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Pet Industry Association

Rabbit Care - Fact Sheet

Check list

- Hutch
- Straw or pet hay
- Vitamin & mineral supplement
- Salt lick stone
- Shampoo
- Wormer
- Toy (yes rabbits get bored too!)
- Water bottle
- Food bowl
- Litter tray & litter
- Hutch cleaning spray
- Small animal lice & mite spray

ARRIVING HOME

Your new rabbit is likely to be nervous. For the first few days make sure you talk to him regularly before introducing your hand into the cage or stroking him. When he is used to this you can then pick him up. Use both hands, one under the chest with the rabbit's front legs on either side of your fingers, the other resting on his neck and back. Hold him close to your body so he feels safe and wont fall. Once they are used to you, rabbits love being handled.

BEDDING

Rabbits can be kept outdoors all year round or indoor's if you prefer. If kept outside, they should be kept in a weatherproof hutch that is raised off the ground and away from the wind. A rabbit hutch should be at least 122cm x 61cm x 61cm with a separate living area and run. In the warmer months you can place the rabbit's hutch onto your lawn. However, you must move it frequently to prevent overgrazing and ensure the hutch is not in direct sunlight. Wood shavings, breeder's choice litter, straw or hay should be used as substrate on the floor of the hutch. You should remove all substrate weekly and thoroughly clean the hutch using hutch clean spray. If you have more than one rabbit you will need to clean the hutch at least twice a week. Your rabbit will choose one area in its hutch as a toilet spot. Once this spot has been determined you can place his litter tray with litter there. Place some of your rabbit's droppings into the litter tray so he knows this is still his toilet area. Clean the litter tray each day. For the first few times after cleaning the litter tray you should still put some of his droppings in there until your rabbit is used to the litter tray. We recommend using the small animal corner litter trays. They have been designed to fit into the hutch without using up too much of the rabbits space.

FEEDING

We recommend feeding your rabbit a rabbit and guinea pig mix along with fresh fruit and vegetables. You will need to add a vitamin and mineral supplement to your rabbit's water as rabbits cannot produce their own vitamin c. Your rabbit can eat apples, pears, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower leaves, celery (in small amounts) lettuce (in small amounts), Corn on the cob, silver beet, spinach and milk thistle. Occasionally you can treat your rabbit with bread but not too much as the yeast can be harmful in large quantities. Remember to remove any uneaten fruit or vegetables daily to prevent your rabbit from getting ill from eating soiled food. We recommend using a ceramic dish for your rabbit's, food as they are easy to keep clean and are too heavy for your guinea pig to tip over. Your rabbit will graze constantly during the day, if you notice that the rabbit and guinea pig mix has been finished each day then you will need to increase the amount that you are feeding your rabbit.

WORMING

Your rabbit will require worming every three months just like cats and dogs. The small animal wormer can be given to your guinea pig by mixing it with his water or by drops directly to the mouth. Always follow the instructions on the bottle. If left-untreated worms can make your rabbit quite ill with, diarrhea, weight loss, dry skin and a dull coat.



GROOMING

You should start grooming your rabbit from an early age so they become used to the feeling. We recommend regular brushing with a slicker or bristle brush. You can wash your rabbit using small animal shampoo or a dry shampoo in the colder months. Once a month you need to spray your rabbit and hutch with small animal mite & lice spray to prevent or treat against mites and lice.

BREEDING

Rabbits are prolific breeders! Females can start breeding from 1 month of age. The gestation period is between 28 - 31 days, with the average litter size of 3-4 babies. Make sure you remove the male, as the female can become pregnant again within an hour of giving birth! When planning to breed your rabbit you will need to increase the amount of calcium in her diet before and during pregnancy and make sure you have wormed her prior to breeding. If you are not planning to breed your rabbit you can have the male de-sexed to prevent any accidents, or you can keep two rabbits of the same sex together even two males as long as they are introduced together from a young age. Rabbits are extremely sociable animals you should avoid keeping them on their own.

TOYS

Believe it or not toys play a vital role in the rabbits life as they do for many other animals. Rabbits enjoy new things to explore and play with. Other than relieving boredom toys are also important to keep their teeth in perfect condition. Rabbits will even enjoy having a good chew on sticks, coco chunks and even dentabones.

FIT AND HEALTHY RABBITS

A healthy rabbit will be alert with bright clear eyes, dry nostrils and a clean and shiny coat. The droppings should be small, firm pellets. Signs of illness are a dull, dirty coat, loss of appetite, skin sores, loose droppings, or a runny nose. Poor hygiene is a common cause of illness. If these symptoms are present you should consult your vet.

CLUBS AND SHOWS

If you want to have even more fun with your rabbit you can get involved with your local rabbit club and join in with activities and shows. You can find the rabbit clubs listed under clubs in your local phone book or via the internet.

FURTHER INFORMATION

There are many different breeds and colours of rabbits. You can get all the info via the many books written on rabbits, attending the shows or by searching the internet.

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