

Use this checklist to make sure that a rabbit is right for you and your family

- I have the appropriate housing for this pet
- I understand that it is best to keep rabbits separated unless they are neutered
- I can provide daily supervised time for my rabbit outside of its enclosure
- I can commit to taking care of my rabbit for up to 10 years
- There is an adult who can provide primary care for this pet.

Average size: 20cm to 30cm depending on the breed type
Life span: Up to 10 years

FEEDING

Feed a good quality pellet that is specifically designed for rabbits. Small amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables and a constant supply of hay are also diet staples. Treats should not exceed 10% of the total food intake.

WATER

Fresh clean water should always be available and changed every day. It is best to use a water bottle or a heavy bowl to avoid contamination and spillage.

HAY

Hay is a very important part of your rabbit's diet, as it provides a good source of roughage to maintain digestive health. Hay is also essential for bedding. This should be freshened up daily.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Vegetables are a great source of nutrients and add variety to your rabbit's diet. It is important that you vary the vegetables you give your rabbit and ideally feed a selection of 3 vegetables a day. Introduce any new vegetable one at a time with 2 already existing favourites. Do not feed lettuce as the high water content will often lead to diarrhoea. Fresh grass is also acceptable as long as it has not been sprayed with any chemicals (and never lawn clippings).

The following is a list of safe vegetables/plants for your rabbit:

- ▶ Alfalfa, radish & clover sprouts
- ▶ Basil
- ▶ Beet greens tops (sparingly)
- ▶ Bok choy
- ▶ Broccoli (mostly leaves/stems)
- ▶ Brussels sprouts
- ▶ Carrot & carrot tops
- ▶ Celery
- ▶ Coriander
- ▶ Clover
- ▶ Dandelion greens and flowers (pesticide free)
- ▶ Endive
- ▶ Green peppers
- ▶ Mint
- ▶ Mustard greens
- ▶ Parsley
- ▶ Pea pods

- ▶ Peppermint leaves
- ▶ Raddichio
- ▶ Radish tops
- ▶ Raspberry leaves
- ▶ Spinach (in small amounts)
- ▶ Watercress
- ▶ Wheat grass.

If in doubt DO NOT FEED

When trying a new feed, introduce it gradually over a few days mixed with the original feed.

HOUSING

You are best to provide your rabbit with the largest enclosure you can afford and it must be at least four times the length of the adult rabbit. The enclosure should be escape proof and have an area with a solid surface. Rabbits were not designed to spend all day on a wire grid.

Position – keep your hutch in an area where there are no great extremes of temperature or draughts. If your rabbit is to be housed in an outdoor hutch, make sure there is shelter from the wind and direct sunlight.

Rabbits can tolerate cold weather if properly acclimatised and sheltered, but they must be put under shelter in the winter. Rabbits cannot tolerate high temperatures.

Place 3 to 5cm of bedding in the bottom of your rabbit's cage using hardwood shavings (cedar bases are not recommended) and hay. Your bunny will also need a nest box or hidey hole.

HOUSING MAINTENANCE

Remove the wet spots daily and clean the entire bedding weekly or more frequently as required. Clean the food and water vessels daily and top up fresh hay. Fruits and vegetables not eaten within 24 hours should be discarded.

BEHAVIOUR & EXERCISE

Rabbits are most active at dawn and at dusk, so these are great times for supervised play and exercise. For playtime, an outdoor play arena can be used or a rabbit harness allowing your new rabbit to explore safely. Make sure that the outdoor area is predator free.

Rabbit proof your home prior to letting your rabbit loose; remove electrical cords within chewing reach and provide toys for your bunny when he is out to prevent him chewing such things as your furniture. A box on its side stuffed with hay makes a fun toy for your bunny.

Did you know?

Safe chew toys are essential for preventing health problems caused by overgrown teeth. Rabbits are smart, social pets and loving companions. Like all pets they truly benefit from daily social interaction.



HANDLE WITH CARE

Your rabbit should be handled frequently to keep it tame and maintain a bond between the two of you.

Open the cage door and let him come to you to be lifted out. Lift gently with both hands and hold him close to your body. It is important to remember to always support his hind legs.

Rabbits should never be lifted by their ears or by the scruff of the neck and should not be allowed to 'jump' down or be held facing the ground as this may cause them to struggle and can severely damage their legs.

Gently herd your rabbit back towards his cage rather than "catching" him, you don't want his cage to feel like a "timeout" zone. Try a command like "sleeptime" when you want your bunny to go back to its cage. During the training period you will obviously have to catch your rabbit.

CHEW TOYS

Rabbits need chew toys as their teeth continually grow; it is essential that they gnaw on hard, safe objects in order to keep their teeth at a manageable length. Overgrown teeth can cause serious health problems and need to be assessed by your veterinarian.

GROOMING

Rabbits generally stay clean but can be bathed using a small animal shampoo. Some long-coated rabbits require regular (sometimes daily) and thorough brushing and combing.

Always wash your hands before and after handling your rabbit.

HEALTH

Rabbits should be seen by your veterinarian at least once per year and checked for ear and fur mites, general body condition, nail length, and dental problems. Any health problems that occur between regular check-ups should be referred to your veterinarian.

Neutering / spaying should also be discussed with your veterinarian.

The signs of a healthy rabbit are:

- ▶ Active, alert and sociable
- ▶ Healthy fur
- ▶ Clear bright eyes
- ▶ Eats and drinks regularly
- ▶ Communicates by making soft noises
- ▶ Hops normally
- ▶ Normal stools.

The signs of an unhealthy rabbit are:

- ▶ Prolonged diarrhoea or a dirty bottom
- ▶ Overgrown teeth
- ▶ Heat stroke – panting, loss of consciousness or seizures
- ▶ Skin lesions.

If you notice any of these signs please contact your veterinarian.

LITTER TRAINING

Rabbits can be taught to use a litter tray by placing the rabbit droppings (pills) into the tray over a period of a few days. They tend to use "corners" as toilets so place your litter box in the corner that your rabbit has chosen. Older rabbits can also be taught to use a litter box – in fact they become better learners the older they get. Use a rabbit specific litter.

Recommended supplies

- ▶ Good sized cage
- ▶ High quality food
- ▶ Water bottle
- ▶ Bedding
- ▶ Grooming products for long haired rabbits
- ▶ Litter box / litter
- ▶ Hay
- ▶ Food bowl
- ▶ Chew toys
- ▶ Books about care
- ▶ Nest box/ hidey hole.

