

# Rabbit Management



**Rabbit Skill:** Develop a rabbit care management plan.

**Life Skill:** Planning and organizing

**Success Indicator:** Interviews others and develops a management schedule.

**Science Standard:** Systems, order and organization

## Caring for Rabbits

There are many opinions about the best way to care for a rabbit. All of them consider basic rabbit needs. Many differ in how the care is given. Your rabbit project depends on you to study the differences and create your own plan.



*I need a really good rabbit care plan.*

### “Hop to it!”

What do others think about rabbit care? Ask two people what they think rabbits need. Write their answers on two separate lists.

<p>First Person Name _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Second Person Name _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Now use the information to create your own schedule for caring for your rabbit. Compare the lists. What things are alike?

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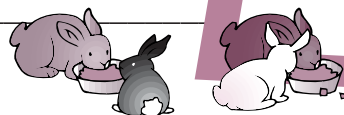
\_\_\_\_\_

What differences are there? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### My Rabbit Care Schedule



# Rabbit Rap

## Share What You Did

What did you learn from your interviews?  
What did you include in your plan?

## Process What's Important

What did you learn about rabbit care?  
How do your rabbits communicate their needs?

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## Generalize to Your Life

How does developing a plan help you?

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## Apply What You Learned

How will your plan help you care for your rabbit(s)?

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## Rabbit Facts

## Rabbit Management Tips

### Cage

An all-wire cage for a 6–7 lb. rabbit should be at least 2' wide by 18" high by 2' long. You'll need a sitting board 6–8" square or larger to prevent sore hocks and feet.

### Temperature

Outside cages need a shady roof and protection from rain, wind, drafts, dampness and direct sun during the hot summer months. To cool a rabbit, put a gallon jug of frozen water in the cage. Put long wet towels on the sides of the cage. Dampen the roof with cool water.

### Cleaning/Sanitation

Remove all droppings from the cage every day. At least once a month, clean and disinfect the cage and tray. Use a mild bleach solution. Rinse well.

### Feed

Rabbits need a balanced diet to grow and reproduce. Feed them commercially prepared 15%–18% protein rabbit pellets daily. The amount fed will vary with the age, weight and activity level of each animal. Five to six ounces will usually keep a mature New Zealand rabbit not in production in good condition. Small breeds need two to three ounces of pellets. Small amounts of fresh hay and grain may also be given. Feed a doe and her litter all they will eat each day. (Feed the doe only two to four ounces the first day after kindling to prevent caked udders.) Give weaned bunnies all they will eat.

Do not overfeed or let uneaten rabbit pellets stay in the dish day after day. Store the feed in a water/air tight container away from the sun and moisture so the pellets keep their nutritional value.

Check to see if a rabbit is being fed enough or too much by feeling the skin covering the ribs and back bone. If it's too thin, feed it more; if too fat, feed it less.

### Water—the most important nutrient

Rabbits need plenty of fresh, clean ice-free water each day. Clean the crock or water bottle every few days with a mild bleach solution and warm soapy water. Rinse thoroughly. A doe and her litter will drink about a gallon of water a day.

## Bounding Ahead

1. Visit a rabbitry to learn their management plan.

# Gear, Goods and Gadgets

What do you need to take care of rabbits? There are many pieces of equipment that will make your job easier. The key is to identify and learn about this equipment.

**Rabbit Skill:** Identify basic rabbit equipment.

**Life Skill:** Making decisions

**Success Indicator:** Uses decision making skills to correctly identify equipment used in raising rabbits.

**Science Standard:** Property of objects and materials

## Hop to it!

Match the pictures of the equipment with their names. Check the Rabbit Facts section for more information about each piece of equipment. Under each picture show its approximate cost.

*Rabbits don't need very much equipment.*

- a. Nest Box
- b. Crock
- c. Feeder
- d. Cage
- e. Water Bottle

**photo**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Rabbit Facts

#### Basic Equipment

##### Feeders

The most practical kind of feeder is a metal self-feeder with a screened bottom or a bottom that is perforated by many 1/8-inch holes to allow fines to sift out.

the bottom for small breeds. Feeders mounted on the outside take less space, are more sanitary and can be filled from outside the cage.

No matter what kind of feeder you choose, remember to check it daily and remove any dirty or moldy feed.

Mount the metal self-feeder on the side of the cage 4 inches from the cage bottom for giant breeds, 3 to 4 inches from the bottom for medium breeds and 2 inches from



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# Rabbit Rap

## Share What You Did

What equipment do you need to get started raising rabbits?

