

Destructive Bunny Behaviour Guide

If your rabbit is chewing cables, ripping up carpet, digging at couches, or generally causing *chaos*, you don't have a "naughty" bunny. You have a normal rabbit.

Destructive behaviour in rabbits is not bad behaviour, it is natural, instinctive behaviour that isn't being met in an appropriate way. A bored bunny is a destructive bunny, but even a stimulated bunny will still need outlets for their instincts.

Why Rabbits Are Destructive (By Nature)

- Rabbits are:
 - Diggers (burrows are life-saving in the wild)
 - Chewers (their teeth never stop growing so they need to file them down)
 - Explorers (they investigate with their mouth)
- When these needs aren't fulfilled, rabbits will:
 - Dig carpets, beds, couches
 - Chew skirting boards, furniture, cables
 - Rearrange their environment... aggressively
- This isn't rebellion. It's unmet instinct.

Bunny Proofing

You cannot train a rabbit *not* to be a rabbit, but you can control the environment.

Cables and chargers

- Use cable covers or conduit
- Lift cords off the floor entirely
- Block access behind furniture

Carpets and flooring

- Use rugs, mats, or offcuts as sacrificial layers
- Place tiles or grass mats in favourite dig spots
- Rearrange furniture to cover their favourite dig spots

Furniture and skirting

- Block access with pens, grids, or barriers
- Use untreated wooden planks as chew alternatives
- Bitter sprays are often **ineffective**, physical barriers work best.
- Bunny-proofing isn't a failure, it's responsible rabbit care.

Redirect, Don't Punish

- Rabbits do not understand punishment.
- Yelling, spraying water, or clapping hands will:
 - Increase fear and stress
 - Damage trust
 - **Not** stop the behaviour
- Instead, redirect the instinct to an appropriate outlet.

Match the Instinct to the Solution

Digging

- If your rabbit digs, provide a dig box filled with:
 - Shredded paper
 - Soil (no fertilisers or pesticides)
 - Cardboard, hay, leaves
- Place it where your rabbit already digs.

Chewing

- Provide constant access to:
 - Unlimited hay
 - Untreated wooden toys
 - Cardboard boxes (no tape)
 - Apple or willow sticks
- Rotate chew items regularly to keep interest high.

Boredom

- Mental stimulation is just as important as physical space.
- Enrichment ideas:
 - Scatter feeding instead of bowl feeding
 - Treat balls or puzzle feeders
 - Cardboard mazes and tunnels
 - Paper bags stuffed with hay

- A busy brain causes far less destruction.

Consider a Bunny Friend

- Rabbits are **highly social animals**.
- A single rabbit often becomes destructive because:
 - They are lonely
 - They have excess energy
 - Humans cannot meet rabbit social needs
- A bonded companion provides:
 - Constant stimulation
 - Grooming and comfort
 - Reduced boredom-driven behaviour
- Bonding must be done properly and safely, consult a rescue or rabbit-savvy expert. Many “destructive” rabbits dramatically calm down once bonded.

Space, Routine and Expectations

- Ensure your rabbit has adequate space (not just a cage)
- Provide daily free-roam or exercise time
- Maintain a predictable routine
- And most importantly, adjust your expectations
- Rabbits are not decorative pets. They interact with their environment intensely.

What NOT To Do

- Do not:
 - Punish or scare your rabbit
 - Expect perfection
 - Remove enrichment because of mess
 - Keep rabbits confined to prevent destruction (containment causes more behavioural issues long-term)
- A fulfilled bunny is a happier, calmer bunny. And yes, usually a less destructive one!

Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us! We're more than happy to help!

Hop and Flop Rabbit Rescue

Port Elizabeth, South Africa

hello@hopandfloprrabbitrescue.co.za