



Outdoor Rabbit Housing Options

Outfit a rabbit hutch the right way to keep your outdoor rabbit comfortable throughout the year.

Outfit your outdoor rabbit hutch with all the necessities to make your pet rabbits comfortable, including a nesting box, resting board, feeder and water. It's not difficult to prepare outdoor housing for your pet rabbits, but you'll want to do everything you can to make your rabbits safe and comfortable. Here are some items that will keep your pet rabbits happy and healthy in their outdoor abode.

Rabbit Hutch

If you're handy with tools, you can make a rabbit hutch from scratch, but you may find it easier to purchase a rabbit-hutch kit. In either case, the rabbit hutch will need to be sturdy and secure, with a wooden frame and solid roof.

The sides and floor ideally should be made of wire mesh. The wire sides allow for ample ventilation, while the wire floor allows your rabbit's droppings and urine to fall directly through the hutch floor. This not only keeps the hutch sanitary, but also makes for easy clean-up, especially if you use plastic trays underneath.

Once you've established the hutch best-suited to your needs, it's time to prepare the other necessary items that your outdoor rabbits will need.

Nest Box

For outdoor rabbits, a nest box is a must. While many breeders provide only a nest box for female rabbits when a litter of kits is due, most rabbits enjoy the comfort of a nest box year-round. For a rabbit that is kept outdoors, a nest box inside the hutch provides a warm, cozy place to hide or relax. If you fill the nest box with hay or straw, your rabbit will burrow inside, which help it keep warm during the winter months.

Resting Board

You can purchase plastic resting boards, also known as floor mats, that nap onto the wire of the hutch floor. They allow your rabbit to have a comfortable place to sit, while still allowing the droppings and urine to fall through the hutch floor.

Feeder

Your rabbit hutch will need to be outfitted with a feeder. Generally speaking, you can choose between a feeder that mounts on the exterior of your hutch or a feed pan. For an outdoor hutch, a feed pan is probably the safest option. There have been incidents (though rare) of predators entering rabbit hutches via the opening in an exterior feeder. If you do opt to go the exterior-feeder route, be sure to select a feeder with a lid to minimize predatory risk and keep other animals out of the food.

If you feed hay to your rabbits on a regular basis, a hay rack can also be a helpful item.

Water

Many rabbit owners provide water bottles for their rabbits. While these can work well in outdoor situations, they are not the best choice in northern climates during the winter months. If you live where the temperature drops below freezing during the winter, you should probably switch to water cups or crocks for your rabbits. When frozen, cups and crocks break less often than water bottles, which are prone to cracking.

By following this simple list, you'll be well on your way to providing your pet rabbits with a pleasant home outfitted with all the essentials.

About the Author: Samantha Johnson is the author of *The Field Guide to Rabbits* (Voyageur Press, 2008) and *How to Raise Rabbits* (Voyageur Press, 2009). She has been a rabbit enthusiast for nearly 20 years and resides in northern Wisconsin.