

Congratulations on deciding to care for two of our adorable bunnies for a month! Bunnies can bring a tremendous amount of joy into any home. They are smart, social, and engaging little creatures and are wonderful companions. This document should cover most of the basics of caring for your rabbit. If you have any other questions or need further support, please contact us at nvfanimalrentals@gmail.com. Please use email for any basic questions but in case of emergency you may call Michaela at 802-338-0116.

Things to Know about Your Bunnies

Your Bunny Kit

Here is a checklist of what you should find in your bunny kit:

- A crate
- Run
- A crate floor/roof
- A bunny house
- Food dish
- Waterer
- Hay
- Zip Ties
- Ground Staples
- Food scoop
- Clothespins
- Feed
- Parachute cord
- Two Bunnies!

To set up your bunny cages, unfold the crates and attach them together side by side with the parachute cord. The run is attached to the outer edges of both crates creating a circle where the bunnies can run and interact and also have access to their crates. The waterers are attached to the outside of each crate. You can use your zip ties to attach the plastic crate floor to the roof as a rain block if they are outside, or you can insert the floor into the bottom of the cage if the bunnies will be indoors. We recommend that the rabbits have some time outdoors each day, even if they spend the night/evenings in the house. The houses are placed in the back of each crate. Ground staples are used to secure the run and crate to the ground, some of rabbits have been known to crawl under the run if it is not secured. This also helps with keeping predators away.

Specific to indoor bunnies- The house can be flipped upside down to create a litter box. Fill the box with hay, and try to feed them in the box. Rabbits usually choose one area to relieve themselves. If they choose a different area, move the litter box to the area they have chosen. Cages and litter boxes should be cleaned frequently.

Specific to outdoor bunnies- Secure a sheet to the top of the run and crate using the clothespins provided, this blocks the bunnies from sight of hawks and other predators. It also discourages

jumping over the run, some of our bunnies are more athletic than others! At night, be sure to lock them inside the crate for safety. Cages and runs should be moved frequently to allow for fresh grass and a clean environment. Make sure your bunny has a dry place in the rain and a cool place in the sun. Our crates come with a plastic bottom that we use as a rainguard and shade when they are outdoors. They also have a little home they can go into to stay cozy. On cold nights, give your bunny a little extra hay inside their house to stay warm and be very sure their bedding is not wet. Bunnies also overheat very easily, so make sure the cage is in the shade on sunny days.

Your daily bunny chores

1. Observe. Is your bunny eating and drinking? How does their fur look? Is their cage intact? Are they panting or overheating? Is their cage clean or does it need to be cleaned or moved? Do they look alert or lethargic? A big part of raising animals is learning to recognize changes in their behavior. You will get to know your bunny's normal habits quickly and it is important to note if something seems off.
2. Fill their water. We always make sure our animals' waters are filled to the tip top everyday. It is much better to be filling their water too often than to risk them being without for any amount of time.
3. Feed. This pamphlet will include the amount to feed your specific bunnies. However, a big part of a bunnies diet is greens and hay. Make sure that they have clean hay to nibble on and that their cage is moved to fresh grass.
4. Exercise. Bunnies love to run and play! They can run around the house or a fenced area outdoors. Maybe you will experiment with building a bigger playpen for them. Having time in the day to frolic can greatly enhance their lives. Also, there are many games you can play with your rabbit to provide mental stimulation.

Treats

Bunnies love treats! This is a great way to build a relationship with your bunny and let them know that interacting with you is a good experience. However, some treats are better for them than others. The following foods can be fed daily as a great part of your rabbits diet: *romaine or dark leaf lettuce (no iceberg or other light lettuce) *carrot tops *collard greens *kale *celery & celery leaves *asparagus *squash *cucumbers *broccoli leaves *bok choy *clover or dandelion leaves & flowers *mustard greens *herbs like basil, cilantro, dill, mint, parsley or watercress

These foods are poisonous to bunnies and should not be fed: Avocado- Iceberg lettuce- Nuts Any human food (bread, etc.) -Chard- Cauliflower- Potatoes- Any meat -Rhubarb- Any plants from bulbs

These lists include many common foods, but are nowhere near comprehensive. If you are unsure, do some research or contact us before feeding. There are many wonderful online resources that talk about safe food for bunnies.

Handling

Snuggling bunnies is the best! However, they are prey animals, which means that being held can be a traumatic experience for them if not done properly. Because of their short stay with you, we ask that not be picked up while you are standing. Instead, allow them to come to your lap while you are sitting down. The majority of our bunnies are extremely socialized and friendly, so just give them some time and treats and this will happen! Here are some tips for physically interacting with your bunny.

1. Ground yourself. This is one of the most important skills with any type of animal ownership. Animals are non-verbal, and look to our physical cues for information about us. Creating a space of calm inside yourself can have seemingly magical effects on the animal you are interacting with. Try to create a grounding ritual with your kids before they enter an animal pen. Something like this might be good to start with-
2. Begin by taking a full breath in and a long breath out (5 seconds).
3. Now bringing awareness to the top of your body, your head, face, neck, shoulders (3 seconds).
4. Noticing any sensations, movements, any places of holding (5 seconds).
5. Now moving down to the arms and the hands (5 seconds)
6. Sensing the back of the body, the front of the body (3 seconds).
7. Feeling the contact of your body with ground(10 seconds).
8. Now sensing your upper legs, your lower legs, and the feet (5 seconds).
9. Noticing if there are any particular places that call out for attention. Places where sensations feel most vibrant or dynamic (10 seconds)
10. Take a full breath in and a long breath out (5 seconds)

We cannot stress the benefits of this enough. Creating these types of habits while interacting with animals can have life-long benefits for children and for the animals around them.

