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Contact Bunny Buddies
for
House Rabbit
Information
•
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Adoption Assistance

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The
Easter Bunny
Came!



Now What?

Every year, thousands of "Easter bunnies" all over the nation will be surrendered to shelters and rescue organizations, because well-meaning parents and grandparents didn't think it through before taking home that cute little big-eared ball of fur. And the bunnies who find their way to shelters are the lucky ones: others will be dumped in fields and parks, languish and die due to inadequate care, or live a torturous existence neglected and lonely in a back-yard hutch.¹

Which Came First: The Bunny or the Egg?

Along with the Easter baskets and eggs, Easter inevitably conjures images of cute, furry “Easter bunnies.” This association prompts many parents and grandparents to bring home a live rabbit for a member of the family. Once Easter is over, the realization begins to set in that—unlike a stuffed rabbit or a chocolate bunny—this rabbit is going to require care, visits to the veterinarian, daily fresh greens, regular litter box changes, etc. for the next decade. If your family is among those blessed with a new furry family member, Bunny Buddies would like to help make your relationship with your new companion fulfilling and long lasting.

First, let’s list some things you can expect from your rabbit.

Since the vast majority of bunnies sold at Easter-time are very young (pet stores, feed stores, road-side vendors, and breeders often sell baby rabbits long before they should be taken away from their mothers), two things are certain: **your rabbit will get bigger**—sometimes MUCH bigger—and **your baby rabbit will soon become a hormone-riddled “teenager.”** While neither of these things ought to come as a surprise, many rabbits are discarded at about five months of age, when they start spraying and marking territory, displaying sexual behaviors, and becoming moody and “aggressive.” For many reasons, both for the rabbit’s health and well-being and for your

sanity, rabbits should be spayed or neutered. This will cause most hormonal behaviors to subside or disappear, will avoid unwanted offspring, and will prevent many forms of reproductive cancers which occur frequently in rabbits. Be sure to find a vet who is “rabbit savvy,” as anesthesia protocol for rabbits is very specialized, and an inexperienced vet will put your bunny at serious risk.²

Rabbits chew! This is part of who they are, and you’re not going to train it away. To protect your home and furnishings, electrical cords, and carpet, your best bet is to limit the rabbit’s access to safe areas. The House Rabbit Society’s Rabbit Proofing advice (<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/rabbit-proofing.html>) offers a helpful introduction.

It’s worth the time and effort! For those who are patient enough to learn to “speak rabbit,” the rewards are great. Over and over we hear stories from people who unexpectedly found themselves caring for a house rabbit and were surprised to have a whole new world opened up to them. “I never imagined a rabbit could have so much personality.” “I didn’t know rabbits could run, leap, and dance like that.” “I was amazed to learn how curious and intelligent rabbits are.” And, invariably, “Now, I can’t imagine my life without a rabbit!”

To learn more about living with and caring for a house rabbit, start with Bunny Buddies’ Rabbit Care Guide (<http://bunnybuddies.org/literature/rabbitcareguide.pdf>). Another great primer is the Vancouver Rabbit Rescue and Advocacy (VRRRA) Rabbits 101 guide (<http://www.vrrra.org/rabbits101.htm>). There

are lots more fun and informative links on Bunny Buddies’ Resource Page (<http://www.bunnybuddies.org>).

We also highly recommend joining Bunny Buddies. The group provides you with an instant network of bunny resources with a combined wealth of experience and knowledge and a community of people who “get” one another. Whether it’s getting advice on litter training, asking about the safety of a particular veggie, looking for someone to trade bunny sitting with, or seeking advice when your rabbit “just doesn’t seem right,” it’s good to know you’ve got people around to help. As a member, you’ll also be among the first to receive messages about adoption days, B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Bunny) events, and other opportunities, and you’ll receive periodic notification of special group offers, including participation in a members-only hay and pellet bulk-purchasing program.

Whether you decide to become a Bunny Buddies member or not, we’re always happy to answer questions at one of our adoption events, on the Hopline (713.822.8256), or by email (info@bunnybuddies.org).

¹Domestic rabbits do not revert to the wild; they have been bred in captivity for centuries, and are dependent upon human care. “Set free” is a sentence to death by predator or disease.

²If your vet tells you to fast your bunny prior to surgery, look elsewhere; dogs and cats should fast before surgery, but rabbits need to keep fiber moving through their guts or they may quickly become gravely ill.