## Process What's Important

How did you decide what type of feeder or waterer to use?

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## Generalize to Your Life

What type of information do you use to help you decide to buy something you need?

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## Apply What You Learned

Now that you have decided what you need, how will you obtain it?

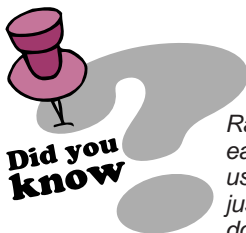
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Rabbits are easily trained to use a litter box just as a cat does.

# Rabbit Facts

## Basic Equipment

### Water Containers

Ceramic crocks with curved interior sides make useful water containers. They do not tip over easily. Rabbits do not chew on them.

Some people like unbreakable vinyl crocks for use all year because:

They break less when water freezes and expands. They are easier to clean and do not collect bacteria.

The bottle-tube waterer has a rubber stopper with a metal tube inserted into a plastic bottle. The bottle is mounted upside down on the outside of the cage. The tube lets the rabbit drink water without wasting or spilling it.

An automatic waterer provides plenty of clean water without much work. This waterer costs more to buy. It often has a break pressure tank with a float valve, a supply pipe and a valve for each cage.

Rabbits need clean, fresh water at all times. A rabbit that needs more water will eat less food and grows slower.

### Nest Box (see Kits 'n Kaboodle lesson)

Provide nest boxes for your does before they give birth. A nest box keeps the kits dry, protects them from hot or cold weather, and hides them from predators.

The size of the nest box is important. Nest boxes that are too large can cause the death of a kit. When a box is too big the doe may stay longer than needed to nurse her young. She may soil the bedding with her droppings. This can make the bedding damp and leave a strong ammonia odor that may cause respiratory illness in rabbits.

### Cage

Wire cages are easier and quicker to clean. They must be used with some type of shelter or hutch.

# Bounding Ahead

1. Go to an agriculture supply store and find approximate costs for a cage, crock, water bottle, feeder and nest box.
2. Visit with a rabbit breeder to ask what equipment is recommended.

# Hutch Sweet Hutch

Your rabbit will need housing that is suitable for your climate, conditions and cost. Examples of housing are included in this activity. When you decide on a cage for your rabbit, build it or find it. You'll want to record your rabbit's weight to help you decide the size of cage you need.



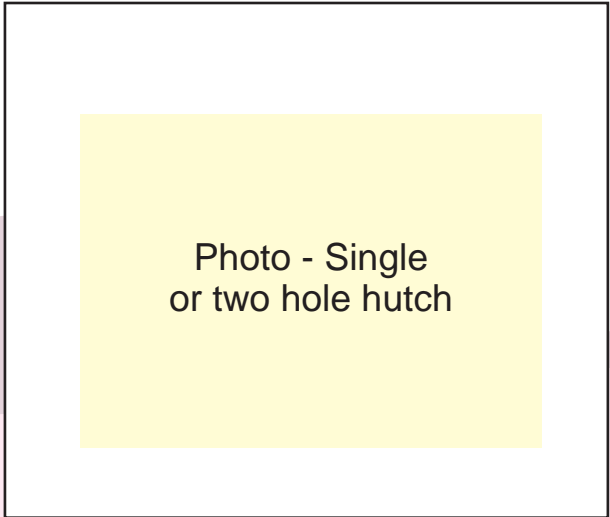
**Rabbit Skill:** Selecting an ideal cage  
**Life Skill:** Comparing alternatives  
**Success Indicator:** Uses decision making skills to follow directions and create or purchase a rabbit cage.  
**Science Standard:** Organisms and environments

## “Hop to it!”

Create the cage size and structure for your rabbit. Follow instructions to complete a rabbit cage. In the space below record the steps you did to build a cage or what you did to purchase one.

My rabbit's weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Cage size needed: \_\_\_\_\_



### Steps to Build or Purchase a Cage



# Rabbit Rap

## Share What You Did

What size cage does your rabbit need? How did you build or purchase housing for your rabbits?

## Process What's Important

What is most important to think about when deciding on rabbit housing? What is the cost difference between building a cage and buying one?

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## Generalize to Your Life

Describe how following instructions made it easier to build your cage.

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## Apply What You Learned

How will good housing help you be successful with this project?

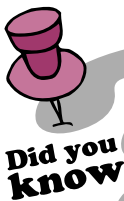
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The largest rabbit breed is the Flemish Giant.

