

This time of year, many people welcome home new pets – these pets require special care and we wanted to provide our friends with information to help them thrive.



Welcoming Your Rabbit Home

Animals like their routines and moving from one home to another or to a permanent home can be stressful for any pet, including rabbits. By preparing everything ahead of time, you can help ease the process for your new rabbit.

Get ready for rabbits - Here's a quick checklist for what to do before you get your new bunnies:

- Set up your rabbit's "rabbitat" in a quiet, out-of-the-way area with one or more litterboxes (and safe litter), water bowl or bottle, and safe chew toys.
- Rabbit-proof any areas of your home to which your rabbit will have access in order to prevent injuries, but don't forget to supervise him when he's not contained.
- Try not to handle your rabbit too much during the first few days. You can allow your rabbit to check you out by sitting on the floor and letting her come to you.
- Keep the environment as quiet as possible.
- Let your rabbit get used to his new home before introducing them if you have other pets, like cats or dogs.
- If you already have one or more resident rabbits, keep your new rabbit separate from them until you can do introductions in a neutral location.
- If you're adopting multiple rabbits at once, keep an extra close eye on them. The stress from a change of venue can result in fights, even with rabbits who have been bonded for years.

Do you have enough space in your home?

Keeping a rabbit in a hutch outside is a big no-no; so is relegating a bunny to the basement or garage. Plus, those tiny pet store cages are way too small. You'll need an available area for a fairly large cage, plus at least one room in your home that has been thoroughly rabbit-proofed.

How rabbit-friendly are your kids?

Rabbits and very young children are generally not a great mix. Rabbits require safe, gentle handling and a quiet environment. As prey animals, rabbits can be easily startled and stressed by the loud noises and fast, uncoordinated movements that are typical of excited children. You may need to wait until your kids are older before adopting a rabbit. Kids may be enthusiastic about the new bunny for the first couple of weeks, then lose interest when taking care of him interferes with their activities. If your kids are begging for bunnies now, just keep in mind other things

they've begged for and remember that the pet may end up spending most of her time with you. Your kids may think they're ready for a pet, but you definitely have to be.

In addition to veterinary costs, these are some of the start-up items that new rabbit owners will need to purchase:

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| *Large cage or habitat (or supplies to build your own) pellets | * Water bowl or bottle | *Timothy hay |
| *Litterboxes and litter | * Chew toys | * Fruit/treats |
| *Timothy hay (or other grass hay) | * Vegetables | |

Do you have time for a Rabbit?

Rabbits are crepuscular, which means they generally sleep during the day and night and are most active at dusk and dawn. Rabbits need regular interaction with you to stay socialized and happy. They also need at least an hour out of their cage each day for play and exercise. A healthy rabbit diet includes fresh vegetables every day, so you'll need to go grocery shopping at least once a week. Your rabbit's enclosure needs to be tidied up every day and cleaned thoroughly once a week.

Are you ready for the commitment?

Rabbits can live past 10 years of age, so a rabbit may be with your family for as long as a dog would.

Rabbit Housing

The best place for pets to live is indoors with their human families, and this applies to rabbits, too. Many bunnies today live as house rabbits, roaming freely throughout the home just like dogs and cats do.

Outdoor dangers - There are several reasons rabbits shouldn't live outdoors:

- Domestic rabbits are different from their wild relatives—they don't do well in extreme temperatures, especially summer heat.
- Even in a safe enclosure, rabbits are at risk from predators. Just the sight or smell of a predator can cause rabbits so much stress that they can suffer a heart attack and literally die of fear.

Indoor digs

Whether your rabbit has free rein in your house or is confined to a "rabbitat," he needs a private space where he can feel safe and comfortable. There are several different housing systems for rabbits. Whatever kind you choose, make sure to keep it clean and well-stocked with hay, water, and the other necessities that make his house a home.

Cage basics

Most rabbit cages sold in pet stores are too small. Your bunny needs more than just a few square feet for his home. If your rabbit is free to roam through the whole house or an entire room, a small cage like this may be ok as a base of operations. But if your rabbit is in his cage for extended periods of time, he'll need a much larger place to live.

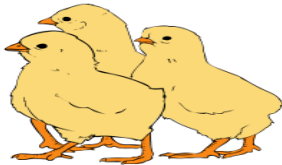
A rabbit's cage should be a minimum of five times the size of the rabbit. He should be able to completely stretch out in his cage and stand up on his hind legs without bumping his head on the top of the cage. Look for larger, multi-level rabbit homes offered by some pet supply stores and specialty online retailers. These cages give your bunny a lot of room to move around. Whatever type of cage you get, make sure that the floors and resting platforms are solid—not wire, which can hurt your rabbits feet.

Not all rabbits need a traditional cage. Another option is to use a puppy pen or x-pen to contain your rabbit. As long as the pen contains the appropriate amenities, that will work just fine.

