

If you're a new rabbit owner, you may be wondering how to get them through winter. Luckily, rabbits are much more tolerant of the cold months than the hot ones, so with a little knowledge and preparation, you can rest assured your rabbits will have a safe and comfortable winter.

Our resident rabbit guru, Jo Ann Vann, has a few pointers for care.

- Smaller rabbit breeds may not tolerate the cold as well as the larger ones. Be especially vigilant with small breeds.

Housing

- Most rabbits will not need a heated environment to make it through the winter.
- Keep hutches off the ground. This will prevent water and snow from getting inside and will allow warming air to rise.
- Place the back of the hutch to the north and position it against a building (if it's not solid). This will prevent the cold north wind from entering the hutch. A south-facing hutch will allow the warmer air to enter.
- The sides of the hutch should be boarded up, and the front, south-facing side of the hutch should be partially covered to prevent snow from entering.
- Do not close off your rabbit's cage too tightly. Rabbits need plenty of fresh air, and being enclosed with the fumes from their urine may cause respiratory distress.
- Do not move your rabbit to a garage where it may be exposed to fumes from a running car engine, which can cause respiratory distress or death due to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Do not move a rabbit directly from the cold into your heated home as they don't tolerate sudden fluctuations in temperature well.
- An enclosed porch or shed may be favorable over moving it inside your home.
- Place some straw in the nesting area and remember to change it periodically.

Food and Water

- Fresh water at all times is a must.
- Water bottles can crack when the water freezes. Using bowls for water may prove to be less work.
- Increase calorie intake by adding some old-fashioned oats to your rabbit's diet.
- Alfalfa hay or extra pellets are okay in moderation.
- Adding corn to the diet is NOT recommended due to risk of aflatoxin poisoning.