

Rabbit Shopping Guide



Most of the products sold for rabbits at pet stores are incorrect, unhealthy, and in some cases downright dangerous! However, for many people, a pet store is the only option for finding supplies. In this document, we've compiled this list of recommended products to help people find the good supplies and avoid the bad.

If at all possible, we encourage you to shop for supplies at pet stores which do not sell animals. Here are two of the best in NC:

- **AniMall** - 1105 Walnut St., Ste. 103 | Cary, NC 27511 | 919.465.2500
info@animall.org
Hours: M-F 10am-9pm Sat. 10am-9pm Sunday Noon-6
- **Phydeaux** - 400-A1 S. Elliott Rd. | Chapel Hill, NC 27514 | (919) 960-3606 | Toll-Free 1-866-PHYDEAUX (749-3328)
10 W. Franklin St. | Raleigh, NC 27604 | (919) 833-9216
Phydeaux also has online ordering.

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New Rabbit Shopping Guide

Cages

There are currently no commercially available cages which have the appropriate dimensions for rabbits. You can order appropriate cages online from Leith Petwerks (<http://www.leithpetwerks.com/>), but we use and recommend Cube and Coroplast cages, made according to the instructions on www.guineapigcages.com. Grids are available at Target, or they can be made with Closetmaid Shelving from a hardware store, and the Coroplast is available at Southeastern Sign Supply in Apex (919-363-1722) (they also deliver all over the state) or at any local FastSigns location.



We also use dog x-pens as an easy alternative rabbit pen. Four Paws K9 Keeper Exercise pens come in a variety of heights (we typically use the 24" or 30" heights, but lighter, jumpier rabbits may need a taller pen). Two pens can be connected end to end to make a huge, safe play area if the rabbit's room cannot be rabbitproofed. Place the playpen on a sheet of Coroplast to protect floors.



An unconventional but appropriately sized cage can be made using a Z-crate brand dog crate – the 42"x28"x31" or 48"x30"x34" sizes will both provide nearly the correct floor space. You can also hang a shelf half-way up to give the bunny a "perch" and a little extra room to jump.



NEVER use a cage smaller than 20"x40" inside dimensions. Rabbits kept in too-small cages are prone to cage aggression and loss of litterbox training, plus they are much less entertaining when they have no room to move around. **Never use wire-floored cages** – the wire damages' rabbits toes and prevents litterbox training.

Litterpans

Rabbits will naturally littertrain themselves if offered a litterbox. We recommend avoiding the litterpans which are sold specifically for rabbits (Super Pet brands) because they are too small – rabbits will not use a pan they cannot get entirely inside of. They are also hard to clean and far more expensive than regular litterpans. For best results, place the rabbits' hay manger overtop of the litterbox so the rabbit has to sit in the box to eat.

The Van Ness Cat Litter Pan (Large CP2 or Medium CP1) is fine for most rabbits. Go larger if you have a big breed or multiple rabbits. Always offer one more litterbox than your number of rabbits.



The Bill Covered Pans are great for larger rabbits or pairs, but most rabbits won't use a covered pan – just take it apart and use the top elsewhere in the cage as a hidy house!

Litter

Litter should only be placed in the litterbox, the rest of the cage should be bare (although you can offer a towel or grass mat to lay on). Using litter in the entire cage impairs the rabbits' ability to learn to use his litterbox.

We use and recommend wood pellet litters. It is very inexpensive and is excellently absorbent, but it is a little dusty. The conventional brand is called Feline Pine, but Marthwood Wood Stove Pellets (sold for burning in wood stoves) are the exact same product at a fraction of the cost.



Another litter we like is Yesterday's News, a product made out of recycled newspaper. It has excellent absorbency and is nearly dustless, and has good odor control as well. For older rabbits or for owners who prefer to offer a softer litter, Carefresh is another excellent paper-based bedding, although somewhat more expensive.



Another litter alternative is Aspen shavings. They are safe and inexpensive, but very dusty and not recommended for people with allergies. They also aren't as absorbent for rabbit urine and don't control the odor very well.



NEVER use cedar or pine shavings. The phenols (aromatic oils) are toxic to rabbits and cause respiratory infections as well as liver failure. **Never use conventional mineral-based cat litter** – rabbits ingest their litter, and mineral-based litters cause fatal intestinal blockage.

Houses

Rabbits always need a hidy house! However, most rabbits are too large for commercial hidy houses. For tiny breeds you can use the Giant Pet Igloo (60407), but the best hidy house is a big cardboard box, like the kind copier paper comes in. Bunnies love to shred their boxes and this gives them great entertainment for free!