Rabbit room

If you have a large home with many rooms, you can even devote an entire room to your rabbits. For starters, avoid flooring that's too slick for rabbit feet, like linoleum. Textured tiles usually work well and are easy to clean. Carpeting is fine too, if your rabbits have good litterbox habits and you can trust them not to chew the carpet. Replacing a regular door with a transparent door or Dutch door can allow you to keep an extra eye on your bunnies. In any home, it's important for a rabbit have a secluded place to hide. A cardboard box with a hole cut in it will be fine (staples and tape removed for safety). Rabbits usually sleep during the day and night, becoming playful at dawn and dusk, so they may use this box as a bedroom. Also, don't forget the necessities, like one or more litter boxes with litter, hay, and water, and plenty of great chew toys to keep your bunny stimulated.

Source: http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/rabbits/tips/rabbits_as_pets.html



How To Take Care of Your New Chicks

Chicken care considerations - Many people purchase chicks in the spring!

Chickens are energetic, inquisitive, and friendly animals who are a joy to watch, but the decision to keep them should not be made lightly. Chickens require dedicated, consistent care and there are important issues to consider before acquiring a backyard flock.

Chicken care essentials

Once chicks have been adopted, proper care and housing are vital. In addition to regular daily attention, feed and clean water, and securing them in their shelter at night, the following care principles are also essential.

Chickens are heat- and cold-sensitive

Like dogs and cats, chickens must have shelter to protect them from temperature extremes. Hens and roosters with large single combs are prone to frostbite in cooler climates, and all chickens need shade during periods of heat. It is important that the shelter is both insulated and well-ventilated. Straw bedding will add comfort and warmth to a shelter's floor space, but it should be replaced regularly with new, clean straw.

Predator protection is vital

Chickens need absolutely secure shelter at night or they can easily fall prey to urban wildlife like raccoons and

opossums. Dogs may also attack chickens. They must be completely enclosed in a safe henhouse, with four solid walls and a sturdy roof, every night. Predators can also dig under fences and walls, so this should be considered when planning the chickens' home. During the day, chickens should be kept in a fully-fenced enclosure or yard with proper protection from aerial day-time predators, neighborhood dogs and, in the case of small bantam hens, free-roaming cats.

Chicks need an appropriate environment

Chicks need an enclosed nesting space (a "nestbox") in which to lay their eggs. They also need an elevated roost on which to perch at night; this is where they prefer to sleep. Chicks enjoy loose substrate such as dirt, sand, or peat for dustbathing, and they should also have free access to grass and other vegetation to engage in natural pecking, scratching, and foraging behaviors. Often-used areas may become denuded, and it is important to provide plenty of space, giving them as much room as possible to express natural behavior outdoors. Hen houses, coops, and runs must be kept very clean at all times, for the health of the chickens and the food safety of the eggs.

Chickens will require veterinary care

While it may be tempting to think of a backyard flock as a source of inexpensive eggs, hens, like cats and dogs, require periodic veterinary care. Chickens can become ill or get injured, and vet exams and treatment can easily cost over \$100 per visit. These expenses should be carefully considered before the decision is made to keep backyard chickens. Not all avian veterinarians are experienced with chickens, so be sure to locate a trusted poultry vet in your area ahead of time.

Vacation help is a must

Since chickens require daily care, a designated caretaker must be arranged for vacations and other periods away from the house. Someone must be present to feed and water the hens and to put them inside their secure shelter every evening.

Chicken nutrition is important

It is a common misperception that chickens can be fed on corn kernels or kitchen scraps alone. Chickens need a balanced diet, like one of the commercially available feeds that have been carefully formulated by nutritionists specifically for adult hens. The protein requirements of chickens change with the birds' age, so it's important to feed an age-appropriate diet.

Laying hens also need access to a supplemental source of course calcium, such as limestone (available at livestock supply stores) if their feed ration does not already contain enough. In addition to calcium, hard insoluble granite grit should be fed, free choice, 2 or 3 days per month.

Chickens enjoy fresh fruits, grains, and vegetables in addition to their regular feed, but certain plants can be toxic. Avoid raw green potato peels, dried or undercooked beans, and avocados. Chickens should receive fresh feed and water daily—discard any feed that is old, moldy, or stale.

Prevent disease

Chickens can carry and become ill from a variety of infectious diseases. It is important to keep the hens' environment clean with regular manure removal, and by washing the feed and water containers. You should also avoid mixing birds from different flocks. (Temporarily quarantine any new birds for two weeks and

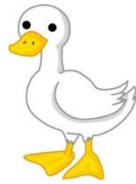
watch them closely for signs of illness or parasites before introducing them into an already established group.) Don't share equipment with neighbors (each chicken house should have dedicated tools, wheelbarrows, buckets, etc.), because pathogenic organisms can travel on these items. Diseases can spread to chickens from pet birds and wild birds, so limit contact where possible.

