

Hot cross bunnies – from a rabbit's perspective

After springtime happiness will surely arrive a hot stressful summer, so please make sure I don't suffer or die from heat stress. Keep a close eye on me on hot days. Check that I am not breathing heavily or especially make sure I am not wet around my mouth and nose because if you see that I am suffering.

You will have to cool me down immediately but don't panic and dunk me in a bucket of cold water for I could die of shock!

Just take me to your nice, cool bathroom or laundry and dampen me down with tepid water.



1. First, wet your hand and stroke me so I'll think you are affectionately licking me. (Do not squirt me in the face with a spray bottle, I would hate that and think I am receiving some sort of punishment!)
2. Pay particular attention to wetting my ears for they are great conductors for temperature control.
3. After that let me, stretch out on the cool tiles or provide a piece of wet carpet or towel to lie on. We would much appreciate it if you could also supply a bowl of water nearby.
4. That should do the trick, mind you just to save us a lot of hassle you could prevent me from getting too hot in the first place.

Would you like a few suggestions? Okay, well here are a few examples of what considerate owners do for bunnies in their care during summertime.

How to prevent a hot cross bunny!

- ✓ Place our hutch in constant shade in the coolest part of the garden.
- ✓ Cover a hutch or shed roof with carpet or potato sacks then water with a garden hose or soaker hose as often as needed. If water restrictions are in force, apply for a special exemption.
- ✓ A heavy water bowl is useful. Some clever bunnies will soak their front paws and Lops may dip their lovely ears in a cool bowl of water
- ✓ Freeze plastic bottles of water and place them in our hutch and even though we like to lick the condensation remember to change it once it has melted

- ✓ A wet piece of carpet is always nice and cooling to lie on—much more cooler than a tile or brick.
- ✓ Drinking water must not get too warm or else we may die of thirst, either keep changing the water bottle or add a few ice cubes to our water bowl
- ✓ Bunnies housed in sheds, carports and garages, can overheat especially if they are metal, not insulated and lack sufficient ventilation. It is essential, not a luxury for owners to provide an air conditioner, air cooler and/or a fan. However, don't have those whirly things blasting us directly in the face, indirect flow of air will do nicely. Instead of lazing by the pool, be sure to regularly pop into our shed to double check we are coping well and that those electrical contraptions are still working and doing an efficient job.
- ✓ If I am to reside where it is constantly hot (such as up in Darwin) how about you dig me a burrow or let me be an indoor house pet.
- ✓ Expectant mothers are more prone to become stressed and kittens in a nest need extra special monitoring. Sometimes over heated little ones naturally try to dig further down into nesting material in the hope of finding cool soil—but end up making their situation much worse. Remove excess hay and insulating fur, place a frozen bottle wrapped in a clothe or a wet face clothe in a nest box or if these do not help on unbearable hot days temporarily keep the nest box and kittens indoors until the worst is over.
- ✓ Clip Angora/long coated bunnies or thoroughly brush out left over moult, loose excess fur or matting. You want to make sure their summer coat is open and thinner than their winter coat. And even though some breeds have very short coats (for example a Rex) the thick density of fur increases body temperature.

‘So now you know how, please keep me nice and cool, happier and alive this summer!’

Excerpt from the book ‘The Wonderful World of Pet Rabbits’

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