

RABBITS IN THE SHELTER SETTING:

A GUIDE FOR ACO'S AND SHELTER STAFF

Presented by the House Rabbit Connection, Inc.

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President

ABOUT HRC

501 (C)3 NON-PROFIT

FOUNDED IN 1997 IN SPRINGFIELD, MA

ALL VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

FOSTER HOME ONLY RESCUE

CAN ONLY TAKE IN FROM: ACOS, VETERINARIANS, OTHER RESCUES

COVER CENTRAL/NORTHERN CT TO WESTERN MA



USEFUL LINKS:

HOUSE RABBIT CONNECTION:

HOPLINE.ORG

INFO@HOPLINE.ORG

MARLENE@HOPLINE.ORG

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY:

RABBIT.ORG





WHAT EVERY ACO SHOULD KNOW:
ABOUT DOMESTIC RABBITS IN YOUR FACILITY

- ▶ People leave animals in homes/apartments when they move
- ▶ Individuals set them free outdoors thinking they can survive on their own
- ▶ Animal cruelty/neglect seizures by ACOs



Daniel taken by Springfield, MA ACO

WHY MORE RABBITS IN MUNICIPAL POUNDS?



HOPE

Seized by Ashford, CT ACO

- Matted
- Fleas
- Open wounds from being on 3 in. of her own waste
- neglected



Havahart trap



net

CAPTURING STRAY RABBITS

- Can be tricky!
- They take cover in brambles & thickets
- Under porches and decks
- Catch & release can harm rabbits when they try to escape

- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Litter
- ▶ Dietary needs
- ▶ Bedding
- ▶ Health

SPECIAL NEEDS OF RABBITS

IZZY:

REMOVED FROM HOME BY
SPRINGFIELD, MA ACO'S

ABUSED

STARVED

NEGLECTED



All rabbits are prey animals:

Need a quiet location

- Away from barking dogs
- Probably not the front office either!

NO wire mesh cage bottoms

- Rabbits can rip toes
- Causes sore hocks

Use solid bottom dog crates instead



HOUSING

- ▶ Rabbits train very easily to a litter box
- Clean litter boxes with white vinegar
- Put a huge handful of hay in half of litter box
 - Eating triggers peristalsis action

Wood stove pellets for litter!

- Dirt cheap: \$6 for a 40lb bag
- Tractor Supply sells same thing but called Horse Bedding
- Biodegradable
- Excellent for odor control

POTTY MOUTH: TOILETING NEEDS



DIETARY NEEDS

Rabbit digestive systems almost identical to a horse!

- Need to keep gut moving at all times
- Good quality Timothy hay 24/7 needs to be about 85% of their diet
- Limited food pellets: processed food ie. Burger King, McDonalds
- NO grains, nuts, seeds, or corn
- Can have some greens each day
- Fresh water daily



BEDDING

NO Cedar or Pine shavings

- Have chemical called phenols which accumulate in liver causing health issues over time



HEALTH

- Rabbits are part of the family called lagomorphs
- Bottom of the food chain: they are designed to hide their illness until the bitter end so you don't always have the luxury of time on your side
- Stress can cause a rabbit to go into GI Stasis
- Spay/neuter to prevent ovarian/testicular/uterine cancers
- Litter box is your best diagnostic tool: be sure they are peeing, pooping, eating, and drinking
- Exotic vets are vets that see birds, guinea pigs, rabbits etc.

RABBITS ARE NOT RODENTS!

THEY ARE IN THE ORDER LAGOMORPHA: PIKA, HARE, AND RABBIT



Gestation period: just 31 days!

Q & A