

RABBITS AND CHILDREN

Rabbits can make good family pets if parents respect the needs of the rabbit and the limitations of the children. Adults need to accept all the responsibility of caring for the rabbit. Please do not buy a rabbit solely as a child's pet.

- **Small children with rabbits need supervision.**
Rabbits are rarely cuddly!
- **Rabbits can scratch and bite if harassed.**
They do not like to be picked up and can easily injure their backs if they fall or are dropped
- **Children may not have the patience necessary to establish a relationship with a rabbit**

It's a good idea to choose a large breed of rabbit if you have young children as they are generally quieter, sturdier and too large to be picked up. Children don't pick up the family dog and they should learn to respect the rabbit in the same way.

WHERE TO GET A RABBIT

- Why not adopt a rescue bunny? Britain is flooded with unwanted pet rabbits awaiting new homes in rescue centres and if you adopt an adult bunny you can be sure of its personality.
- Many pet shops sell young rabbits but if you want a particular breed or colour, locate a reputable breeder via the RWA Helpline 0870 046 5249.

Wherever you get your rabbit you can be sure that with care, love and respect your rabbit will become a loving member of your family.

RECOMMENDED READING

Living with a Houserabbit. Linda Dykes and Helen Flack.

Available via The RWA Shop: www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk/catalog or order on **08443246090**



This leaflet is brought to you by the Rabbit Welfare Fund - the charitable wing of the Rabbit Welfare Association.

If you love rabbits, please consider supporting the Rabbit Welfare Fund. You can make a donation, or you may like to join the RWA. As well as fund-raising activities, most RWA members kindly make a small donation to the RWF in addition to their annual £17.50 RWA membership fee. RWA members receive a fabulous quarterly magazine packed with health, behaviour and care advice to help you to build a wonderful relationship with your bunny - whether she/he lives indoors or out.

To contact the RWA/Rabbit Welfare Fund:

Ring the RWA National Helpline on 0844 324 6090

Write to us at PO Box 603, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5WL.

Log onto our websites

<http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk>

<http://www.rabbitwelfarefund.co.uk>

Contact the National Helpline to order bulk supplies of leaflets or send SAE for single copies.



Rabbit Welfare Fund
Write to us at PO Box 603,
Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5WL.
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Registered Charity Number 1085689

Is a rabbit for me



Are you thinking of keeping a pet rabbit?

Or maybe you already have one. Either way you are one of the millions of pet lovers who think of rabbits as ideal pets. This is not surprising as they are endearing, affectionate animals that easily sway us with their charm. But just like any other pet, keeping a rabbit is a big commitment. So, please take a moment to read this leaflet to find out exactly what is involved in providing top quality care for your rabbit and how your hard work can be rewarded with a devoted and happy pet.



BUNNY BASICS

Although they are different shapes, sizes and colours, pet rabbits are closely related to their wild cousins. Their basic nature and needs are the same as a wild rabbit.

Rabbits are active!

They need plenty of space, a spacious run outdoors or freedom to run around the house for several hours every day. Cages should be burrows to rest in, not prisons!

Rabbits are sociable!

Wild rabbits live in colonies, never on their own. Your pet will need plenty of company either from you, a bunny companion or preferably both.

Rabbits are someone else's dinner!

Preyed upon by many other species, rabbits are naturally shy, quiet animals who hate being held above ground level. Gaining the trust of a rabbit takes time and effort.

A GOOD HOME FOR A RABBIT?

You'll need to keep these basic facts about rabbit nature in mind when deciding how best to keep your pet. Keeping a rabbit alone in a hutch doesn't meet many of the fundamental needs of the species and results in a bored and distressed pet. As a caring owner you'll need to look at alternatives.

OUTDOORS

- Two or more rabbits (provided they are neutered to stop fighting and breeding) living in a permanent enclosure in the garden with suitable shelter.
- Two rabbits sharing a hutch at night with daily access to a large exercise run (or garden, if you don't mind your plants being nibbled!). Remember, gardens and runs need to be secure against foxes, cats and dogs! Both these options offer a good quality of life. You would enjoy watching your rabbits behave in a natural way, but you would find that they won't become particularly tame.

INDOORS

If you want a closer relationship with your bunny then why not keep him as a houserabbit? Rabbits are very clean animals and, if neutered, can be trained to use a litter tray.

- One rabbit will live happily in the house with plenty of human company
- Two rabbits will be very content if you lead a busy lifestyle with less time to devote to them. Many houserabbits will watch

TV from the sofa, flop out in front of the fire and run to greet their owners when they come in from work! However, houserabbits are not suitable pets for everyone. Just like cats and dogs, they can be demanding and destructive, especially as youngsters. Even after thorough training and "bunnyproofing" some wear and tear on the furnishings as well as a bit of mess such as pet hair is inevitable.

YOU AND A PET RABBIT: A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN?

So, you think a bunny is the right pet for you?..... read on to be sure.

"FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE"

Your rabbit will be completely dependent on you. That means arranging holiday care if you want to go away. He will need affection and attention every day. Houserabbits are a bit like toddlers that never grow up. Can you cope?

"FOR RICHER, FOR POORER"

Pet rabbits are usually inexpensive to buy. The main cost is the equipment you will need to keep your rabbit. Building a safe, attractive outdoor enclosed complex can cost several hundred pounds and indoor cages, food bowls etc. will not leave much change out of £100. "Starter kits" are temporary homes for young rabbits. You'll need to budget for a bigger, better quality hutch as your rabbit grows up. Your bunny will need regular supplies of a quality rabbit food, hay, and bedding.

"IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH"

Your rabbit will need to be neutered and to have annual vaccinations against VHD and six monthly for Myxomatosis. Veterinary fees for a rabbit are very similar to those for a cat, so pet health insurance cover is strongly recommended in case of serious health problems.

"TILL DEATH US DO PART"

The average life span of a rabbit is 7-10 years. You are taking on your pet for around a decade. If the rabbit is for the children, they may be gone before the bunny!