit healthy but not so clean that he feels he doesn't belong. Frequency of vacuuming, laundering towels or throw rugs, and litter-box cleaning should be negotiated between the rabbit and his housekeeper. Humans should understand that randomly scattered strands of hay and the occasional stray "rabbit poop" add character to the home's décor and make it look "lived-in."

### **Food Service**



The primary shopper in the perfect rabbit home knows the rabbit's food preferences and chooses grocery stores based on the quality and selection of items in the produce department. On at least a weekly basis the shopper drives as far as necessary to stock up on hard-to-find items such as carrot tops and organic dandelion greens. In the winter, if a blizzard is forecast, the shopper makes a special trip out just before the storm hits to ensure that the quality of salads will remain at an acceptable level throughout the storm. In the summer, a garden is planted with all the bunny's favorites.

Salads are freshly prepared and artfully presented twice a day. Presentation is important even if the rabbit's first move is to fling the salad around or dig through it for his favorite foods. Pellets are served (in amounts appropriate to the rabbit's size and age) in custom-made, personalized, pottery bowls. Fresh hay is available at all times. Fresh, perhaps bottled, water is provided in a personalized pottery bowl or a water bottle, depending on the rabbit's preference. The rabbit's server never becomes upset when food plates or bowls are dumped over, tossed, or chipped by the rabbit.

In the perfect rabbit home, treats consist of small amounts of fresh fruit. Unhealthy treat foods, such as bread and other carbohydrates have never been offered so the rabbit doesn't feel deprived. Treats are delivered at a regularly scheduled time. If the rabbit begs, his server automatically knows which treat he is begging for!

### **Health Care**



In the perfect rabbit home, a qualified rabbit veterinarian has been located before the rabbit even joins the family. A check-up visit is scheduled soon after the rabbit is settled in his new home — just to make sure the rabbit is healthy. If the rabbit was not neutered or spayed before coming home, an appointment to have this done is made before the rabbit shows signs of sexual frustration. Annual physicals are scheduled to ensure the rabbit's continued health. Between veterinary visits, the primary caretaker carefully monitors the rabbit's behavior and schedules an appointment at the first sign of illness. Caretakers are willing to spend whatever time and money is necessary to properly diagnose and treat any illness that may strike. Caretakers also recognize and accept that when a rabbit is ill — or when he becomes elderly — his litter-box habits may be less than perfect.

### **Entertainment and Interaction**

The perfect rabbit home has lots of fun spaces for rabbits to explore safely and even hide in. Most rabbits love playing “where's the bunny” with their humans, especially when it is bedtime, a vet visit is scheduled, or it is time for the human to leave for work.

The perfect rabbit home will be filled with safe toys that fit the type of play your rabbit enjoys best. Humans don't mind if their rabbit's favorite type of play is tossing around noisy toys at 3:30 in the morning in the room next to where humans sleep. In fact, the humans in a perfect rabbit home find this noise comforting — a positive sign that all is well with their beloved rabbit.



In the perfect rabbit home, humans spend a lot of time on the floor, sharing their rabbit's space. They understand that most rabbits don't like to be picked up and held. The rabbit is allowed to choose the time, place, and type of interaction with their humans. Humans are on-call at all times to provide snuggles, pets, and play their rabbit's favorite games. They are never too busy to give their rabbit the attention he asks for.

### **Unconditional Love**



The single most important element of the ideal rabbit home is unconditional love and acceptance of the rabbit as part of the family. As a family member, his status should not be affected by the arrival of a new baby or the adoption of another pet. If the family moves, there should be a place for the family rabbit in the new home, even if that means carpet and woodwork may not remain perfect. Finally, the family rabbit should be loved for who he is, even if he turns out not to be anything like what the family expected. If you can offer a rabbit this kind of love, you are very close to providing the perfect home.