

Aster Holland Lops  
RABBITRY

# BUNNY LOVE



# HAPPY BUNNY HANDBOOK

Aster Holland Lops

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# About the breed

Holland Lops are one of the smallest lop-eared rabbit breeds recognized by the American Rabbit Breeders Association. Weighing about four pounds, they are small enough to keep indoors and resilient enough to live in an outdoor hutch. The Holland Lops breed mixes the Netherland Dwarf and the French Lop breeds. Compared to other domestic breeds, they are easy to care for, as they only require basic grooming. On average, they live between 7 and 10 years.



## “Force-Free, Fun-Based Tips”

Aster Holland Lops is a small rabbitry located in Westchester, New York. We pride ourselves on breeding and raising our rabbits to be excellent companions and family members. From birth, we handle the babies, socialize them, and expose them to many types of animals including tortoises, dogs, puppies, and cats. When they're ready to leave, we make sure that our rabbits are litter-box trained and ready for a loving family.

At Aster Holland Lops, we ensure that our bunnies live happy and fulfilling lives. We expose each bunny to an indoor and outdoor playscape so they become accustomed to different environments. Inside, our litters are conditioned to everyday life, and each of our rabbits is socialized, litter-box trained, and clicker trained using positive reinforcement.

# HOW BUNNY'S THINK

Rabbits are curious, peaceful creatures. They are prey animals whose primary goal is to feel safe and nurtured. Rabbits have no impulse to challenge, attack, or dominate anyone and are crepuscular, meaning they're most awake in the morning and dusk.

We handle our baby bunnies from birth and socialize them to the sights and sounds of everyday life. As their pens are inside, they're accustomed to loud noises and clamoring children, cats, and dogs who loiter about their pens.

We'll guide you through the process if you choose to adopt one of our bunnies. Baby bunnies are fragile and need the following environment to bond with their new family.

1. Consistent Temperature. We keep our bunnies at 68° in the winter and 70° in the summertime. If you create an outdoor pen for play, provide a denning hut and bring them inside in extreme temperatures.
2. Wait to introduce your baby bunny to veggies until they're six months old. Keep their diet 85-90% hay and 10% pellets or oatmeal.
3. Avoid too much freedom too fast! When you first bring your baby bunny home, it will take them days to a couple days to get used to living alone with only people for companions. This is known as the bonding phase. The goal is to help your bunny feel safe with everyone. Now think of this from your bunny's perspective! They are so tiny, and people are big! If you move too fast and grab them too tightly they will get scared. Like you they want to feel safe and happy!

Move slowly around your bunny, teach them hands are for giving, not for grabbing by holding out pellets or hay when you initially approach them, and always keep your hands where they can see them! Make a habit of scouting their pellets out in a plastic cup and shaking it to alert them to feeding time. When possible, feed them by hand!

Keep them in restrictive enclosures initially so they won't run and hide—while it's instinct to run in fear, you don't want them to mistake you as a predator! Encourage everyone to approach and sit with them calmly. Keep your hands where they can see them (under their eyes) and move slowly should you want to pick them up.

## Understanding Behaviors

*Bunnies act calm when they feel safe and frantic if they think they're under attack. Help your bunny trust you from the start!*

Your bunny is a burrowing animal and needs a little box or covered enclosure to rest in when they're tired or hot--it's like a bedroom! They can overheat in direct sun: make sure they have a place to burrow if you leave them outside or in a windowed room.

We regularly water and feed our bunnies their hay and pellets—at 8 AM and 3 PM. We also check on them before bed to ensure they have water and some hay. Bunnies love attention and getting out of their pen to play— do this when time allows, or let them sit with you while you do work or watch TV. Each of our bunnies gets two hours of free play in a room, or pen, the love their tunnels and toys!

We clean their pen and water dish every other day: bunnies don't smell if you keep them clean! Changing the litter box should take less than one minute if you do it right! We use absorbent shavings (cedar or aspen or yesterday's news) in their litter box and pen. Unlike dogs and cats, their paws aren't padded: if the flooring is hard plastic or wire, your bunny will spend all its time in their litter box. This can lead to UTIs and depression.

Rabbits love to play! [Facebook](#) and Youtube are full of sights showing bunnies acting like a dog. Our bunnies enjoy tunnels, balls, and wooden chew sticks (cherry wood is their favorite).

Once your bunny is older (about 4-6 months), they'll have reasonable bladder control, and you can expand their freedom, one room or section at a time. Start slowly using gates or Xpens to expand their area.

Always ensure they have access to their food and litterbox to prevent accidents.

Initially, give your bunny more freedom by gating off one room at a time and proofing the surroundings. Do not let other pets chase your bunny- they scare easily and may have a heart attack!

