*Lots of Lops Rabbitry*~Rabbit Care Handbook

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**Lots of Lops Rabbitry**

Congratulations on making the decision to buy a LOL rabbit! Owning and raising a rabbit is a challenging yet incredibly rewarding experience for ten years or more. We're so excited for you! Our rabbits come with lifelong support - that means at any point in the rabbit's life you can contact us with questions, comments, or concerns; no matter how bad or good the news is, we're here to help and offer advice.

If you want to learn more about rabbit care beyond what is covered in this handbook, feel free to check out my rabbitry website, [www.lotsoflops.com](http://www.lotsoflops.com) for a series of educational articles I wrote. These articles may answer any questions you may have. If not, you are of course welcome to contact me personally. ☺

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, we're always willing to help out. Email me at [lolrabbitry@gmail.com](mailto:lolrabbitry@gmail.com) if you ever need any help or advice. We always love to hear updates on the bunnies we’ve sold, and pictures are always a plus! We are happy to help out at any point in the rabbit's life.

~Lots of Lops Rabbitry

**Housing**

Our favorite cages are wire, made by KW cages. Wire cages are not inhumane, in fact they are far more humane than other housing options, as rabbits have easily enough fur on their pads to cause them no discomfort. In addition to this, wire cages provide good traction, and offer an environment in which the rabbit is never sitting in its own waste. As such, wire keeps the rabbit much cleaner and more sanitary than all other housing options. Some people tell you wire cages cause sore hocks; this is entirely false. Wire cages allow for better ventilation and more sanitary and pleasant living conditions for the rabbit, and pose significantly less risk of injury than solid floored options. Wire cages are also easily cleaned and sanitized. KW wire cages are available at many ARBA shows and are also available to order online at kwcages.com.

We strongly discourage keeping your rabbit in a plastic-bottomed hutch or exercise pen. Our rabbits are raised on wire cages and are not used to the lack of traction. If this lack of traction spooks your rabbit, they might seriously injure themselves. Avoid using blankets or fleeces, as rabbits are renowned chewing culprits and might ingest pieces, which is harmful to their sensitive digestive systems. Shavings or similar bedding may stain your rabbit’s underside and prove difficult to keep tidy. By choosing a wire cage instead for your animal, you are providing a clean, safe, sanitary form of housing for your pet, and they will thank you for it!

**Nutrition**

Rabbits have very sensitive digestive systems, and any major change to their diet can be very dangerous. They cannot tolerate extremely watery, high calcium, or sugary foods either. This is why fruits, vegetables, Petco or Petsmart rabbit pellets and treats, and alfalfa hay should not be a part of a rabbit's diet.

Rabbits can have unlimited orchard grass hay or timothy hay. We feed this twice per day, and at each feeding we recommend removing and replacing whatever hay your rabbit hasn’t eaten from the previous feeding. You can buy dried papaya treats from most pet stores. Give a small piece to your rabbit every day or so in order to help prevent gastrointestinal stasis. Rabbits should not be fed greens as they can cause dangerous bloating and diarrhea.

A Holland Lop should typically have between 1/3 and 1/2 cup of pellets daily. You can adjust this amount according to your individual rabbit’s needs. Feed Manna Pro, Bar Ale, Purina Show, Templeton, or a similar brand of SHOW pellets with 16% protein. Do NOT feed Petco or Petsmart rabbit pellets or mixes, as this is essentially rabbit junk food and can lead to obesity and diabetes, among other health issues.

We also recommend feeding a supplement to keep your rabbit in top fur and body condition. Barbi Brown’s Conditioning Mix is a great option! For that, we recommend feeding one teaspoon per day.

**Digestion**

A VERY important topic! Occasionally, for whatever reason, there is a chance your rabbit might decide to stop eating. This might be because of abnormal stress such as a change in location or weather, a change in their feed, being spooked by something, or an underlying health concern. However, the most common cause of digestive issues is feeding a poor diet. Greens are a BIG culprit – despite what the rescue groups say, please do not feed any greens, ever. All it will do is cause digestive issues. Rabbits have extremely sensitive digestive systems; in fact, digestive issues are their number 1 cause of death.

It’s important to make sure you know your rabbit’s normal eating habits. Some rabbits eat more or less than others, which is totally normal and fine. However, if you notice a sudden change in their eating habits, then this might be cause for concern. The most important symptoms to look for are sudden changes in eating, drinking, and pooping. If your rabbit has stopped any of these behaviors, or if the poop is abnormally small and dry, or full of hair, a digestive issue may be at play.

