

## HEALTHY HOPPERS

### ♥ It's natural for prey animals to hide illness or pain.

If your bunny stops eating, refuses treats or does not seem himself (lethargic / unusually aggressive / looking uncomfortable) it's time to see a vet immediately. DON'T WASTE TIME.

♥ **Bunnies commonly suffer from trapped gas & GI stasis** (digestion stops), which can be fatal if left untreated. It can be spotted quickly if you know what bunny poop should/shouldn't look like. Every healthy bunny has 2 types of poop:

1) **Round poops** that they drop everywhere: healthy poops are not too hard or too soft, not too dark (darkness indicates lack of fiber/hay), not too small and perfectly round/egg shaped.

2) **Caecotrophes** – grapelike, squishy poops that they eat straight from their bum so you shouldn't see these often. If you do, or they are leaving marks on the floor, you may need to adjust bunny's food. If you find truly runny poop, it's time to see a vet!

### ♥ Always keep an emergency kit at home

(speak to your bunny-savvy vet about this) and know where your closest after-hours bunny-savvy vet is.

## DON'T DUMP, REHOME!

♥ While many people think that they are "setting a bunny free" when dumping it in a field, domestic bunnies cannot survive in the wild. They live short lives full of terror and illness, often killed by cars, predators or starvation. If you can no longer take care of your pet, put him up for adoption on our Rehome Page and give him a new chance at life.

## ADOPT, DON'T SHOP!

♥ There is really no need to buy a bunny from a pet shop when there are bunnies of all ages, shapes and sizes in foster care all over the Cape. Check out our Rehome Page or contact our rescuers to find the right bunny for you:

**Michelle du Toit** | 082 780 3955  
**Sian Christina Huyser** | 062 124 5325

## BUNNY-SAVVY VETS

♥ **Dr Coetzee de Beer** at CARE (Centre for Avian, Reptiles and Exotics), Klapmuts | 021 875 5063 / 086 123 2473 **(24-hour support)**

♥ **Dr. Bernice van Huyssteen** at CEAH (Cape Exotic Animal Hospital), Durbanville | 021 975 2239

♥ **Dr. Kim Tutt** at Cape Animal Medical Centre, Kenilworth | 021 674 0034

♥ **Dr Ilse Jenkinson** at Teva Veterinary Clinic, Somerset West | 021 851 3511 / 3554

♥ **Dr Susie Petersen** at Noordhoek Veterinary Clinic, Noordhoek | 021 789 2888

♥ **Dr. Lauren McGavin & Dr. Gina du Plessis** at Steenberg Veterinary Clinic, Westlake | 021 701 0557

♥ **Dr. Steven Smith** at Tygerberg Animal Hospital Kenridge | 021 914 0886

♥ **Dr. Vanessa Persson** at Observatory Animal Clinic, Observatory | 021 447 1331

Bunny Huggers South Africa would like to thank TEARS, ARO and Grassy Park SPCA, as well as the numerous vets who have helped us treat, spay & neuter rescued bunnies. Without you, we would be a lot less effective in our rescue efforts.

## BUNNY HUGGERS ONLINE

### Join The Bunny Huggers South Africa Facebook Group

It's an interactive community where we help each other and learn to be the best bunny parents we can be, together! We share info, pics, tears and laughter.

♥ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BunnyHuggersSA/>

**The Bunny Huggers South Africa Rehome Page**  
networks bunnies in need of homes and/or lost bunnies:

♥ <https://www.facebook.com/bunnyhuggersrehomepage/>

**For more info** on all things bunny-related, visit:

♥ <http://bunny-huggers.co.za/>



# BUNNY HUGGERS

South Africa

WESTERN CAPE

# BUNNY BASICS

**Bunnies are cute, playful, smart, entertaining, sassy and they make great pets if you're ready for the commitment.**

## YOU SHOULD KNOW:

♥ They aren't low-maintenance starter pets but rather exotic pets with unique needs.

♥ They can live up to 12 years; so when you adopt a bunny, make sure you're in it for the long run.

♥ Just like dogs, they need daily affection and space to exercise. A hutch is not enough!

♥ They need care from an exotic/bunny-savvy vet and a lot of good quality food to keep them healthy.

## HEALTHY DIET

♥ **Hay** (a bunny-sized clump of fresh hay per day)  
Bunnies shouldn't go without hay for even one day because they need a LOT of fibre. Oat hay, teff/eragrostis hay, mountain/meadow hay, orchard grass. Don't mistake straw for hay. Straw has no nutritional value (it is dry, yellow, and hollow in the middle).

♥ **Fresh grass** (whenever possible)  
Bunnies' teeth are constantly growing and need to be worn down by grass. It contains silica which wears the teeth down better than anything else. It's really only good within minutes of picking so if you don't have a garden, why not plant some grass in trays?

