

Setting Your New Critter Up for Success



Congratulations on adopting your new critter!

To ease the transition into their new home, consider the following:

Supplies & Tasks Checklist

Make sure you have the following essentials to make your critter feel right at home:

- Heavy ceramic food bowl
- Heavy ceramic water bowl and water bottle
- Habitat/enclosure of appropriate size (no wire bottom)
- Bedding or enclosure liners (We recommend Care Fresh or similar. No wood shavings.)
- Hiding holes (at least one for each critter)
- Food and vegetables—lots of safe leafy greens and fruits & vegetables rich in Vitamin C (limit fruit/sugar intake)
- Food scale
- Daily fresh supply of Timothy hay (for rabbits and guinea pigs)
- Timothy-based food pellets for rabbits, other food pellets as appropriate for other critters
- Non-toxic toys for daily chewing (baby keys, cardboard, untreated wood, wicker, etc.)
- Grooming supplies
- Complete microchip registration (for rabbits)
- Establish veterinary care
 - *It's important to find a veterinarian for your new pet ASAP to continue any necessary preventative care (e.g. vaccines, flea/tick prevention), review history and records and make a care plan for your new family member.*
 - *Some rabbits may not have finished their RHDV vaccine series at Seattle Humane. Contact Seattle Humane's Vet Services team at vets@seattlehumane.org if your rabbit requires this time-sensitive booster vaccine before establishing care with your primary veterinarian.*

Time for Adjustment

Welcoming a new critter into your family is an exciting milestone, so it's tempting to want to show them off to the world. Every pet is different, but it generally takes a few weeks to a few months for them to decompress from their time in the shelter, acclimate to their new surroundings and establish a routine.

Creating a Safe Space

Set up an indoor enclosure with a minimum size of 6 feet by 3 feet (can be multilevel for guinea pigs). To eliminate falling hazards, the enclosure should be placed at floor level. Include bedding and plenty of chewable enrichment items. Provide hiding holes in the enclosure for added security. Set up a litter box with Timothy hay and newspaper, and make sure to provide food and water.

Critters can mask illness, so monitor their eating and elimination habits closely.

Keep in mind that most critters are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dusk and dawn. Critters are also highly social animals and require companionship from the same species.

Rabbits and guinea pigs require activity outside of their cages, so walk through your home and pick up any items that might be harmful to your pet. Are there wires they could chew on? Are there any plants that are toxic to pets?

Visit <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants> to learn more about plants that may be toxic to pets from our friends at the ASPCA.

Introducing Your New Pet

Take your time introducing your new critter to other people and pets in your home. Allow them to acclimate at their own pace. Supervise all interactions until everyone is comfortable.

By establishing these essentials in a safe and loving environment, you're setting your new critter up for success for years to come. Practice patience and understanding with them and with yourself as you both adjust to life together.

If you have any questions or concerns, we're here to help. Explore behavior and training resources on our website at seattlehumane.org/resources or reach out to us for advice and support at (425) 641-0080 or adoption@seattlehumane.org.

At Seattle Humane, we are committed to finding the right match for both you and our animals. However, we understand that despite the best efforts and intentions, a pet may not be the right fit for your home or lifestyle. We encourage you to rehome on your own if you are comfortable, but we welcome any adopted pet back at any point in their life.

Visit seattlehumane.org/intake for tips on rehoming, or if you need to return the pet to our care, complete a Pet Surrender Questionnaire and our dedicated Intake team will assist you with the process.

For after-hour emergency surrenders, please contact your local animal control agency.