If your rabbit isn’t eating, offer a treat such as a piece of shredded wheat cereal, and see if they take it. If they do, that’s a good sign. Offer plenty of hay as well, and observe to see whether your rabbit eats it. Provided they are eating shredded wheat and hay and are drinking and pooping, then they should start eating pellets again soon. However, if they don’t, it’s important to kick-start their digestion before it becomes a problem. Catching it early is crucial.

If the rabbit still isn’t eating, then mix some of the Critical Care formula with water, and syringe-feed the rabbit until they are full. They will most likely struggle quite a bit the first few times you try and syringe it, but this is normal. It does not mean they are full. Instead, keep feeding until the rabbit starts letting it dribble out of their mouth rather than swallowing hungrily. Normally I’ll try and get 3 full syringes into them per feeding, twice per day, until they start eating their regular food again.

As is the case with many aspects of animal care, with digestive issues, prevention is the best cure. Feed your rabbit a high quality, consistent diet with high fiber and a good quality show rabbit pellet. Always avoid fruits and greens. Make sure to groom your rabbit frequently when it is molting in order to prevent fur from accumulating in the gut. Keep any fabric or plastic out of reach of the cage so that the rabbit doesn’t ingest any. Give some dried papaya every day or two, as the enzymes help break down any ingested hair. And always keep some Critical Care and a syringe on hand just in case.

If you have any questions about this, you are welcome to email me at any time. If at any point your rabbit decides to stop eating, please contact me and I can help guide you through the process.

**Temperature**

Rabbits are extremely sensitive to heat, and are prone to heatstroke, a common cause of death. My rabbits are used to being kept in a cool environment, and as such won’t be able to tolerate being outside in the California heat. Therefore they must be kept indoors and out of direct sunlight. To alleviate temperature in warmer weather, use a spray bottle to mist your rabbit, or rub cool water on their ears. Keep the AC on, and use fans. You can also put frozen plastic bottles of water in your rabbit's cage, and put damp towels on the floor of their cage.

Cold is not generally a serious threat to an adult rabbit. They can withstand extremely cold temperatures, so it is not typically of any concern.

**Attention**

Upon leaving our rabbitry, all of our rabbits are given every opportunity to become gentle, affectionate pets. They are given plenty of socialization and handling, and have been turned over on their backs frequently, have practiced posing, are used to having their teeth, nails, eyes, noses, and sex checked, and are reliably good-natured with people. They have been exposed to the sights and sounds of our dogs, guinea pigs, and cats, as well as many young children and teenagers.

Let your rabbit relax and get used to their new environment for the first few days, but once they have settled in you can resume all your normal household activities. Our rabbits are used to all sorts of noises and experiences, so there is no need to coddle them. The more they experience, the more relaxed and well-rounded they become. Handle your rabbit multiple times daily, so he stays the wonderful, sweet bunny he was meant to be!

**Nail Care**

Trim your rabbit's nails approximately once per month. Rabbits have 18 nails that are constantly growing. 4 on each rear foot, and 5 on each front foot, including the dewclaw on the inside of the leg. They must be kept short. Unlike dogs, this cannot be done by simply being allowed to run around. You can buy nail trimmers from any pet store, and will soon find what type works for you. Do not use dog nail trimmers; most small cat nail trimmers work fine. Turn your rabbit over on his back, and hold him firmly on your lap. You may need a helper when you're first learning.

On each nail there is a red or darker part called the quick. This is a blood vessel. Do not cut the quick, or you'll make your rabbit bleed! Cut in small increments in case you cut the quick accidentally. If your rabbit’s nails are dark, you can dip them in water and hold the rabbit in bright light to see the quick. If you accidentally cut the quick, apply a generous helping of flour to the nail.

**Naming**

A very important step! If you bought a rabbit from us that was sold to you as pet quality, you can choose a name for him or her. For show or brood quality rabbits, you must keep the name given to him/her by Lots of Lops Rabbitry, including on any and all official documents, including ARBA registration and pedigrees. It must additionally keep the original herd prefix, which if it was born in our rabbitry should be LOL. If your rabbit was sold to you as show or brood quality, we will provide the pedigree at or before the time of sale. We do not offer pedigrees with animals sold as pets, but instead offer a birth certificate.

