



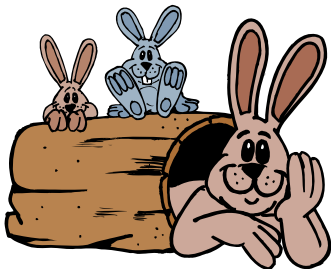
Care of Rabbits.

So you have decided to get a rabbit?

Rabbits are rapidly becoming a very popular pet. I see them regularly during my working week. I will answer the most frequently asked questions here.

How do I choose my Rabbit?

Make sure you source your rabbit from reputable breeder or pet shop. Ensure that they have been properly weaned, free from discharges from the eyes/nose etc. The ideal age to get a baby rabbit (know as kittens) is about 8 weeks old. Baby rabbits depend totally on milk for up to 10 days and are fully weaned at 3 to 4 weeks.



Housing.

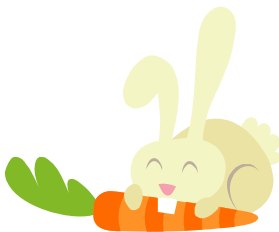
A hutch is the most commonly used housing for rabbits, however, they should not be kept permanently in one as they need daily exercise. They need 8 hours a day outdoors in a run or garden. The minimum size for a hutch for an average size rabbit is 6ftx2ftx2ft. Large enough to allow him to stand up on his hind legs and move about freely. Hutches should be raised from the ground to give protection against dampness and to deter vermin. The roof should be covered with roofing felt, sloped to allow water to run off and should have a

overhang. Rabbits cannot tolerate damp, drafts, or excess heat so make sure you place the hutch in an area out of direct sunlight, wind or rain. Do not forget to provide extra warmth in the form of extra day bedding in the colder months. The hutch should be strong enough to withstand unwanted attention from dogs/cats/foxes etc. Check the hutch for any sharp wire ends or anything that could injure your rabbit.

Bedding.

Straw is a safe and effective bedding for your rabbit. Bedding needs to be changed twice a week and the entire hutch should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected once a week (except for the breeding season).

Feeding.



The most important part of your rabbit's diet is good quality hay. Hay is rich in natural fibre and calcium. It is vital for their natural digestive function.

Next add in fresh greens such as dandelion leaves and clovers. Fresh vegetable can be added like parsley, peas, carrots etc. Very little commercial feed is needed with hay, greens, and vegetable. A handful of commercial mix for an average sized bunny a day. With the muesli style mixes do not let your bunny pick out his favourite bits and reject the rest. Clean fresh water should be available at all times. Avoid highly caloric 'rabbit treats' drops etc.

Handling.

It is best to handle your rabbit every day. Careful handling is the key to a relaxed bunny. Always support his hind quarters with one arm and hold him close to your body so he feels secure. Never pick him up by his ears. Rabbits have very strong hind quarters, so young children should be supervised when handling.

Exercise.

8 hours a day ideally in your garden if secure, or a rabbit run. They can escape very easily so make sure you do a tour of your garden!

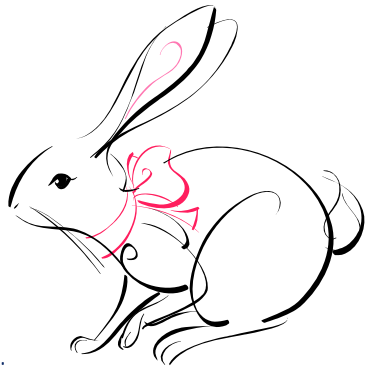
Health.

Dental disorders, eye problems, nasal discharges, stomach upsets.

Vaccination.

Vaccination is part of keeping your rabbit fit and well. Myxomatosis vaccination should be given every 6 months, Feb and October according to your rabbit's age. Myxomatosis is a viral disease spread by blood sucking insects, e.g. the rabbit flea. There is no clinical evidence to suggest that myxomatosis is spread directly from one rabbit to another. The signs to look out for are puffy eyes, and swelling around the genital area. Myxomatosis is almost always fatal and vaccination is the most effective (though not 100% protection) way to protect your rabbit from the deadly disease.

Flea control is also important to prevent transmission between rabbit, so speak to your vet about the appropriate flea control for your



rabbit.

