

- Fly-strike (maggots), which can quickly lead to death
- Other parasites, such as cuterebra who burrow under your rabbit's skin and mites who infect their ears and fur

DOING WHAT'S BEST

Sadly, it can be easy to forget about your rabbit when she lives outside. Everyone gets busy—school, work and other commitments, pull us in many directions. The NJHRS director realized that when Georgie was alive, she had been spending less and less time with him—out-of-sight, out-of-mind.

A rabbit outside in a hutch, maybe all the way in the back of the yard, or maybe even just on the side of the house, who doesn't even make a sound, can be easily overlooked, or rushed by on your way here and there.



WE CAN HELP

If you need advice on indoor living arrangements, contact us. We have plenty of suggestions and we'd be happy to help you make the transition. We can also offer low cost spaying/neutering if your rabbit is not yet altered (which we highly recommend).



If you are not able to bring your rabbit in, for whatever reason—maybe your home life has changed since you first adopted her, or you know that you really don't have the time needed to give her a more full life—we suggest that you think about her quality of life and the dangers present in living outside.

If you feel she is not getting all she deserves, you may want to consider, even though you love her dearly, re-homing her to a family where she will live inside and be given the attention you know she deserves. We can help if you feel that would be in her best interest. Call or email for advice.

New Jersey House Rabbit Society is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the well-being of domestic rabbits and to secure their place as a companion animal in society and in our homes.

Living arrangements for companion rabbits

Inside? Outside? Caged?
Cage-free? Penned?

Insuring the best possible life for your rabbit



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THE GREAT OUTDOORS?

"When I was young, we used to keep Georgie, our giant chinchilla rabbit, outside in a hutch. One day the neighbor's dog got loose, ran into our yard and had no problem tearing at the chicken wire on Georgie's hutch. He escaped out the opening, avoiding injury from the dog. The neighbors corralled their dog and we found Georgie, unharmed, under a shrub. We patched up the hole and put him back in. Within a half hour, he was dead. To this day it haunts me."

The above person isn't a terrible person. She didn't *not* care about her rabbit. On the contrary, she loved him dearly. She just didn't know. But she learned the hard way and began advocating for rabbits to live inside, as part of the family. She is now the director of the New Jersey House Rabbit Society.

Hutches or cages do not provide enough protection to make it safe to leave rabbits outside.



With her acute vision, hearing, and smell, a rabbit can sense the presence of a predator

(such as a raccoon, coyote, hawk, opossum and even cats and dogs) even in your neighbor's yard. She may panic and injure herself, or she may die of shock. That's what happened to Georgie.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Maybe you've had your rabbit(s) living outside for years now without a problem from predators—so you feel she's safe. But what is the quality of life for an animal living outside all the time, especially if she is alone? A life spent confined to a hutch is boring, depressing, and stressful for an animal as sensitive as a rabbit.

A life spent outdoors, but unconfined, is simply too dangerous for domestic rabbits. By domesticating them we have deprived them of whatever natural ability they had for survival on their own.

If your rabbit currently lives outside, we strongly urge you to bring her inside to start a life with the rest of the family. After all, that's probably why you got her—to be a part of the family. But just like the NJHRS director, you feel, or may be told, that living outside in a hutch is just what you do for rabbits.

Sure, she could live outside, and perhaps even live a long life outside, but think of how lonely that is. Rabbits require a lot more attention for their well-being than most people realize. They are social animals and need stimulation, things to do, and places to explore to be happy and healthy. You



may not think so and feel your rabbit doesn't do anything except sit and hop around a little bit. But then again, what else is there to do in a small hutch?

Having two rabbits living outside together doesn't negate the bad aspects of living outdoors. They are still prey to other animals, they still have virtually no exercise, and they are not given the same attention they would be if they lived in the house.

There's no magic in turning an "outdoor rabbit" into a house rabbit. It can begin simply by bringing her in. Once inside, you can work on building a relationship with your rabbit.

OTHER DANGERS

Rabbits who live outside are also at risk of:

- Theft or teasing by humans
- Exposure to sun, heat, wind, rain and snow