Give your birds plenty of attention

If you spend time watching and interacting with your chickens, you will find that each one has a unique personality, and they are friendly and curious when treated kindly. They display interesting behavior patterns such as dustbathing and foraging, and their complex social interactions are entertaining to observe. Enjoy their antics, and remember that your hens are completely dependent on you for responsible, committed care for their entire lives.

Source: The Humane Society of the United States,

http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/chickens/tips/adopting_chickens.html



HOW TO RAISE YOUR DUCKS

These are some basics on raising ducklings. Be prepared and have everything set up prior to the arrival of the ducklings. There are a few basic necessities for ducks. Quality feed, clean water, secure housing and good sanitation practices are all that is needed to raise healthy happy ducks.

Brooder

Something as simple as a cardboard box may be used as a brooder. Plastic totes, bathtubs, and wooden boxes can also be used.

You can line the bottom of the brooder with plastic sheeting (if brooding indoors) this will help with cleanup.

Put down a layer of bedding several inches thick. Pine shavings or straw are good and readily available. You can add pine pellet horse stall bedding to help with wet spots. Avoid slick material like newspaper. Paper towels can be placed over the bedding for the first few days. Watch the ducklings to ensure they are not eating bedding materials. Most will "taste" the bedding but not actually swallow it.

Wet spots should be removed and bedding replaced every day. If using shavings, avoid adding large amounts while the ducklings are in the brooder as shavings are very dusty. Cedar shavings should be avoided as they can give off fumes due to the heat lamp.

Heat

Ducklings need a brooder that is about 90° for the first week and then the temperature should be lowered by 5° each week afterwards. Once the temperature in the brooder is the same as the environment (inside or outside) the heat source can be removed. A thermometer is a great investment for someone new to brooding. The heat lamp should be placed so that the ducklings can get away from the heat if needed. Overheating is just as dangerous as chilling for ducklings.

Feeders and waterers should be placed at the perimeter of the heat source. Ducklings may not go to eat and drink if the area is too hot or too cold.

Water

Ducklings need to have constant access to water whenever feed is available. They need to be able to wash their eyes and nares (nostrils) to remove dust or debris. A chick waterer can be used for the first week or so but they will quickly outgrow it. Adding large marbles to the base of the waterer will help to keep the babies out of the water. A non-spill waterer can be easily and cheaply made. A gallon milk jug or shallow food storage container can be used. Simply cut a hole at the height of the ducklings back that is large enough for them to fit just their entire head in. These will need to be replaced on a weekly basis as the ducklings outgrow them.

A platform can be fashioned out of a container covered in hardware cloth so the splashing of the waterer is contained there. Place the waterer in the brooder in advance so that the water is room temperature. When the ducklings arrive, dip each of their beaks in the water and ensure that they swallow.

Ducklings should not be allowed to get and stay wet. Extreme care should be taken in allowing them to swim when young. Ducklings easily tire and can drown even in a small amount of water. A thorough drying is needed if they get wet.

Size of container, height and hole size will change based on duckling age. This is a 16 oz container and would okay for a few ducklings that are under 2 weeks.

Feed

It is recommended that ducklings have feed available 24/7 for the first 6-8 weeks. Ducklings should be fed starter feed with 18-20% protein for the first two weeks. This can be in a crumble form or a mash. Mash should be wet to make it easier to eat. If mash is used, it must be replaced several times a day to prevent spoilage. They can be given chick starter, duck/waterfowl starter, broiler starter, or turkey starter. Care should be taken when feeding a higher protein level feed as physical damage can result.

For many people, duck specific feed is not available. Many people have good results feeding starter or a feed developed for all ages/species. Layer feed should NEVER be given to growing ducklings as the calcium level is too high and can result in damage or death.

Feeders should be shallow for the first few days. Jar lids, egg carton flats or anything that will not tip but is very low will work. Once eating well, they can be switched to troughs. Whole grains should not be given until ducklings are several weeks old. Ducklings

do not need grit if they are fed only commercial feed. If grains or greens are fed, they need appropriate size grit.

Niacin

If ducklings are fed chick starter a niacin supplement should be given for the first 10 weeks. Brewer's yeast can be added to feed (2-3 cups per 10 lbs of feed) or niacin tablets can be added to water (100-150mg per gallon).

How Many to Get

Ducklings do best with other ducks. Some people have luck in raising a single duckling but ducks need companionship which is best provided by another duckling. Ducks can live up to 15 years and while "right now" you may have the time to devote to a duckling, it is unlikely that your life won't change in the next 10-15 years. Two ducklings will still bond to their owner but they will have each other to spend time with, play with and act like a duck with.

Can I Release Them?

No. Domestic ducklings raised by people do not possess the skills needed to survive on their own. They have not learned skills from a wild mother that they need to survive and are unlikely to possess migratory instincts, if they can even fly.

Source: www.backyardchickens.com raising and caring for ducklings