## Rabbit Facts

### Building a Wire Cage

Make plans for housing before you purchase your rabbits. Housing may be a cage in the garage, a hutch in the backyard, or a special building with cages for a number of animals.

Use 1/2 x 1 inch, 14-gauge galvanized wire for the floor (place the 1/2-inch side face up and toward the rabbit's feet).

Use 1 x 2 inch, 16-gauge wire for the top and sides.

The size of the cage varies with the size of the breed:

Length x Width x Height

#### Small breeds

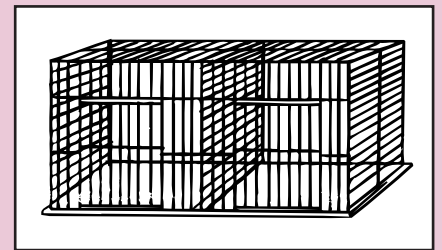
24" x 24" x 16" cage

#### Medium breeds

30" x 30" x 18" cage

#### Large breeds

48" x 30" x 18" cage



## Bounding Ahead

1. Shop at a local feed supply store to compare the cost of pre-made cages. Record your findings. Compare the sets of prices. Which is a better choice for you?

# Keeping a Pedigree

In addition to daily management records, pedigrees are an important part of your project. You should keep three generation pedigree records for all of your rabbits. The pedigree should show the name and address of the breeder, the breed of the rabbit, and birth date of the rabbit. It should also give the following information for the rabbit, and for each of the rabbits in its three generation ancestry, ear number, name, sex, color, weight, registration number (if any), grand champion number (if any) and show wins (if any). Try to keep your pedigree records up to date. When you sell a rabbit, give the buyer the pedigree at the time of sale.



- Rabbit Skill:** Learning parts of a pedigree
- Life Skill:** Record keeping
- Success Indicator:** Enters information correctly on a pedigree
- Science Standard:** Characteristics of organisms

Photo – youth at a computer  
GC

## “Hop to it!”

Prepare a rabbit pedigree. Use the following information to fill in the first generation for a Dutch rabbit called “Megan’s Sweet Pea”, ear No. M200.

Sire:	Megan’s Hercules
Date of Birth:	01-07-03
Ear No.	M95
Color:	Black
Reg. No.	X46522
Wt. _____	G.C. No. _____
Winnings	
Variety:	Dutch

Dam:	Miss Megan
Date of Birth:	04-06-03
Ear No.	M100
Color:	Black
Reg. No.	X7205R
Wt. _____	G.C. No. _____
Winnings	
Variety:	Dutch

### Application for Registration

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Breed \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Variety \_\_\_\_\_

Name of rabbit \_\_\_\_\_ Ear Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Sire: \_\_\_\_\_

Reg. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Wt. \_\_\_\_\_ G.C. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Variety \_\_\_\_\_

Dam: \_\_\_\_\_

Reg. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Wt. \_\_\_\_\_ G.C. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Variety \_\_\_\_\_

# Rabbit Rap

## Share What You Did

What items did you include in the pedigree?

## Process What's Important

Why is it necessary to keep pedigrees?

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## Generalize to Your Life

What records do you and your family have that are similar to a rabbit's pedigree?

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## Apply What You Learned

How does your family record family history?

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**Check this out!**

Contact the ARBA for pedigree forms. Many feed companies also have record forms available.

Acknowledgments: Megan Kline

# Rabbit Facts

## Types of Rabbit Records

**Pedigree Record** - The family tree of each individual rabbit is listed. It shows the sires and dams and the grand sires and dams. It lists the color and senior weight of each rabbit. There is a place for registration and grand champion numbers of each rabbit. A three generation pedigree is needed to register your rabbit.

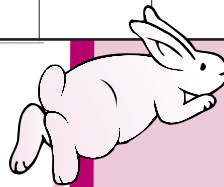
**Herd Record** - This record includes every rabbit in your rabbitry. Listed are the sire, dam, sex, color and date of birth of each rabbit. Also the date it leaves your rabbitry. Comments such as buyers' names or rabbit show winnings help keep track of each rabbit.

**Breeding Record** - Each breeding is recorded on this record. It will help you decide which does are the most productive and which bucks are the best.

**Show Record** - A show record includes dates and places of shows entered plus information on classes and awards received. It helps the exhibitor know the faults and good points of each rabbit.

**Rabbit Show Record**

Name of Show	Location	Date Entered	Ear Tattoo Number	Classes Entered	Number in Class	Show Placing	Show Premiums



## Bounding Ahead

1. Have one of your rabbits registered.
2. Give a demonstration or talk about a pedigree.