

Caring for your **Rabbit**

Did you know pet rabbits should be kept indoors to protect against predators, and that rabbits don't like to be alone? Find out what other facts and responsibilities you should know to take good care of your pet rabbit.

Supplies Needed

- A solid-bottom cage. Don't get a wood cage, because rabbits chew wood.
- Small to medium rabbits need a cage that's at least four feet wide, two feet deep and two feet tall. Double the size for a large rabbit.
- Ceramic or metal food bowl only. Rabbits chew plastic.
- A water bottle that attaches to the cage. These are cleaner than water bowls.
- Chew toys like wood blocks or lava rocks. Rabbits' teeth never stop growing. They need to chew daily.
- Timothy hay only. Never use alfalfa or wood chips (especially cedar!). These cause serious health problems.
- A digging area filled with Timothy hay. Rabbits love to dig!
- A pet carrier
- Pelleted rabbit diet
- Soft grooming brush
- A litter box – if you want to train your rabbit. It's pretty easy to do!

Four Steps to Litter Box Training

1. Place a litter box in 1 corner of the cage
2. Fill the box with litter
3. When your rabbit "pees" or "poops", move the soaked hay or poop to the litter box
4. The smell will cause your pet to use the litter box

Chores

Daily

- Feed your rabbit pelleted rabbit food, timothy hay and dark green/orange vegetables (see below for guide)
- Take your rabbit out and play with him/her no more than 20 minutes a day
- Remove any uneaten vegetables or fruit

Weekly

- Clean the cage and litter box using bleach. Mix one part bleach to ten parts water and rinse thoroughly.
- Brush your rabbit twice a week. Brush daily during "shedding season" in the spring and summer.

Yearly

- Take your rabbit to the veterinarian for a check up
- When your rabbit turns six years old, he/she should go twice a year to the veterinarian



Feeding Your Rabbit

Rabbits under six months: can eat all the pellets and vegetables they want

Rabbits six months and older: 1/8 to 1/4 cup of pellets per day per five pounds of body weight, and two cups of vegetables per six pounds of rabbit

All rabbits: can eat unlimited timothy hay

Dangerous Foods

Never let your rabbit eat:

- Chocolate
- Salty food
- Salt
- Alfalfa hay
- Nicotine
- Cedar chips
- House plants

Holding a Rabbit

Rabbits get hurt easily. Pick your pet up carefully and support his/her hindquarters. Your parents should always be around when you hold or play with your rabbit.

Always Watch Your Rabbit

When you take your rabbit out of his/her cage, always watch him/her. If left alone, rabbits will chew and destroy anything.

More Than One Rabbit?

Avoid adopting two males. Males usually fight. If you decide to adopt more than one rabbit, get two females or a neutered male and a female.

Keep Your Rabbit Indoors

It's best to keep your rabbit indoors. Your pet wants to be around you and your family. They could also be harmed by predators like coyotes or foxes if left outdoors.

The Right Temperature

Rabbits are very sensitive to heat. They should be kept in temperatures less than 80 degrees F. You may want to move them down to a cool basement in the summer if it's too hot.

Neuter or Spay Your Rabbit

To prevent health problems, females should be spayed and males should be neutered when they are at least four months old.

Finding the Right Veterinarian

- A veterinarian that treats "exotic pets" will be more comfortable with rabbits
- When you get your pet, have your parents or guardians take it to a veterinarian for a checkup
- Your pet should see a veterinarian once a year and when you think it might be sick

Information about taking care of your rabbit provided by Monique Weldon, DVM of the Coal Creek Veterinary Hospital, Centennial, Colo.

