



# Kaninchenschutz e. V.

- Helfen mit Herz -  
<http://www.Kaninchenschutz.de>

## Basic principals of keeping indoor rabbits

### 1. Where can I get rabbits?

Rabbits should not be bought in pet stores or at the breeder's. This will support the uncontrolled breeding of rabbits while many animals are waiting for a home in the animal shelter. It is better to visit a local animal shelter or to contact an animal rights group (e. g. [www.kaninchenschutz.de](http://www.kaninchenschutz.de)).

### 2. Why never an individual animal?

Rabbits are sociable animals and you should keep a minimum of two. Human beings or other animals (e. g. guinea pigs) cannot replace a conspecific. Even if you already own an individual animal you can and should consider acquiring a conspecific.

### 3. Bringing together rabbits

To bring rabbits together you should follow some expert advice in order to avoid fights. It is important to provide a neutral territory where neither rabbit has been before.

If you intend to place boxes and cartons for shelter please make sure they have at least two exits. Put the rabbits together in the area and watch them. Normally the rabbits will sniff the new territory and after a while they will approach each other. Maybe one rabbit will try to escape while the other is chasing it. This is normal and you should keep back. As long as the rabbits do not hurt each other, please stay calm. It may look serious for the owner but this is the rabbits' way of establishing their hierarchy. The whole process can take from a couple of days to a couple of months at worst. When the rabbits get along with each other, the initial phase of the introduction process is finished.

### 4. How much space do rabbits need?

Anyone who has watched wild rabbits knows how active they are. Therefore a standard cage will not meet the needs of a rabbit. In order to allow an indoor rabbit an appropriate keeping an enclosure of at least 2 m<sup>2</sup> per animal should be provided. Enclosure elements (e. g. [www.ebay.de](http://www.ebay.de)) or own constructions made of wood ([www.kaninchengehege.com](http://www.kaninchengehege.com)) are appropriate. Additionally the rabbits should be able to move around freely in the secured flat daily.

### 5. How to equip the enclosure

In order to protect the flooring material of the enclosure you can use a non-slippery PVC-floor which can be cleaned easily. You can cover the PVC-floor with pieces of carpet. As a toilet you can use a cat's litter box or cage subshells filled with chips, wood pellets and/or straw.

A sufficiently large hay bucket should be available as well as water in a bowl that can't tip over.

We advise against using nipple drinkers because they are hard to clean, release water only drop by drop and lead to an unnatural posture.

Appropriate toys and items of interest added to your enclosure help entertain your rabbit, such as branches, cardboard boxes and cosy tubes.

### 6. How to protect the apartment

Many rabbits like cables. To prevent nibbling we suggest hiding reachable cables in cable ducts or behind skirting boards.

It might be necessary to protect wallpaper behind plexiglass or wooden panels, because otherwise the "little artists" might work on the wallpaper according to their ideas.

Ensure there are no dangerous poisonous plants within reach.

## **7. How to feed rabbits**

Most important is the daily supply with hay, which has to be available at all times, as well as fresh water. Additionally provide your rabbit with vegetables, fresh herbs and grass (slow feeding is suggested). Generally, almost all vegetable varieties are well tolerated by rabbits. New varieties should be introduced gradually. Healthy animals do not need additional generic feed mixes, these are rapidly fattening and contain additives such as sugar, milk and oils, which are harmful for rabbits. You should avoid snacks such as yoghurt drops or bread sticks for the same reason. Hard bread and rolls or potato peelings do not belong on the menu either.

For tooth abrasion you should instead offer pesticide free branches of fruit trees or wicker toys.

## **8. When should rabbits visit the veterinarian?**

All rabbits need to be vaccinated twice yearly against Myxomatosis and once yearly against Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD). Other than that you should visit the veterinarian when your animal behaves unusually, has little appetite or shows symptoms of disease. Rabbits are sensitive animals, so please do not hesitate too long.

We will be pleased to help you find a local veterinarian who is experienced with rabbits.

Contact us or visit our online forum ([www.kaninchenschutzforum.de](http://www.kaninchenschutzforum.de))