# BUNNY PROBLEMS

Your bunny is a peaceful, predictable creature who only needs four things to feel content: A safe resting spot, food and water, and room to play and explore. What you might consider bad behavior might be normal behavior to a bunny (chewing on wood or cords) or their response to fear or loneliness (avoidance, nipping, destructiveness, etc.)

**Avoidance or Running Off** - Face-to-face interactions is only normal if you're a person.

Approach your bunny at an angle, keeping your hands where they can see them. When possible, offer pellets, so they learn that hands are for giving, not grabbing.

**Destructiveness** - Bunnies get restless when they're bored—like kids! If left alone too often, they'll resort to chewing, and can be destructive. Give your bunny interaction and freedom for an hour in the morning and evening to satisfy them. They love attention!

**Nipping** - Bunnies only nip in fear or if they need to get off your lap to potty. The later rarely hurts! It's just a gentle reminder to put them in their potty area!

# COMMON BEHAVIORS

**Chinning.** Rabbits sometimes rub their chins against nearby surfaces, especially in a new area or with another rabbit. Rabbits have scent glands on the bottom of their chins and will do this to claim their territory.

**Binky.** Sometimes, you might see your rabbit run and jump in the air, twisting their bodies before landing. This is called a binky, a sign that you have a very happy or excited rabbit.

**Flopping.** You might be worried the first time you see your rabbit flop on its side, but you have nothing to worry about. Flopping is a common sign that your rabbit is very content, relaxed, and they feel secure.

**Periscoping.** When rabbits are curious and happy they often tilt back on their hind legs to get a better look at things. When done in greeting it is a sign of trust and joy!

**Thumping.** If your rabbit thumps, something isn't right. A rabbit will thump their back legs if they feel danger nearby, they're displeased, or in some cases, they may thump to get attention.

**Nudging.** If your rabbit nudges you with its nose, it wants attention.

**Teeth Grinding.** If your rabbit is grinding their teeth- it means they are happy! Teeth grinding is a rabbit's way of purring!



# COMMON ILLNESSES

## Overgrown Teeth

Rabbit teeth continuously grow throughout their life; if they do not grind their teeth down with fiber, their molar teeth can grow into sharp spikes that can damage their cheeks and tongue, causing discomfort that will make them not want to eat. If a rabbit stops eating, its gut will stop working within a day, and they will die.

To prevent this issue ensure 80-90% of your rabbit's diet needs to be the fiber of oaten or grass hay, with the rest of the diet consisting of leafy greens with pellets and other treats being minimal to non-existent.

Note: Wait to introduce vegetables or greens until your bunny is six months of age.

## Snuffles (Pasteurellosis):

Bunnies can get colds like people. Signs include discharge from the eyes (redness, squinting) and/or nose (sneezing, discharge). The "snuffles," or Pasteurella can also infect other areas of the body, including ears (resulting in a head tilt), abscesses (seen as lumps on the body), and uterine infections.

To prevent the issue, know that some strains of the bacteria remain latent in the rabbit's nasal tract if your rabbit is stressed (e.g., a new diet is introduced, or a new pet is welcomed). Note anything that might stress your bunny and try to counteract it by giving them space and keeping room temperature and their routine consistent.

## Hairballs (Trichobezoars)

The collection of hair is common in a rabbit's stomach as they self-groom. However, as rabbits cannot vomit, that hair must pass through their gut. If blocked, it will form an obstruction and cause serious health complications. It is not uncommon and should be a concern if your rabbit is lethargic and not eating.

A good prevention to this problem is always to feed a high-fiber diet- mostly hay and greens, which can be introduced at six months.

# COMMON ILLNESSES

## Uterine Tumours

Entire female rabbits can develop cancer called uterine adenocarcinoma, and it should be suspected anytime an un-desexed female rabbit becomes sick. Some common clinical signs include blood-stained vaginal discharge, aggressive behavior, mammary gland cysts, and lethargy.

A good prevention for this is to alter your bunny at 6- months of age.

## Myxomatosis:

Cause and clinical signs:

Myxomatosis is a virus transmitted in mosquitos, fleas, or by close contact between an infected rabbit and a susceptible rabbit. The disease is recognized by swelling and discharge from the eyes, nose, and anogenital regions.

To prevent this, invest in a mosquito-proof rabbit hutch, and bring your rabbit inside at dawn and dusk when mosquito levels are higher. Flea control can help and when introducing new rabbits, keep them isolated for at least two weeks.