Travel Carrier

A small hard-sided carrier is needed to transport your bunny to and from the vet. The Marchioro Clipper Aran is a nice brand which has a convenient top opening in addition to the standard side door. The smallest ones are great for single rabbits, but go larger if you have a bonded pair – they prefer to travel together!



Toys

Bunnies love toys, but beware that most toys are marketed for their human interest rather than their interest to the rabbit. Rabbits don't tend to gnaw on wooden toys, they prefer cardboard for that. Wooden toys are only good if they can be tossed or thrown. The Nut Knot is an excellent example of this type of toy. Small plastic cat balls are also good for bunnies.



Bunnies love grass mats, like the Peter's Woven Grass Mat. It's great for chewing as well as laying on. We always keep several extras on hand!



Hay Manger

Commercial hay mangers are very overpriced. Go to Home Depot and get a small wire basket of the type sold for kitchen use. They work just as well, and hold much more hay, for less than half the cost!



Bowls

A rabbit needs three bowls: one for water, one for veggies, one for pellets. Any shallow stoneware bowl is fine - "Ethical Products" is a good pet store brand. Choose shallow bowls so the rabbits don't have trouble getting the pellets out - a 3" to 4" diameter bowl works best for pellets, 5" for veggies. Get one pellet bowl for each rabbit.



Get a crock that is very wide and heavy to use for water - bunnies will turn them over to be troublesome!

Water Bottles or Water Bowls?

While rabbits typically prefer to drink from a crock rather than a bottle, some owners like to offer both at once - if the bottle runs dry the bowl is still available, and if the bowl gets dirty the bottle is still clean. Any of the bottle brands sold by pet stores are fine - Super Pet, Oasis or Lixit - we prefer the glass bottles but that's mostly because they don't break as easily. Get at least a 16 ounce bottle so that it does not need to be refilled more than twice a day.



Hay

Grass hay is the most important part of the rabbit diet. Unlimited hay should be available at all times. Always choose timothy, bluegrass, or orchard grass – these are true hays which contain the correct amounts of fiber to ensure proper digestion and proper tooth wear. Alfalfa hay is actually a legume, and is high in calcium, which leads to bladder sludge. **Alfalfa hay should only be fed to bunnies under 1 year old**, after that age, they cannot process the excess calcium.

Both Oxbow and Zupreem make high-quality hay.



Pelleted Food

Most pet stores carry many brands of pelleted rabbit food, but **only two brands are truly safe for rabbits**:

Oxbow Bunny Basic T and Zupreem Nature's Promise are recommended for bunnies over 1 year old. Oxbow also makes an Organic Rabbit version which is fine as well. Only purchase 5-10 lbs at a time to ensure freshness.



Avoid ALL other brands of pelleted food. Other brands contain alfalfa (which leads to bladder sludge), seeds or nuts (which can cause choking and are high in fats) or sugary binders such as molasses, which leads to obesity and GI upset.

Veggies

Don't forget, your bunny needs daily vitamin-A rich veggies! Romaine lettuce, parsley, cilantro, and sweet bell peppers are the best place to start. Check www.rabbit.org for more details about good and bad veggies.

Treats

MOST COMMERCIAL TREATS ARE DANGEROUS TO RABBITS. Seed treats can cause choking or esophageal perforation. Yogurt treats upset the GI tract (rabbits cannot digest the milk enzymes). Other types of treats are full of empty calories and questionable ingredients.

The BEST treat for rabbits is always fresh herbs and veggies. If you strongly wish to purchase commercial treats, the only safe one is Oxbow Papaya Tablets:

New package



Old Package



Food Storage

IRIS Pet Pantry Airtight Food Storage products are very handy to store pellets and hay.



SAY NO to these products

Wheels/Rollabout Balls (even tiny rabbits cannot use them due to the difference between the way a rabbit's legs move and the way a rat's or hamster's legs move)

Any pre-packaged treat, especially any containing nuts or yogurt (can cause choking or GI upset)

Salt or mineral wheels (can cause bladder stones and are unnecessary)

Any bathing, parasite control, dietary supplement, or hygiene product that is not from a rabbit-savvy veterinarian (some contain dangerous amounts of chemicals or are themselves toxic to rabbits)

Other products you will need – available elsewhere

Dawn Dishwashing Liquid – safe for cleaning bottles and bowls, as well as safe for very occasional use as a shampoo

Medium-sized dustpan – for scooping out dirty litter from the litterbox

Paper towels & White vinegar – for cleaning the cage and litterbox before new litter is added

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**For more information on care or local adoption options,
please contact www.allcreaturesrescue.org**