

Olde Saratoga Farmstead

Caring for your Bunny

Senior Rabbits (6 months +)

Disclaimer: We are not veterinarians. These care instructions are what we have found to be successful in our years of breeding. Please seek a qualified veterinarian for your bunny's care.

Food – We recommend Nutrena Nature Wise Performance 18% Rabbit Food for our bunnies, however many feed stores near our farm have stopped carrying Blue Seal. I have switched ours to Purina Nutrena 18% protein performance blend. It is nutritionally balanced and enhances the shine of their fiber. We do not measure out their food. Fill the hopper ½ full and they will eat as much as they need too.

Treats - Bunnies like treats, but they must be given in moderation. Dried fruit such as bananas, papaya and mango are good but they contain a lot of sugar, so give them these on special occasions (twice a month) .

Black oil Sunflower seeds are also a great treat. I give a handful to each of our bunnies once a month.

Greens – Parsley, carrot tops, carrots and kale are among a bunny's favorite things to eat. Do not give them anything that is wilted. This can make them sick and cause diarrhea. Bunnies need a sufficient amount of vegetables in their diet. I give them some every day.

Timothy Hay – Is a "MUST" in a bunny's diet. It is an excellent source of fiber and is critical in the prevention of "Wool Block" I give a large handful to each bunny twice a week. However, in the winter during very cold temps, I give them timothy hay 3 – 4 times a week. If you see the poops becoming very loose, cut back on the hay a little as to prevent diarrhea. Wool Block can kill a bunny if not treated. Give your aggressively. If you do not see any improvement, get your bunny to the vet. He/she can prescribe mobility medications to move things along. Do not give your bunny alfalfa hay. This type of hay is high in calories and will make your bunny fat. Over the last couple of years rabbit food has changed. While their protein level is important, the amount of greens and hay is even more important.

Shelter - A wire cage or hutch is the perfect home for your bunny. If your hutch is outside make sure it is in the shade at all times. The sun will dehydrate your bunny and will over heat them. During the summer months heat use a 2 liter empty soda bottle fill with water and freeze. Place this in the cage on the floor and your bunny will lie next to it to stay cool. Also

make sure your bunny has plenty of water to drink. Dehydration can occur in 24 hours and is a dangerous situation.

During the winter months cover the front of the cage with an old rug. The bunnies can tolerate the cold, but not the wind. Check the water frequently to make sure it is not frozen.

Illness – Bunnies will stay very healthy when given good care. However there can be a few issues you will want to take care of if they appear. Wool Block is a dangerous situation for a rabbit. Rabbits ingest their fur when they clean themselves. Most of the time it passes thru the digestive track. Sometimes it does not and it forms a blockage. This is a dangerous situation. A bunny cannot cough up a fur ball like a cat can. Check your bunnies litter pan every day. If the poops are getting smaller or your bunny has not pooped in 2 – 3 hours, he or she may have wool block. When this happens give them a large quantity of timothy hay. This usually fixes the problem and he or she will poop like crazy a few hours later. If this does not work give your bunny a syringe of pineapple juice or dried pineapple. If nothing happens a few hours after that, take your bunny to the VET.

Pink Eye – sometimes pink eye forms when a bunny scratches close to his or her eye and an infection sets in. Tractor Supply sells Terramycin for this. If they have none in stock call your vet.

Sore Hocks – This is when the back pads on the bunnies back legs have become sensitive and may bleed and form a sore spot. Neosporin crème with (no pain relief kind) applied on a gauze pad and wrapped with vet wrap will help the sore heel. It usually takes 2 to 3 weeks to heal completely and your bunny will be trying to get the bandage off!!! Be persistent and reward them when you successfully put on the bandage, it will heal quicker when it's wrapped. If it does not improve after 2 weeks call your vet.

Rabbits do not need regular veterinary care like cats and dogs. Check over your bunny every day to notice any changes that may arise.

Junior Rabbits (8 weeks to 6 months)

Food – Your bunny will have started eating pellets at around 3 weeks of age. He/she will still be nursing from Mom and this is very important. Mothers' milk contains many vitamins and antibodies which will give your bunny protection from illness.

Treats – As much as you may want to give your little bunny a treat, it's too early to do so. Treats such as pineapple, mango papaya, bananas and apples have too much sugar for them. The only exception would be a syringe of pineapple juice for SEVERE wool block. Black oil sunflower seeds are considered a treat as well so wait until your bunny is at least 6 months old.

Greens – No Greens such as parsley, carrot tops, carrots, yet.

Timothy Hay – is considered a ‘green’ so do not give any to your bunny unless you are dealing with a case of ‘wool block’. While an adult bunny can get a handful of timothy hay twice a week, a junior bunny can have a small amount (a little each day) until the wool block has cleared. Wool block in a junior kit won’t be an issue until they begin to groom themselves and swallow their fur.

Shelter – shelter can be the same for a junior bunny and senior bunny. Keep in mind that a junior bunny will dehydrate quicker in heat and react to colder weather soon that an older bunny. In the winter add extra straw in the cage and in the summer have extra water available.

Illness, Pink eye, and Sore Hocks are cared for just as you would for a Senior.

Newborn Kits (birth till 8 weeks)

Satin Angora Rabbits litters average 6 to 8 per litter. However here at our farm we have had anything from 1 to 7 born to a doe. The doe usually takes care and builds a nest and pulls her fur to make a nest for her babies. After she gives birth she will usually take care of the afterbirth and cleaning the babies including severing the umbilical cord. At this point you are the surrogate mom for these babies for the next 5 to 10 days. It is important that the babies stay in the nest box to stay warm and nurse from mom. Since she usually feeds them at night they need to be together so they don’t miss a feeding. Some kits are very strong and can wiggle away from the group or get outside of the nest box. Rabbits don’t pick up the babies like cats do, so the kit would be in danger if does not get put back with the group. I check on my newborn kits every 2 – 3 hours for the first week. They are born eyes closed and have no fur when they are born so keeping them together is very important. Their fur will start to come in on day 3 and their eyes will open on day 10. By this time they are moving all over. They still need to stay in the nest box. Your bunny will receive a lot of nourishment from the doe as long as they stay in the next box.

If you want to keep you litter start to wean them starting at 6 weeks by removing 1 from the litter to another cage every 3 days. This will allow the mother’s milk to dry up naturally without complication.

If you decide to sell or give your bunnies away, New York state law states that jr. livestock cannot be sold until they are a minimum of 8 weeks of age. This is for the benefit of the animal so that it is healthy when it arrives at its new home. I know that the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island have the same requirement.

MOST IMPORTANT – give your bunny plenty of love and attention and you will have many happy years together.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to call (518)867-7238. I will be happy to help in any way I can!!!

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