

Executive Summary: Why Ban Pet Rabbit Sales?

Problem: Rescues and Animal Services are Overwhelmed

- Rabbits are the **third most abandoned pet**.
- Most are bought impulsively without understanding proper care.
- Foster-based rescues are constantly at capacity, limiting how many rabbits can be taken in.

Key Issues with Pet Store Sales

- **Lack of Education:** Pet stores provide little to no guidance on rabbit care.
- **High Abandonment Rates:** Many owners surrender or release rabbits when they become too much to handle.
- **Burden on Resources:** Rescues, animal services, and taxpayers bear the financial cost of abandoned rabbits.

Agriculture and Environmental Concerns

- **Feral Populations:** Released rabbits damage crops and property.
- **RHDV2 Threat:** This highly contagious, deadly virus spreads among domestic and wild rabbits, endangering agriculture.

Solution: Ban Pet Rabbit Sales & Promote Adoption

- Reduces rescue intake rates.
- Prevents impulse purchases and promotes informed pet ownership.
- Protects agriculture and local communities from rabbit-related damage and the spread of RHDV2
- Aligns with successful policies in other cities that decreased intake requests and increased adoption rates.

Call to Action

- Support legislation to ban pet rabbit sales.
- Encourage responsible pet ownership through adoption and education.
- Help reduce the burden on rescues, animal services, and local communities

Responsible Choices: Shift from Rabbit Sales to Adoptions

Impulse Purchases Fuel Abandonment

*Rabbits are frequently purchased on impulse, especially around holidays like Easter and Christmas. Studies have shown a spike in rabbit surrenders following these holidays.**

Banning pet store sales reduces impulse buys and encourages mindful adoption through rescues, where education is necessary.

Abandonment Impacts Communities

*Rabbit abandonment in Florida has made national news on multiple occasions. Rabbit colonies have dug holes, chewed through wiring, and impeded traffic, yet many residents push for humane resolutions with the help of local rescues.****

Due to their short gestation period, a pair of rabbits could produce over 3.7 million rabbits in 4 years.

Lack of Education Leads to Abandonment

*Research indicates that pet store staff often provide insufficient or inaccurate care information. This leaves many rabbit owners unaware of a rabbit's basic needs, behaviors, and care costs, contributing to neglect and abandonment.***

We can no longer afford taking a reactive approach toward rabbit abandonment



Areas with Successful Models

Areas that have banned pet store rabbit sales saw a decrease in shelter intake numbers and higher adoption rates.† Adopted rabbits are also vaccinated against the highly contagious and deadly RHDV2 virus.

Rabbit adoptions in Florida spiked in 2020 / 2021 when rabbits were not sold in stores.

Rescues are Overwhelmed

Many shelters don't accept rabbits, leaving rescues as the primary resource for rabbit intakes. Florida has less than 15 rabbit rescues and many are operating above-capacity. Many rescues can only accept strays or support shelter rehousing due to lack of capacity.

Regulating backyard breeders and other pet outlets is key to reducing the growing influx of abandoned pet rabbits.

Managing Impact to Pet Stores

Banning rabbit sales doesn't mean harming businesses. Pet stores can transition to selling supplies and hosting adoption events in partnership with local rescues. Similar models have been implemented in areas with similar bans, allowing businesses to thrive while supporting animal welfare.†

Rabbits are then 3rd most abandoned pet.*

* House Rabbit Society study (2019); **PDSA Animal Wellbeing (PAW) Report (2023); ***CBSNews.com (2023); †Municipal Data (CA, NY)

In the News: Rabbit Abandonment Impacts Communities

Brevard County Rabbit Dumping

Rabbit abandonments continue to increase, and the Space Coast Rabbit Rescue doesn't have enough foster homes to accommodate all of the intake requests. They are pleading with county commissioners to take action before the pet rabbit population gets out of control.

News coverage: Fox 35, Good Day Orlando, Channel 13, Florida Today; National coverage – Yahoo, USA Today Network

Naples – Orange Tree (2024)

A pet breeder abandoned several pet rabbits in the neighborhood, leading to a colony of approximately 100 rabbits. These domestic rabbits have been attacked by predators and dogs, shot by residents with pellet guns, and struck by vehicles. Collier County Animal Services does not have the resources to capture the rabbits.

News coverage: Coastal Breeze News, The Naples Press

Wilton Manor (2023)

A resident abandoned rabbits in the Wilton Manor neighborhood. The rabbits quickly grew into a colony of 60 to 100 rabbits causing property damage and crowding of sidewalks and roads. At the urging of residents, the city partnered with a local rescue to humanely capture the rabbits and place them in foster homes.

News coverage: The Guardian, CBS, NBC, New York Times

By the Numbers – Orlando Rabbit Care and Adoptions (ORCA)*

- Since 2018, medical costs have increased steadily from \$11K to **over \$75K**
- Adoptions increased by **36%** in 2020/2021 when rabbits were not being sold stores
- Intake requests consistently out number adoptions
- There are less than 15 rescues in Florida; they are all struggling to find homes for abandoned rabbits and cover medical costs.