*Lots of Lops Rabbitry*~Rabbit Care Handbook

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**Lots of Lops Rabbitry**

Congratulations on making the decision to buy a Lots of Lops rabbit! Owning and raising a rabbit is a challenging yet incredibly rewarding experience for ten years or more. We're so excited for you to begin this journey! 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 our advice and support!

If you want to learn more about rabbit care, showing and ownership, 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 are all listed under the ‘Rabbit Care’ tab. The articles may answer a lot of the 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 if you ever need any help or advice. We'd also love to hear all your funny stories, and pictures are always nice! Don't feel guilty for emailing me with anything, we'll be happy to help out at any point in the rabbit's life.

Wishing you the best with your new rabbit!

~ Lots of Lops Rabbitry

**Housing**

Our favorite cages are wire, made by KW Cages. Wire cages are not inhumane, on the contrary they are the ideal form of housing for the domestic rabbit. Wire keeps the rabbit's underside much cleaner and more sanitary than all other housing options. Thus, they help prevent hutch burn and sore hocks. Wire cages allow for better ventilation and more sanitary and pleasant living conditions in which the rabbit will never be touching its own waste. Holland Lops have thick fur pads, wire is not painful to them in the slightest. 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 [www.kwcages.com](http://www.kwcages.com).

We strongly discourage keeping your rabbit in a plastic-bottomed hutch. Flat-bottomed cages pose the risk of splayed, dislocated, or broken legs, or even broken spines. Blankets or fleeces will rub the foot pads and cause fur loss and possibly sore hocks. Shavings or similar bedding will stain the underside and provide a breeding ground for bacteria. Wire cages are a far more pleasant option for the rabbit.

**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 many watery foods, 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. A hay rack may be a worthwhile purchase so that the rabbit doesn’t pee on its hay. Hay racks can be purchased from KW Cages. You can buy dried papaya treats from most pet stores. Give one piece to your rabbit per day. They contain an enzyme that breaks down ingested fur, and thus helps prevent gastrointestinal stasis. Because rabbits aren’t physically able to vomit, hairballs are very dangerous because the blockage stops digestion. Rabbits should not be fed greens as they can cause gas, diarrhea, and bloating, which can often be fatal.

Hay is recommended if you have access to good quality hay. I always feed my Juniors (under 6 months old) hay as they are more sensitive and hay is good for their gut pH, and I always feed hay to rabbits that may be stressed after a show.

A Holland Lop should typically have between ¼ and ½ cup of pellets daily. You can adjust this amount according to your individual rabbit’s needs. Feed Purina Show, Templeton, or a similar brand of SHOW pellets with approx. 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.

Holland Lops should be between 2 and 4 pounds (false dwarfs may be a little over this weight), so weigh your rabbit regularly to check he is at a healthy weight. His spine should feel well packed and not too bumpy, and you should be able to feel but not see his ribs and spine.

**Temperature**

Rabbits are extremely sensitive to heat, and are prone to heatstroke, a common cause of death. This is yet another reason to keep your rabbit indoors. To alleviate temperature, 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 so long as it is not stuck outdoors. It does however pose a threat to very young kits, so be aware of this if you plan on breeding your new (show or brood quality) rabbit in the future.

**Attention**

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

Most of our rabbits settle in very quickly with their new owners, but sometimes a rabbit might become frightened by the transition. Regardless, don’t coddle the rabbit, go about with your day and don’t tiptoe around them. Our rabbits are very used to various sights, sounds, and experiences, so it’s important you keep exposing them to those things so that they learn that there’s nothing to be scared of. Coddling does much more harm than good. Handle your rabbit frequently and correctly, so he stays the wonderful, sweet bunny he was meant to be!

**Nail Care**

Trim your rabbit's nails once every 3-4 weeks, or as needed. Rabbits have 18 nails that are constantly growing. They have 4 on each rear foot, and 5 on each front foot, including the dewclaw on the inside of the leg. The nails must be kept short. This cannot be done by simply being allowed to run around. You can buy nail trimmers from any pet store. Look for a very small pair marketed for cats. 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 rename 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 name, which if it was born in our rabbitry should be LOL. If your rabbit was sold to you as show or brood quality, we can give the pedigree at the time of sale upon request. We do not offer pedigrees with pet quality animals, 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 show. 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. By purchasing a rabbit, you have agreed that you will handle it every day for the remainder of its life. If you can't handle this commitment then you should reconsider whether you are ready to own a rabbit.

