

rabbits

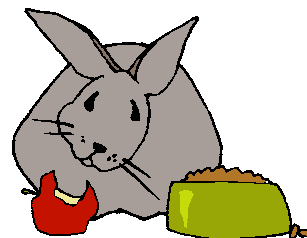
the right pet for you?

Rabbits can be difficult to look after properly. They need lots of space for exercise, and large homes that can be expensive to create. Before you think about getting any pet you should think very hard about whether you can provide everything it needs.

what do rabbits need?

- Someone to provide them with all their needs for the rest of their life.
- Companionship to be with other rabbits or people.
- A balanced diet of grass, rabbit pellets and fruit and vegetables.

- A constant supply of fresh, clean water in a drip-feed bottle with a metal spout.
- A large weatherproof home that is kept off the ground, out of direct sunlight and strong winds. Many homes sold in pet shops are too small.
- A separate covered sleeping area for each animal inside the home.
- A clean layer of wood shavings on the floor of their home with plenty of hay or shredded paper.
- Daily exercise in a large, safe, grassy area. Rabbits burrow, so make sure that the enclosure is sunk into the ground, is escape proof and safe from predators.
- Their home to be cleaned every day and their bedding to be changed every week.
- A gnawing block to wear down long teeth.



- To be combed every day if they have a long coat.
- To be neutered at an early age. Ask your veterinary surgeon for advice.
- Injections to prevent some serious diseases.
- To be taken to a veterinary surgeon if they are ill or injured.
- To be looked after when you are away on holiday.

lifespan

Rabbits can live for up to ten years.

behaviour

Rabbits still retain many of their natural behaviour patterns. In some ways, this makes them unsuited to life in captivity. In the wild, rabbits live in large social groups, and it is unkind to keep one rabbit on its own.

Female rabbits from the same litter can be kept together. Male rabbits will often fight even if they have been neutered. One male rabbit for up to every four female rabbits is usually a successful ratio.

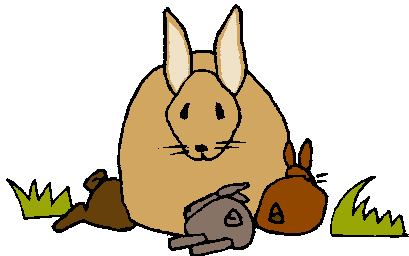
handling

Approach the rabbit from the front. Gently hold the scruff of its neck with one hand and take the weight in your other arm. Lift the rabbit toward you and rest it against your body with its head toward your shoulder. Never pick a rabbit up by its ears or the scruff of its neck.

breeding

The RSPCA strongly advises that all rabbits are desexed (all rabbits sold from the RSPCA are desexed).

A female rabbit (doe) can have several litters a year and as many as eight kittens (baby rabbits) in each litter.



health

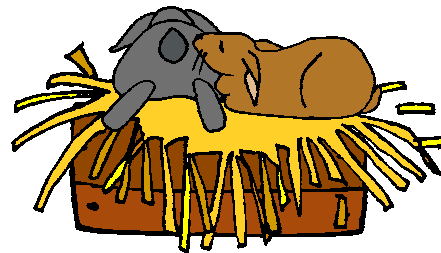
Young rabbits should be vaccinated against Rabbit Calicivirus and given regular boosters (further injections) throughout their life.

Myxomatosis is a highly contagious disease that is spread by fleas and mosquitoes. Rabbits must be protected from these insects wherever they are living. The vaccine for Myxomatosis is not available in Australia.

Rabbits also get and carry Pasteurella bacteria which can cause respiratory disease and abscesses.

Rabbits need to be checked regularly for overgrown claws and teeth. Both can be trimmed by a veterinary surgeon if necessary.

If you have any concerns about your rabbits' health, ask your veterinary surgeon.



choosing a new rabbit

It is a good idea to bring your rabbit in to meet its new friend before purchase. Remember that two males are unlikely to get along unless there are several females.