Move slowly and calmly. The main danger in picking up your bunny is that he will panic and hurt himself in an effort to get away. It's important to move slowly and to speak calmly to him as you approach. If he backs away, don't force the issue; just wait a little while and try again. Treats really help with this!

Stay close to the ground. When you hold your bunny, he might flail his legs, which can result in injury. Worse, his rapid movements may cause you to drop him. Snuggle your new bunny from the position of sitting on the floor so if you have to let go of him quickly, you're already only a few inches from the ground.

Interact often with your bunny! Give your bunny treats to let him know that being handled is something to look forward to and enjoy. Also, consider putting aside some bunny toys to play with only when he is with you.

Play

There are many ways to keep your bunny entertained. Not only does it provide joy for both you and the bunny, it will also help develop your connection and relationship with each other. Here are some ideas!

Bowling bunnies: Stand up a few toilet paper tubes or empty oatmeal cans (stuff them with hay or treats for added interest) and let them knock them down.

Furry bunny thieves: Lay on the floor with an envelope, stick or other small object in your hand and let her steal it, take it back and repeat, sit with an apple slice or other treat in your open palm and let your bunny take it.

Furry destroyers: Fill a shoe box with shredded paper and let her go to town. Give her a newspaper or phone book and let her shred it up. Set up cardboard boxes for them to hide in and chew on

Baseball bunnies: Rabbits that like to toss things will love plastic baby toys (like plastic key sets), knotted jute ropes, small blocks of wood, plastic cat toys with bells, willow balls, or toilet paper tubes

Brainy bunnies: Logic games are great mental stimulation. Hide a treat in a loosely closed fist, hold both fists in front of your rabbit and make him choose the fist with a treat before giving it to him. You can make your own puzzle for your bunny by cutting a couple holes in a toilet paper tube and putting small treats in it (make the holes larger than the treat), tape up the ends and have your rabbit roll it around to get the treats out.

Be patient with your bunny and your bunny will learn to trust you. Remember, if you try to rush things they may end up afraid.

Grooming

Rabbits can enjoy being brushed and it will help build trust between you. Before you picked up your rabbit, her nails were clipped by us. However, if you end up keeping your bunny for more than a month, they will need to be clipped again. We can clip them for you or help you learn to do this yourself! That is a lot of information, but we know you are going to be a great bunny owner! Don't forget to enjoy your time with your new furry friend!

Challenges

Animals can be unpredictable and can leave us with a lot of questions! Here are some answers to some common problems.

My Bunny Bit Me

It's important to remember that rabbits are prey animals that will bite when they feel threatened. We continue to try and select rabbits for our program that are friendly and comfortable around people. If your rabbit bites, the first thing to do is examine how you were interacting with it when the bite occurred. Were you reaching into his safe space, such as underneath his house? Were you trying to pick it up off the ground? Did you give it adequate time to adjust to his new surroundings before trying to handle it? Basically, assess if the bite was aggressive or defensive. Animals have so much to teach us in regards to respecting boundaries and putting the needs of others before our own. If you feel that the bite was defensive, adjust your own expectations or interactions with your rabbit. If the behavior continues or feels aggressive, please contact us. Bunnies become very temperamental when they are overly stressed or are struggling with health issues. We may ask that the bunny be returned to the farm so we can assess if it has unmet needs or simply is not a good fit for our program at this time. If your bunny is nibbling you, they are probably just learning that you are a provider of treats and maybe needs to remember their manners! Thumping your hand on the ground is a good way to remind them that the behavior is not acceptable. Rabbits communicate displeasure by thumping their feet, so you can let them know about yours in the same way!

My rabbit won't interact with me

Give them some time. A move can be a big event for a rabbit. Try setting aside an hour to just sit in the pen with them without attempting contact. If you can let go of your own time expectations, you'll be surprised how quickly they will relax into interacting with you. If your bunny is hiding and seems afraid after a week at your house, please contact us.

My rabbit won't eat

This is a huge red flag for any animal. Contact us immediately if an animal is not eating or drinking.

My rabbits are fighting

We have chosen bonded pairs to send out together, meaning they have spent significant time together and we have not observed any negative feelings towards each other. If they start fighting, immediately separate them into their own crates and contact us. As adorable as they are, rabbits can do some serious damage to each other if they begin to display physical aggression towards each other. Sometimes, a change of environment can trigger some territorial behaviors. If the behavior is mild, we may just have you observe for a day or two.

My rabbit escaped

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure in this capacity. Always double check your fencing and setups and observe for a little while before leaving them unattended. However, even the best systems can fail. We genuinely hope this does not happen, but if it does take a

deep breath and do not move quickly towards your bunny. Move slowly and offer treats. If it is not coming towards you, create a plan with your family to herd it into a place where it is cornered. Frantically chasing the bunny will make the process of catching it almost impossible. We totally understand that these things can happen, and have our fair share of mischievous bunnies here at the farm. Don't feel overwhelmed about reaching out to ask for support.

That is a lot of information, but we know you are going to be a great bunny owner! Don't forget to enjoy your time with your new furry friend