

Bunny-Proofing Your Home

WHY ARE SOME RABBITS DESTRUCTIVE?

Rabbits are curious, high-energy pets and do best in exercise pens or free roaming in a home. But the space will need to be bunny-proofed to keep your items and your rabbit safe. Extensive bunny-proofing can be overwhelming and may not be necessary for all rabbits. Many rabbits are completely content with their enrichment and toys and may never chew or dig destructively.

Digging and chewing are the most common rabbit behaviors; these instinctual behaviors developed long before rabbits were domesticated. Rabbits instinctively chew and dig to create, not destroy. In the wild these behaviors are used to make burrows, tunnels, and nests. So instead of punishing these behaviors, look at what your rabbit is trying to create in their environment and work with them to find a solution.

Corners, low-ceiling areas (such as underneath furniture), and edges (such as baseboards) are naturally appealing to rabbits as they would make fantastic burrows. Once they begin chipping at the paint or pulling up the carpet, they will continue the behavior in that space since they were making good progress there. The easiest way to prevent destructive behaviors is to provide an alternative that your rabbit will enjoy even more like toys and enrichment activities. If your rabbit persists, block off the space they're trying to access paying special attention to low-ceiling areas (under couches, for example) and other areas that are hard to access.

WIRE & CORDS

- Cover and secure all wires or cords in an area the rabbit will have access to. Not only for the sake of your cords, but the electricity could harm a rabbit if they are chewed on. And any ingested pieces of the cord, metal, or wiring can cause GI issues or blockages.
- To keep the temptation of chewing on a wire inaccessible, it's recommended to use cord covers or split loom tubing. There is also the option of floor cord protectors or simply taping down cords with electrical tape, however, keep an eye on your rabbit to be sure they do not chew up or ingest any of the plastics or tape.

FURNITURE, STAIRS & WALLS

- Block stairs in the home to limit the risk of the rabbit injuring themselves. Using pet gates or baby gates is usually the easiest option for blocking off stairways.
- Waterproof mattress covers can help protect beds and couches against urine or damage. However, many owners choose to simply block access with an X-Pen or small animal fence to block the area entirely.
- Use baseboard guards and edge protectors to help protect walls, trim, and molding if a rabbit is insisting on trying to chew or dig at them. Blocking off access to the area can also be an easy fix.

HOUSEPLANTS

- Keep houseplants out of reach of the rabbit, both due to the risk of the rabbit ingesting any of it, but also to keep your plant growing healthy and strong.
- Make sure the plant is on a surface completely out of reach, even if the rabbit stood up on its hind legs, and out of range where the rabbit could jump to.
- If you believe your rabbit has consumed anything toxic, contact an emergency veterinarian immediately.

CARPETS & RUGS

- Rabbits can dig at carpets and rugs for a variety of reasons, from boredom, chasing a scent or to get on the other side of the carpet (such as to dig their imaginary burrow). Many owners will put down a different flooring such as tile, slate, laminate, or vinyl planks to help protect their carpets. Foam children's puzzle piece mats can also work as long as your rabbit does not try to chew up or eat the mat.
- Vinegar sprayed onto the spot of the carpet or rug can help prevent further chewing at the location if the reason for the digging is due to a smell, but effectiveness can vary.

- Long pile rugs (rugs with long fibers like shag rugs) can be more tempting for rabbits. Another option for covering up carpets or slippery hardwood is with low-pile carpets made of untreated, natural fibers such as seagrass, sisal, grass, or straw as these are generally safe if chewed on or ingested in small amounts.

GROWING PLANTS

- It can be very fun for you and your bunny to grow herbs & veggies at home. Many owners will set up small pots in a window or even large planting beds to grow herbs, greens, and snacks for their bunnies.
- Be cautious about toxic soil additives, fertilizers & pesticides that could be exposed to the soil or planting beds that could then be transferred to your rabbit.
- Keep your rabbit up to date on vaccinations and to avoid feeding grass or plants grown from your yard if wild cottontails frequent it due to the risk of germs and interspecies viruses.
- Before letting your rabbit outside please be sure to make sure the area is safe, out of the elements and understand the risks of germs, viruses, predators, and potentially toxic plants.

TOYS & ENRICHMENT

- Just like dogs and cats, rabbits are playful and they do best with plenty of enrichment and toys. Purchase a wide variety of toys to see what your rabbit prefers to play with.
- DIY toys for your bunny can be made from cardboard, paper bags, hay, treats and more.
- Pet stores offer a huge variety of small animal safe toys and enrichment items, such as but not limited to dig boxes, wobble feeders, stacking/throwing toys, chew toys hides and more.