

CARING FOR YOUR RABBIT



We care about pet care

Rabbits make very popular pets. They are naturally clean and easy to manage. They are best kept in a sheltered position outdoors such as a porch or garden shed. They may be kept in the open air if provided with a suitable weatherproof hutch. They usually get on well with guinea pigs. There are many varieties available.

HOUSING

Choose a good quality well constructed hutch. Make sure that it is weatherproof and provide an extra cover to protect it from extremes of weather. Doors must be kept securely fastened. Wooden floors should be treated with a suitable protective sealant. If you plan to keep your rabbit indoors a range of wire cages are available. Always keep your rabbit free from draughts, damp and strong sunlight. You will also need a pen or a means of providing secure outside exercise.

BEDDING

Provide plenty of hay or straw for bedding, preferably over a thick layer of whitewood sawdust. Remove any wet bedding, stale food and droppings daily. Wipe any damp patches with a weak solution of a suitable disinfectant. Sprinkle on fresh sawdust. Clean out thoroughly once a week.

Clean and move the pen as necessary.

FEEDING

A wide range of prepared rabbit mixes and pelleted foods are available from your pet shop. This can be supplemented with cabbage, cauliflower, spring greens, broccoli, celery, carrots, apples and pears. Too much wet greenstuff can cause diarrhoea. Lawn clippings may be fed provided they are free of insecticides. Small amounts of dried whole wheat bread may also be given. In wintertime bran mash and extra grain based foods are advisable. Rabbits tend to feed constantly and it is natural for them to nibble away at something

all the time. A mineral block and a salt lick is appreciated, as is a piece of wood for gnawing. Vitamin drops can also be given. Keep all feeding dishes clean and dry.

WATER

Fresh drinking water must be made available at all times. The best way is to provide a drip-feed bottle securely fastened to the wire of the cage. The bottle should be emptied, rinsed out and refilled daily. Take particular care during the winter to check that the water does not freeze.

HANDLING

Using smooth and gentle movements and gripping firmly but not tightly place one hand across shoulders with the thumb over and around the neck. With the other hand support the rump. This prevents injury to the back by kicking.

GENERAL CARE

Given a good routine your rabbit should keep healthy. Check regularly that the hay and straw never goes mouldy, as this can cause respiratory problems. Long-haired rabbits will need some grooming with suitable coat care equipment. Your pet shop will give you advice. Occasionally a rabbit's teeth can overgrow and will need trimming. Seek advice from your pet shop or vet.

SHOPPING LIST

Hutch/cage, Food, Hay, Straw, Sawdust, Water Bottle, Feeding Dish, Salt Stick, Disinfectant, Mineral Block, Soft Brush and Vitamin Drops.

This leaflet gives basic guidelines only. It is not intended to be a substitute for a good book on Rabbits. Your pet shop will be pleased to show you their range.

Pet Care Trust Bedford Business Centre

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