

Rabbit Pet Care Advice Sheet

Basic rabbit information

Rabbits make good companions. However, large rabbits need large hutches, which are expensive to buy. Rabbits need plenty of space for exercise. Also, hutches need regular cleaning and this is a big commitment. A run should also be provided for exercise these could also be expensive.

A Rabbit Needs:

- To be with other rabbits (although females will sometimes fight)
- We advise people keeping rabbits together to have them spayed/neutered by an experienced vet
- A mixed diet with rabbit mix, apples, carrots, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, you can grow your own fresh herbs like oregano, thyme and parsley. Good quality hay should always be available.
- A supply of fresh water in a drinking bottle available at all times.
- A large hutch (4 to 6 foot long) the average rabbit is the size of a small cat so needs a lot more space that is usually thought
- A clean hutch - cleanliness is very important, be careful with cleaning products it is better to use a detergent especially for rabbits that you can buy in your local pet shop, white vinegar is also good to use for cleaning hutches and food bowls.
- A large run in a garden for exercise. Rabbits burrow, so make sure the enclosure is escape-proof by having wire on the bottom.
- To be looked after at holiday times.
- Your time and interest for the rest of its life.

Fact Sheet

Lifespan

6 - 10 years

Sexually mature

90 days (small breeds), 120 days (large breeds)

Breeding

You should not breed your rabbit as it is very difficult to find good homes for the young. Remember that does (female rabbits) can become pregnant several times each year so a doe should never live with a buck (male rabbit) you can however have a buck neutered and a doe spayed. T.S.P.R.C. will not re-home rabbits if the intention is to breed them.

In season (When female rabbit is fertile and can be made pregnant)

Any time - in response to male

Gestation (Length of pregnancy)

Approx. 31 days

Handling

Lift the rabbit using both hands. Take the weight of the rabbit on one arm and steady it by gently holding the scruff of the neck (loose skin behind the neck) Once in the arms, the rabbit can be held against the body with its head over one shoulder. Never lift a rabbit by its ears or by the scruff of its neck. Put the rabbit down hind legs first to avoid being kicked or scratched.

Companionship

Rabbits naturally live in groups called colonies and so they need lots of companionship. It is kinder to keep more than one rabbit, if the rabbit has to live alone, you must make sure that you spend lots of time with it.

Rabbits and guinea pigs should not be kept together as they have different dietary needs and a kick from a rabbit can seriously hurt or kill a guinea pig

Ailments

Myxomatosis:

Rabbits (indoor and outdoor) must be vaccinated yearly against this fatal disease.

Please see the website below for further details: <http://www.rguppy.freeseerve.co.uk/myxomatosisfactsheet.htm>

Constipation and Diarrhoea

Caused by not enough green food or too much green food. If this carries on for more than 24 hours, seek veterinary advice.

Flystrike

A summer problem especially for the longhaired sorts of rabbit. The 'strike fly' lays its eggs in faeces-soiled fur. Within 12-14 hours the maggots hatch and eat into the rabbit, eventually killing it. It is essential to stop this by daily cleaning of the hutch, replacing the bedding, and checking the rabbit is clean under its tail. Seek veterinary advice immediately.

Obesity

Caused by too much food and not enough exercise

Overgrown teeth and claws

Teeth can become overgrown if there is a lack of gnawing material in the hutch. Lack of exercise causes claws to become overgrown and regular clipping may be necessary. Seek veterinary advice.

Parasites

Fleas, lice, mites and ticks. Treatment is available from your veterinary surgeon.

Snuffles

This is similar to a cold. This is easily passed on to other rabbits and can lead to pneumonia. Keep the rabbit away from any others and seek veterinary advice straight away.

Note: Pets are a great way of teaching children to care about other living creatures and give a lot of joy however all children should be supervised with small pets and parents should always check that pets are being properly cleaned and fed

Remember if your pet is showing unusual symptoms bring it to your local vet!