If you got a rabbit for 4-H, FFA, or showing, practice posing the rabbit. This will make all the difference in the show ring or in Showmanship. Otherwise they might suddenly 'forget' to pose on the day of the show!

A new rabbit is always very exciting, especially for the first few weeks. Don't overload him with attention for the first few days.

**Showing**

Rabbit shows are events where people bring their best rabbits to the show table, where a judge chooses the best of each breed for the title of Best of Breed (BOB), which each compete for the ultimate prize of Best in Show (BIS). Rabbits are judged on conformation, color, markings, fur, health, and condition. There are often other events held at the show, such as raffles, 4-H events, and rabbits and rabbit items for sale. There are also often cavy (guinea pig) shows held simultaneously. Any owner or breeder can show their rabbit(s).

All our rabbits are purebred, and most (apart from torted otters) are recognized colors. At or before the time of sale, Lots of Lops Rabbitry will disclose any known disqualifications. Some pet quality rabbits may have disqualifications such as torted otter coloring or incorrect markings, and cannot be shown. All our show quality rabbits are showable at the time of sale to the best of our knowledge. Showing is a rewarding world, even if you aren't a breeder, and we recommend trying it! It’s a lot of fun! Go to arba.net to learn more.

**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. Local 4-H clubs with rabbit projects include Rolling Hills, Coyote Crest, and El Sereno. 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.

Lots of Lops Rabbitry is proud to run our own 4-H rabbit project through El Sereno 4-H. Anyone in Santa Clara County from 5-18 years old can join our project. Go to elsereno4h.com to learn more about our club. For youth, joining 4-H is an excellent way of learning proper rabbit care, as well as showing and breeding. We attend many rabbit events, such as local rabbit shows, 4-H events, and county fairs like our own Santa Clara County Fair every August. We run the Small Animal Education Area at SCC Fair, so make sure you stop by when Fair comes around! Come by on the Tuesday to watch us compete with our rabbits, or any day from Thursday to Sunday. Go to thefair.org to learn more.

**Pedigrees**

We offer pedigrees with only our show/brood quality rabbits, 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. Selling pet quality kits is extremely difficult when there is so much quality stock on the market.

3. If you aren't willing to spend a bit more money on 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. If your rabbit is unwell, they may crouch down in a loaf position, chatter their teeth, have changes in personality, lose their appetite, lose weight, the fur may be lifeless, eyes may be dull, the nose may be runny, the rabbit may have a loss in sight or coordination, have an abnormally runny nose, have an abnormal lump or swelling in a certain area, be panting, breathing through the mouth, make strange noises, drink an abnormal amount of water, have a racing breathing or heart rate, not poop, or have abnormally colored urine or feces. 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, call your vet. Please let us know too so we can offer suggestions, but our help should NOT replace a vet visit.

We strongly urge owners to always have a supply of Critical Care formula on hand. Critical Care is readily available at many pet stores as well as 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!

For a veterinarian we recommend Dr. Harvey, Chabot Veterinary Clinic in Hayward CA. From San Jose it's a 45-60 drive depending on time of day, but is well worth the struggle. The wait time for an appointment is often 2-3 weeks, so for emergency visits, we recommend Adobe Animal Hospital.

***Helpful Links and Locations:***
KW Cages: kwcages.com
4-H: 4-h.org
El Sereno 4-H Club: elsereno4h.com
American Rabbit Breeders Association: arba.net
Holland Lop Rabbit Specialty Club: hlrsc.com
An Jan: anjan.com
Chabot Veterinary Clinic, Hayward
Adobe Animal Hospital, Los Altos and Los Gatos
Sam's Downtown Feed & Pet Supply, San Jose
For Other Living Things, Sunnyvale: forotherlivingthings.com
Santa Clara County Fair, San Jose: thefair.org
Pets & More, Campbell