



# Braden Run Animal Hospital

Accredited by the  
American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)  
216 Braden Run Road, Waynesburg, PA 15370 724-627-5079



## Rabbit Tips

### Life Span

Rabbits are prey species, which means that they won't show that they are sick until they can no longer hide it. Therefore, rabbits require extra observation on the part of the owner. A rabbit should always be alert when anyone is watching it, especially in a threatening or new environment. Life span of rabbits ranges from 5-10 years, usually 6-7 years. Smaller sized rabbits reach breeding age quicker than larger sized rabbits. Kits, or baby bunnies, only nurse once or twice a day for a duration of 3-5 minutes.

### Housing

Rabbits can be litter trained for urination, but they will still defecate wherever they please. Avoid complete wire bottom cages as the incidence of pressure sores and pododermatitis increases. Bedding of shredded paper or towels is preferred over straw or hay. Each rabbit cage should allow a minimum of "3 hops forward" as well as be tall enough that the rabbit can stand on his hind feet. Individual housing is preferred to prevent fighting. Rabbits enjoy cooler temperatures. Their ideal environmental temperature is 65°F. They must be kept cooler than 82°F, because they only have sweat glands on their lips.

### Diet

What a rabbit eats is incredibly important to its health. The dietary goal is to have high fiber and low carbohydrates. They require long stem hay for proper gut motility. At least 85% of the diet should be timothy hay. Dark leafy greens can be given (i.e. dandelions). If the rabbit gets diarrhea from introduction of the greens, he or she is not getting enough fiber or hay. Pelleted diets were designed for meat rabbits, which have a short life span and need to grow rapidly. Therefore, pelleted feeds are not ideal for the pet rabbit. If pellets are used, no more than 1/8c per 5# body weight should be offered along with adequate timothy hay. Rabbits enjoy fruits, and sugary and starchy foods. Unfortunately, these foods are not good for the rabbit GI tract, as they decrease motility.

### Coprophagy

Yes, bunnies eat poop at night. Since they do most of their digestion in their hind gut, they need to eat "night feces" to get their full nutrition. "Night feces" are different from regular fecal pellets the bunnies produce during the day. Night feces look like a cluster of grapes coated in mucus, and contain a large amount of necessary protein and vitamins. The rabbit should eat them directly from his rump. Overweight rabbits are unable to reach their rump and will become malnourished.

### Preventative Medicine

Annual wellness exams are strongly recommended. We at BRAH can check your rabbit for any subtle hints of disease. Teeth problems are common. When checked by a veterinarian every year, minor teeth alignment can be done to prevent significant disease caused by misaligned bites. No rabbit vaccinations are required in the US. Please watch your bunny for any signs of decreased appetite or change in amount or consistency of droppings. These are signs of a serious and life threatening disease known as ileus, where the GI tract motility shuts down. Please call us as ileus is an emergency.

### Spay/Neuter

Spaying and neutering is important for two reasons: behavior and health. Some rabbits will show inappropriate aggression or mating behavior and inappropriate elimination. These may be curbed or reduced by spaying or neutering. More importantly, uterine cancer appears very commonly in female rabbits. Spaying is often curative, even if the cancer is already present. We recommend spaying and neutering around 6 months of age. Overweight rabbits and older rabbits are more technically difficult to spay. Rabbits are sensitive to anesthesia, but we use safe gas anesthesia and have an anesthesia technician monitoring during the entire procedure.

### Interesting facts

Rabbits cannot breathe through their mouth. If your bunny gets a cold, he will not be able to breathe properly.

Rabbits do not have foot pads, merely a thick layer of fur cushions their foot.

Rabbits can't vomit.

Rabbit water intake should be high (a 4 pound rabbit should drink the same amounts as a 22 pound dog)

Rabbits have very fine bones and can break their back easily. The "football" hold is recommended.

Thanks for choosing **Braden Run Animal Hospital** as your premier veterinary center. We are the only AAHA ([www.healthypet.com](http://www.healthypet.com)) accredited hospital in Greene County. We also offer 24 hour emergency service. Hope to see you soon!

Drs Anita McMillen & Mikk Register & the friendly helpful staff at Braden Run Animal Hospital