

RABBIT CARE

PET CARE SHEET

Housing Rabbits are easily house trained and can be kept indoors if provided with a pen and litter tray, however make sure all electrical cables are protected – rabbits like to chew ! Outdoor rabbits need a large weatherproof hutch, with separate toilet area and sunny exercise area (rabbits need daily access to sunlight) – make sure the quarters are escape proof and protected against cats and foxes. **Rabbits are very sociable animals** normally living in colonies of 20 or more, and need to be with other rabbits or humans –If you are keeping your pet rabbit outside a neutered male - female pair is best, do not house rabbits with guinea pigs.

Feeding Correct feeding is essential if dental and digestive problems are to be avoided. Lack of calcium and roughage causes tooth overgrowth allowing sharp spurs on the teeth followed by painful mouth ulcers. Rabbits need to chew to keep teeth healthy –hay, especially Timothy hay, and grass require chewing and provide the roughage required while also preventing the rabbit gaining too much weight. **HAY AND GRASS should provide at least 70 percent of the diet** with vegetables / high fibre diet forming the remainder Old cardboard tubes and telephone directories can be used for your pet to chew in addition to the correct diet. . Allow the rabbit to graze grass or eat dandelion and other coarse weeds in summer, a good quality high fibre food eg Supa Rabbit can be used in winter as up to 30% of the diet. Be careful not to over feed green vegetables although carrots, sweetcorn, celery and clover can be given – however do not make sudden changes to diet – all new foods should be introduced gradually over 3-4 days. Make sure your rabbit does not become over weight.

Health ***We recommend that all rabbits are neutered at 6 months of age*** This prevents severe uterine problems in later life – occurring in 50- 80 percent of older females and will often improve the temperament of both sexes which can be aggressive during their breeding season.. Castrating male rabbits also prevents testicular tumours and fighting. Make sure you handle and check your rabbit's health at least twice daily (this can be done during grooming), - clean the bottom area which can become mucky, and make sure eyes and ears are clean. Support your rabbit's weight with a hand under the bottom when picking up Rabbits pass occasional soft faeces, usually overnight, which are eaten, however regular diarrhoea and soiling of the anal area indicates a problem- usually dietary although sometimes associated with dental disease or an overlarge dewlap (neck fold). Anal soiling may be associated with fly strike (maggot infestation – sometimes accompanied by severe trauma to the skin). Avoid by regular cleaning, correct diet and the use of insecticides eg Rearguard which repels flies for 10 weeks

Myxomatosis and VHD are fatal diseases. Myxomatosis is common in our area especially in the late summer – it is transmitted by biting insects, mainly midges and fleas. and affects town dwelling rabbits as well as those living in the country. ***Make sure your rabbit is vaccinated with Myxomatosis / VHD single shot vaccine - protection lasts 12 months***

Advantage is a spot on licensed to treat rabbit fleas

Dental problems Despite careful attention to diet some rabbits develop tooth problems which if left unattended can cause severe pain and in extreme cases death.

Incisors (front teeth) May need regular trimming in animals with poor alignment or dietary problems. It is sometimes advisable to have these teeth (which grow continually) extracted.

Molars (back teeth) May develop spurs – these can only be removed under general anaesthesia requiring specialised instruments to expose the teeth.

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