

BUNNY STIMULATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TOYS

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So, if you're reading this you likely already know how important toys are to bunnies, but is your current bunny habitat stimulating enough? This write-up aims to share some ideas that have worked with our many fur babies over the years. It is important for the rabbit community to share best practices and lessons learned so that all bunnies can live their best lives. We don't claim to be experts and welcome any ideas you have to share for the benefit of all.

Toys and exercise are extremely important for the well-being of all pets, including bunnies. In nature, bunnies like to chew, dig, run, and play... and the same goes for the bunny or bunnies in your home. Bunnies are very social and intelligent creatures that require mental stimulation just like people. And just like their owners, bunnies like to have a variety of interesting things to do throughout their day. They are very curious animals with big personalities, regardless of their size.

When it comes to digging "tunnels", our bunnies are obsessed! Each has their own digging castle set up, which is important with bonded pairs, especially if they're on the same digging schedule! This simple set up requires only a few items that will virtually last a lifetime. These items include: a large bendable log, a large hiding hole/castle, and a plush blanket large enough to wrap around the castle and under the log. (See below for pictures of the set up that we use.)

Hiding your bunny's pellets and treats within a snuffle mat is an excellent way to stimulate them. Snuffle mats can provide long lasting entertainment while also slowing down your bunny's food consumption. This is especially important if you have bunnies that inhale their food as quickly as ours do! Many bunny charities/rescues sell snuffle mats, and there are several YouTube videos available for you to make your own. We purchased our snuffle mat from the Green Bunny Store.

We have also found another simple, inexpensive, and loved "toy" to be the humble cardboard box with a cut out door. A soft blanket inside is a great way to make a box a comfy home. Your bunny will likely even make itself a secondary door or window.

Some bunny toys are intended not only to provide entertainment for your bunny, but to help keep their teeth in check too. As you probably already know, bunnies teeth grow continuously throughout their lifetimes, so it is vital to safely inspire them to chew. Other safe (and natural, whenever possible) ideas for your bunny's entertainment include:

- natural wood - with no nails, glue, lacquer, etc. (for example, sticks, popsicle sticks, etc.). Places such as Home Depot have an assortment of wood. Please ensure to buy a soft one, such as willow, balsa, etc.
- pinecones (without glue, etc.)
- non-dyed cardboard (for example, paper towel rolls, cat scratching cardboard blocks, etc.)
- plush toys (be careful of small parts that your bunny could accidentally swallow, and avoid toys with electrical components or batteries)
- plush blankets (that don't irritate the pads of your bunnies' feet)
- dirt boxes. Use garden safe soil in a plastic tub and watch your bunny go to town digging themselves a secret burrow to nowhere. Yes, this can be messy but the smile on your rabbit's face makes it worth it. Consider laying a tarp down for easy clean-up, and you'll want to avoid using sand as it introduces the risk of irritation to the eyes, ears, lungs, and genitals.

When choosing toys/structures and designing your bunny's enclosure, always make sure to give them safe surfaces/landings to jump onto and off of. This is especially important for protecting your bunny's joints and long-term health.

We hope that this information is useful to you and that it can positively influence the well-being of your fur baby. We wish each and every one of them a long and hoppy life!











