

“Bunny Proofing” Your Home

House rabbits can make wonderful pets. Just as dog or cat ownership carries certain responsibilities, ownership of a house rabbit requires specific changes in your home and your lifestyle. The measures taken to protect your house rabbit and your furniture are commonly referred to as “bunny proofing” or “rabbit proofing”. House rabbits are often confined to one or two “bunny proofed” rooms during supervised exercise periods. In select cases, the rabbit may have free access to a “rabbit proofed” room or even an entire home.

All rabbits possess an instinctive need to dig and chew, although young individuals tend to be particularly energetic and curious. “Bunny proofing” prevents destruction of property while protecting your house rabbit from harm:

1. **Avoid** housing rabbits in rooms with wall-to-wall carpet, low shelving, large numbers of electrical cords, and books or plants within 2 feet of the floor.
2. **Protect** any exposed cords using polyethylene tubing or armored cable.
3. **Provide** safe and fun chewing and digging alternatives that are free of chemicals or varnishes like rice matting or willow bark.

Many rabbit toys focus on the need to chew. Visit the House Rabbit Society (<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/toys.html>) for specific toy recommendations. Reliable commercial sources for rabbit toys include The Busy Bunny® and Leith Petwerks Inc.

4. **Neuter:** Having your house rabbit spayed or castrated will reduce or dissipate normal sexual behaviors like frenzied digging.

Although the tasks involved in “rabbit proofing” can be intensive, many activities, such as elective surgery or protecting exposed cords, are a one-time event. And the effort is well worth your time, as the result is a happy, healthy—and safe—house rabbit!

References and Further Reading

Bays TB, Lightfoot TL, Mayer J. Exotic Pet Behavior: Birds, Reptiles, and Small Mammals. WB Saunders, St. Louis, 2006.

Bradley T. Rabbits: Understanding normal behavior. Exotic DVM 2(1): 19-24, 2000.

Checchi MJ. Are You the Pet for Me? Choosing the Right Pet for Your Family. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999.

Harriman M. House Rabbit Handbook: How to Live with an Urban Rabbit, 4th ed. Alameda: Drollery Press; 2005.

Vella D, Donnelly TM. Rabbits: Basic anatomy, physiology, and husbandry. In: Quesenberry KE, Carpenter JW (eds). Ferrets, Rabbits, and Rodents: Clinical Medicine and Surgery, 3rd ed. St. Louis: Elsevier Saunders; 2012. Pp. 167-171.