

Why Does My Bunny Do That?

Begging:

Begging is sooo cute and extremely hard to resist. Rabbits may press their nose through the ex-pen wire or run circles around your feet if you are holding a treat. Some sit up on the toes of their rear feet, stretching towards the delightful smell that has caught their attention.

Rabbits are born with the knowledge that being cute will get them whatever they want. To accommodate the begging rabbit (and the rabbit owner's inability to resist), give psychological treats—a head, ear, eye rub or a ½ inch slice of carrot cut into four pieces and given to your little beggar at four different times throughout the day.

Chewing Cords:

There are several theories as to why rabbits are attracted to phone cords, antenna cords, cable TV cords, lamp cords, etc. One theory is that they are attracted by the vibration of the electricity. Another theory is that the electricity makes a noise that is audible to the rabbit. Or it could be that the cords are reminiscent of roots or vines that rabbits would nibble on in the wild. Whatever the reason, it is simply NOT SAFE to leave a rabbit alone in a non-rabbit-proofed room. COVER YOUR CORDS or hide them. (Read ***Rabbit Proofing Your House***)

Chewing Wood:

For pure chewing enjoyment and immense pleasure, there's nothing better than a nice piece of soft wood to gnaw on for some rabbits. Many rabbits aren't the least bit interested in a piece of plain old wood and many never gnaw. But most do love a good piece of dried apple twig—be sure to dry the twigs for at least a month. (**DO NOT FEED** branches from apricot, cherry, peach, plum and redwood trees, which are listed as toxic by poison centers).

Gnawing on wood is not necessary to keep a rabbit's constantly growing teeth under control. **Eating unlimited hay is what keeps teeth properly worn down.** Gnawing is more of a recreational activity and attention can be diverted from a chair leg to an appropriate piece of wood or to a cardboard box.

Chinning:

Claiming possessions is done by chinning. Rabbits use their chin (as cats use their foreheads) to mark objects with a scent that we humans are not able to detect. Your rabbit will claim your face, arms, clothes, and shoes by chinning.

Circling:

This often means it is time for your rabbit to be spayed or neutered. Circling is part of a rabbit's courting behavior and is sometimes accompanied by a soft

honking or oinking. Circling can also be a way to ask for food or attention from human companions.

Dancing:

Dancing has been describing as a “frolicking series of sideways kicks and mid-air leaps accompanied by a few head shakes and body gyrations.” The bunny dance—also called a “Binky”—is something done to indicate happiness, contentment, and a great frame of mind.

Don't Touch My Stuff:

Rabbits are often displeased when you rearrange their home space as you clean. They are creatures of habit and when they get things just right, they like them to stay that way. They would prefer if you didn't rearrange your stuff either, because they will have to spend a lot of time and effort learning new escape routes.

The Fish Eye/Blinking:

Rabbits with wide opened eyes are frightened. You know they are relaxed when they blink and their eyes are slightly closed.

Flopping:

This indicates a totally relaxed, comfortable rabbit. Your rabbit appears to have an attack, suddenly falling or flipping over on her side exposing her belly. It basically means, “life is wonderful.”

Grunting:

Grunts are often angry reactions to a human behavior or towards another rabbit and may be followed by scratching or biting. Rabbits grunt when they feel threatened, or to show their disapproval if they do not want to be handled—it means “leave me alone” or “back off”. Some rabbits show their disapproval by grunting to protect what is theirs (cage, food) from a human hand or another rabbit and grunting is usually the extent of their anger.

Licking:

Rabbits lick for affection not salt. Licking means “I trust you. I love you.”

Lunging:

Lunging may occur when you reach into you rabbit's cage to clean, give food, or to take your rabbit out—a sign of disapproval. It can be remedied by getting the rabbit accustomed to whatever is occurring. In the meantime, place your hand on the rabbit's head while performing the task or let him take himself out for some well-needed exercise.

Always move slowly around rabbits. Talk to them in a quiet voice so they know you are there. Rabbits have great long-distance eyesight, but do not see well up close. A human hand or foot in front of a rabbit's face can be very startling.

Mounting:

For altered rabbits, this behavior says “I am the dominant rabbit and don’t you forget it.”

Nipping:

Like a little pinch, nipping can mean several different things: “I want your attention now” or “This is a warning” or nipping can be used in a grooming sense: “I like that you pet me, so I will groom you.”

Nose Nudging:

This means “Pet me now” or “Move out of the way” or “Pay attention to me”.

Playing:

Rabbits like to push or toss objects around, especially towels. They may also run laps around the house, jump on and off chairs and act like a kid who’s had too much sugar. Enjoy the show.

REM Sleep:

Rabbits’ eyelids twitch, ears twitch, whiskers vibrate, teeth click. He starts to fall to one side, then rights himself, then relaxes again. A comfortable, happy rabbit who is slipping off to bunny dreamland.

Screaming:

Indicates a mortal terror or excruciating pain.

Tail Wagging:

Indicates defiance. “No, I don’t want to go in my ex-pen” or “You can’t make me”. Watch closely and you will see that a rabbit will occasionally back talk—they think you won’t notice.

Teeth Chattering:

This is a sign of contentment and happiness. It is a very light grinding sound, and when placing your hand on the side of the rabbit’s face, it will feel like a vibration from the molars. The eyes are often half-closed. Teeth chattering occurs while a rabbit is being petted/stroked or when they are completely relaxed and comfortable with their environment.

Excessive Teeth Grinding or Crunching:

Indicates severe pain, discomfort, or stress. Often, body language accompanying tooth-grinding is that of a rabbit sitting hunched up in the corner of a room or cage.

Tense Body Language, Ears Back, Tail Up:

WATCH OUT!

Territory Droppings:

Droppings that are not in a pile, but are scattered, are a sign of territoriality. This will often occur upon entrance into a new environment and is more persistent with unaltered rabbits. If another rabbit lives separately in the house this may always be a nuisance.

Third Inner Eyelid Shows in Corner of Eye:

Indicates fright or uneasiness. Sign of severe stress.

Throwing:

Rabbits will throw anything that they can pick up with their teeth. Often owners complain about food and water bowls being turned upside down. Bowls need to be the heavy ceramic type.

Thumping:

Rabbits thump to get attention, to express displeasure, or to express fear at something seen or heard as a warning to others. The “danger” could be a furnace, refrigerator, or other electrical appliance turning on; the shadow of a bird flying across the moon or a cat walking on the deck. Thumping can occur day or night and is the rabbit’s attempt to save everyone from a terrible fate.

A rabbit may thump if you walk into a room very silently and startle him.

A rabbit may thump when he is displeased by something you have done or not done, like not giving him a treat or even worse, eating it yourself.

A rabbit who is exhibiting continual thumping can die from fright and should be reassured and comforted as soon as possible.