



Care of a New Rabbit



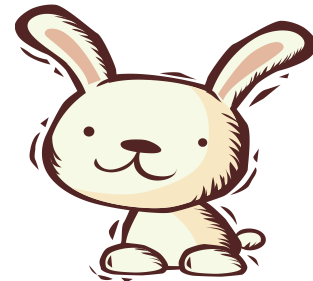
Rabbits make intelligent and friendly pets. The following information is provided to help you enjoy a happy, healthy relationship with your little friend. In addition to this handout there are a number of excellent books on the topic of rabbit health care that you may wish to consult.

- A good quality balanced diet is important to develop a strong and healthy body.
- Grass/Hay is an essential part of a rabbit's diet.
- Small amounts of rabbit pelleted food is necessary.
- Supply branches or wood for chewing to keep teeth trimmed down.
- Water should be available at all times.
- Vaccination is done at 10 weeks or older. Annual or six monthly boosters are necessary.
- Neutering is recommended to reduce aggression and cancer in females.

Vaccinations

Rabbits should be vaccinated against infectious diseases such as viral haemorrhagic disease (VHD) and myxomatosis. These diseases are highly contagious and can be fatal to your rabbit.

We recommend that your rabbit is vaccinated at 10-12 weeks of age and then annually.



Handling My Rabbit

Rabbits have very strong hind legs which allow them to run very fast, jump and kick. When holding a rabbit it is very important to support the entire body particularly the hind limbs by placing one hand under the tummy and the other under the tail, holding them close to your body.

Your rabbit should be groomed and petted daily, also examining their mouth, ears, eyes, coat and skin will aid in recognising any signs illness or injuries which can otherwise go un-noticed. This will familiarise them with being handled and help your rabbit feel more comfortable when being examined by the vet.

Feeding

Rabbits are herbivores and the best diet is grass and/or meadow hay with small amounts of pellet mix and mixed vegetables. This provides enough fibre which is essential. Lack of fibre leads to lack of wear on the cheek teeth and dental disease and also causes the gut to stop working

properly. Introduce all vegetables on a gradual basis to avoid bloat and diarrhoea. Occasionally fruit can be given as treats.



Neutering

Neutering is recommended for both males and females. Rabbits are prolific breeders and care should always be taken to avoid unwanted litters. Neutering not only prevents unwanted matings but also can

make both does and bucks less territorial and aggressive. In addition, does have a very high risk of developing uterine tumours if not neutered. Males and females can be neutered from 5 months of age.

Grooming

Grooming is an important part of the day-to-day care of your rabbit. If not groomed, rabbits will groom themselves, ingesting the fur, which often leads to hairballs or even intestinal obstructions and a visit to the vet. Nail trimming is also essential as rabbits' nails can get very sharp.



Dental Care

A rabbit's teeth are open rooted which means they grow continuously. This does not cause any problems if your rabbit has the correct diet. make sure the rabbit has some branches or wood available for chewing on to keep teeth trimmed down, like our own finger nails they grow constantly.

Socialising

Rabbits are very sociable creatures and like other rabbit or human company. Contrary to traditional ideas of housing a rabbit with a guinea pig, it is best to house like with like as rabbits can seriously injure guinea pigs when play-fighting or trying to mate.

Obviously when housing rabbits together, it is responsible to check, and check again, the sex of the rabbits or have it neutered as two bunnies become twenty very quickly!

Housing

A large secure grazing run with a bedroom attached for privacy is best. Rabbits need to be able to stand up on their hindquarters and hop around. Large pipes can be used to simulate burrows. Rabbits may also be kept indoors if provided with a large hutch and litter tray.