## Mites

The most common type of rabbit mites, cheyletiella, also known as 'Mange mites,' can't be seen with the naked eye. Instead, they can be identified by a 'walking dandruff' effect, commonly found on the rabbit's nape of the neck or back. The mites can travel on hay and leave bald spots on the rabbit. When it comes to treating mites, avoid using any products with fipronil or permethrin. Other things to avoid include flea powders or shampoos, even if advertised as rabbit-safe, as bathing bunnies can cause severe health problems.

# DOS -N-DONT'S

**DO!** Give Water in abundance! Bunnies are like cows and must eat and drink throughout the day to live. approach your bunny slowly at an angle. Keep your hands below their nose until they recognize your scent.

**DO!** Lift them by playing your hands under each side of their rib cage and bring them into a heart hold.

**DO!** Bunnies are playful! Check out [facebook.com/bunniesarefamily](https://www.facebook.com/bunniesarefamily) to get ideas Give your bunnies tunnels and balls and things to chew.

**DO!** Bunnies love to explore and, once litter box trained, will not soil their surroundings. Initial organize their freedom in a pen that surrounds their cage or litter box. As they grow to trust you, you can give them more space. You may need two boxes and feeding stations if you have a big house or apartment.

**DO!** Feed a diet of 80%-90% Timothy Hay, 10% pellets, and once your bunny is six months, they will enjoy the veggies in small doses: Dandelion greens, broccoli leaves, carrots, cilantro, parsley, romaine lettuce, and kale. Fruits should be given as treats: banana, strawberry, blueberry, and apples (no seed)

**DO!** Trim their nails monthly. Bunnies' feet are very sensitive and rely on their balance to move through the world. If you're not comfortable clipping your bunny's nails, ask your veterinarian or a local groomer or bring them back to us--we'll do it for a small fee!

**DON'T** These foods are toxic and may kill your bunny: Avocados, chocolate, nuts, cauliflower, raisins, salt licks, yogurt, or yogurt drops: avoid store-bought, processed foods for your bunny.

**DON'T.** Never bathe your bunny! Unlike cats and dogs, rabbits have very thick fur. For this reason, it takes rabbits much longer to dry themselves, which can lead to hypothermia or shock. Rabbits are very clean animals and will take care of cleaning themselves.

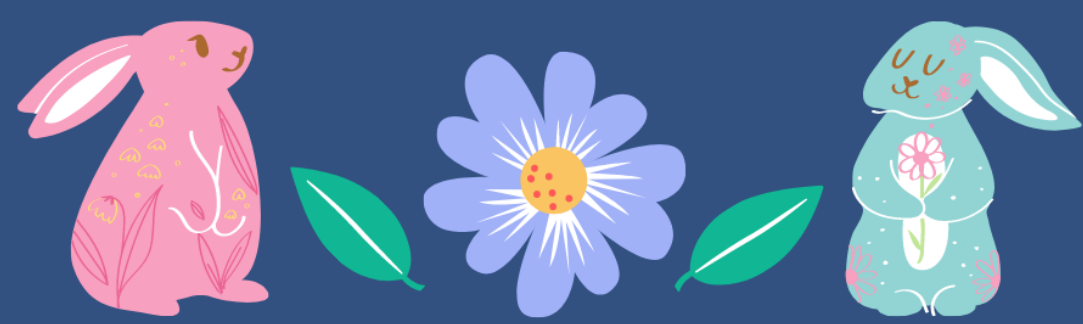
**DON'T.** Avoid cradling or flipping your bunny on their back- this is trancing! Doing this paralyzes your rabbit and causes extreme stress. While it may look cute, the stress of being tranced can put your rabbit into shock and lead to illness.

**DON'T.** Put your bunny in a cage or pen with wire flooring. This is painful to their sensitive feet and can cause sores to develop. Opt for a hutch with a solid floor instead.

**DON'T.** Please don't use a drop bottle. Aside from the fact they don't work well, it's an unnatural way for a rabbit to drink. Rabbits need to drink a ton of water just as they do in the wild. Drip bottles can lead to dehydration in rabbits. Even worse, harmful bacteria can form inside the bottles. Instead, use a bowl or heavy glass dish and wash it daily!



**Stay in touch! We love to hear  
from our bunny families and  
always appreciate a nice  
testimonial or review!**



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We are so pleased with our beautiful Aster Holland Lop Bunny. We didn't know we needed her on the farm until she came into our lives. We also didn't realize how important the beginnings are for these little creatures. We so appreciate how the breeder cares for the bunnies since birth and socializes them with other people and other pets. When I picked ours up, a little boy was visiting and playing with the bunnies, dogs were around them, and they were interacting with the world around them. Our bunny had a seamless transition to our home & farm with 3 little kids and 3 dogs. She is comfortable in our environment, and is thriving. We ♥ our sweet bunny. Thanks to Aster Holland Lop!