♥ **Safe veggies/greens** (1-2 cups per day)  
Basil, mint, coriander, rosemary, thyme, fennel, oregano, sage, lavender, carrot tops, dandelion leaves and flowers, rose/hibiscus flowers (watch out for pesticides), lettuce (except for cos and iceberg which make bunnies sick). Keep house plants and bulb plants out of reach as they can be poisonous!

♥ **Good quality pellets** (1-2 tbsp. per day)  
Just plain brown pellets, please. Corn, peas and seeds in some pellet mixes can cause tummy and teeth trouble, actually shortening a bunny's life. We recommend: Burgess Excel, Selective, Bunny Chow, Verse Laga Crispy Snack, Marltons plain brown pellets. Reduce pellets if bunny is overweight or won't eat enough hay.

♥ **Treats** (1 tsp or less per day)  
Apple, pineapple, carrot, banana, raisins, grapes, papaya, mango, watermelon. Remove all seeds, except on strawberries.

## FEEDING TIPS

♥ **Young bunnies' dietary needs differ**  
**0 - 8 weeks** (away from Mom bunny too early): need to be given Royal Canin kitten milk and Protexin (Available at vet shop). Please don't attempt to feed a tiny baby bunny without seeking help from us at BHSA as it is quite tricky.  
**Under 6 months:** Unlimited alfalfa/lucerne hay for bone growth, extra pellets and rolled oats for weight gain.

♥ **Always introduce a new food gradually** to see if your bunny's system tolerates it. Stop feeding this food immediately if your rabbit has runny poop.

♥ **NEVER starve your bunny** before an operation or for any other reason. They can't vomit under anaesthetic so it's better to feed as usual to avoid tummy trouble.

## BEST BEHAVIOUR

♥ **Bunnies aren't good pets for kids under the age of 10** because they are delicate. We recommend vigilant adult supervision. When picking a bunny up, its back and hind legs need to be supported – one big kick while dangling in the air could leave your bunny paralysed for life. They don't often like being picked up or squeezed and will use sharp nails and teeth if necessary.

♥ **Spaying/neutering is wise**  
It prevents cancer and hormonal/territorial/aggressive behavior as well as unwanted litters – up to 9 kits every 3 weeks from puberty at 12 weeks of age.

♥ **They can be litterbox trained** (better when they are spayed/neutered). To start with litter box training, place the litterbox in the corner that your rabbit has chosen to do his business. Wipe up any urine with tissue, collect all droppings and put them in the litterbox until bunny gets the hint.

♥ **Bunnies are much happier in (spayed/neutered) bonded pairs** or groups. Just remember to read up on bonding before introducing a new bunny, or even better – adopt a bonded pair! Please don't house rabbits with guinea pigs as a rabbit can easily injure or pass diseases onto a piggy.

♥ **Bored bunnies become naughty**  
Keep your bunny entertained with toys to prevent him from chewing electrical cords and furniture: wooden parrot toys, hard plastic balls/stacking cups, tunnels and boxes. The best entertainment is always a friend.

## GOOD GROOMING

♥ **NEVER put your bunny in water** They clean themselves like cats and are generally quite good at it. It's so stressful for them to be bathed that it could cause a heart attack. If your bunny is very dirty, use a damp cloth and dry your bunny properly. If your bun is heavily soiled or matted you might need to have him shaved by a bunny-savvy vet/groomer.

♥ **Short-haired bunnies** need help grooming themselves during moulting season. Brush out loose fur to prevent your bunny swallowing too much of it causing dangerous blockages in the digestive system

♥ **Long-haired bunnies** need daily brushing to avoid knots getting out of hand. They also need to be shaved in the summer to avoid heat exhaustion.

♥ **Trim nails regularly** or else they could get hooked and rip out. You can learn to look for the nerve and trim them with dog nail clippers if you want to.

♥ **We recommend these bunny-savvy groomers** especially for long-haired bunnies:

**Jeni's Pet Parlour** in Newlands | 021 685 2982  
**Happy Tails** in Joostenberg Vlakte | 076 742 5130

## HAPPY HOME

♥ **Bunnies need space** – at least a few hours of run time daily and a sizeable living area. Living in a small cage can cause depression and aggression.

♥ **Keep them safe** from traffic, other animals, delicious electrical cords and poisonous plants by being smart about where your bunny can and can't go. Bunny-proof their space so they can't hurt themselves or eat your precious possessions. This will help your bunny live a long, happy life.

♥ **Bunnies don't handle heat well** and do better in cooler temperatures. Ice bottles, fans and cold tiles help prevent heat exhaustion in summer. Always provide good shelter from the wind, rain and sun.