**Handling**

Rabbits are very social creatures, and as such, require frequent handling to lead happy lives. Upon leaving the rabbitry, our rabbits have been handled every single day of their lives. They are used to having their eyes, nose, teeth, nails, and sex checked, as well as being comfortable posing for shows. They are easily flipped on their backs, and have temperaments that make them excellent pets as well as show animals. We've given them the best start in life possible, and we would like you to continue on the path we left off on. The more you handle your rabbit, the friendlier they will become!

**4-H**

4-H is a nationwide organization for youth to learn agriculture art, STEM, and more, while simultaneously learning responsibility, community service, and leadership and public speaking skills. For youth, joining 4-H is an excellent way of learning proper rabbit care, as well as showing and breeding. Be sure to talk to us for details if you have a youth getting into showing rabbits through 4-H. Go to 4-h.org to learn more.

**Pedigrees**

We offer pedigrees with only our show/brood quality rabbits, with no exceptions. This is because we don't feel pet quality rabbits should be bred, for several reasons:

1. We don't want to lower the standard of the Holland Lop breed.

2. We don’t want inexperienced breeders breeding animals, this is a recipe for disaster for the rabbits and the people involved.

3. Your rabbit was sold to you at a lower, pet price because we do not believe it has the traits required to produce show quality animals.

4. If you aren't willing to invest a little more a show/brood quality rabbit, then you really aren't ready to breed!

**Health**

Rabbits are prey animals, so they will try as hard as possible to not appear sick. Therefore, it is very important to spend plenty of time with your rabbit so that you know their normal habits and behaviors. This way, if something ever were to go wrong, you would be able to notice much more quickly. Common symptoms of disease are changes in appetite, abnormal poop, sudden personality changes, weight loss, a head tilt or lack of coordination or abnormal nasal discharge. These are just some of the many symptoms of sickness or disease; once you get to know your rabbit, you'll have a good idea of what's normal and what isn't. Upon noticing anything unusual, please contact us immediately so we can offer our advice.

We recommend you always have a supply of Critical Care formula on hand, which is readily available at many pet stores as well as on Amazon. This formula, when mixed with water, can be given via syringe. This must be given if your rabbit isn't eating, drinking, or pooping, to keep their digestive system going. This formula has saved our rabbits' lives on multiple occasions - don't forget to get some!

It’s also important to find a good rabbit vet, just in case. It’s easier said than done – most vets are not good with rabbits. Do your homework, talk to some local breeders or 4-H/FFA groups, and see who they recommend. While most health concerns with rabbits can be easily and more effectively treated at home (with help from an experienced breeder), it’s important to have a vet on hand just in case of an emergency.

**RHDV Vaccination**

In the past, it was not necessary to vaccinate rabbits in the US. However, in March 2020, a virus called Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus type 2 (RHDV2) popped up in New Mexico, and has since spread to several other states, including California. It is a very nasty virus as it is highly contagious and can be spread by contact with dead rabbits, flies, rodents, tires, shoes, clothing, and equipment. It is also capable of surviving very hot and cold temperatures and can lay dormant in the environment for up to 4 months. Unfortunately this virus is almost always fatal. However, thankfully there are now several very effective vaccines for RHD available in California (and all other states that currently have reported cases of the virus). There are several types of vaccines available for RHD, the most common of which are Eravac and Filavac. Eravac is the more readily available and slightly cheaper of the two, but if you can get Filavac that would be ideal as it doesn’t tend to cause a bump at the injection site. We strongly recommend scheduling a vaccination appointment right away, and then vaccinating your rabbit annually from now on. However, keep in mind that given that the vaccine has to be imported from Europe, not every vet will have it in stock. For a complete list of vets currently offering the RHD vaccination, make sure join the North American RHDV2 Group on Facebook. Or, if you don’t have Facebook, feel free to email us and we will send you a list of vets to contact.

***Helpful Links and Locations:***   
Lots of Lops Rabbitry: lotsoflops.com  
KW Cages: kwcages.com  
Chabot Veterinary Clinic, Hayward  
Live Oak Veterinary Hospital, Morgan Hill  
American Rabbit Breeders Association: arba.net  
4-H: 4-h.org   
An Jan Feed Store: anjan.com  
Sam's Downtown Feed & Pet Supply, San Jose   
Pets & More, Campbell