

Caring For a Rabbit



Rabbits are intelligent, social animals and make affectionate and rewarding family pets when they receive plenty of attention. They can be trained to use a litter box and are more enjoyable, responsive pets when they live indoors as house rabbits. Given appropriate care a rabbit can live up to 10 years.

General

Rabbits can be taught to share your home, though hazards such as electrical cords and toxic plants should be removed or made inaccessible to prevent accidents. Rabbits will chew and dig, so provide acceptable items such as wood toys and a safe digging box, filled with straw, to avoid damage to your furnishings. Kind training using plenty of praise and treats will teach your rabbit to live as one of the family.

Housing

Rabbits should live indoors, safe from predators and extreme climates. It is important to choose as large a cage as possible, at least four times the size of your rabbit. Avoid wire floors, which can injure rabbits feet. Give your rabbit a litter box filled with safe litter such as Carefresh, never pine or cedar shavings, which contain harmful oils. A hiding box will also be appreciated. Chew toys such as untreated wicker baskets, untreated wood blocks, cardboard boxes and dried out pine cones will keep your rabbit busy.

Diet

A healthy diet is based on good quality rabbit pellets and ample fresh alfalfa, timothy or oat hay. Add at least two cups of fresh vegetables per 6 lbs of body weight each day. Good choices are dark green leafy vegetables and root vegetables. Small amounts of fresh fruit may be given as a treat. Fresh water in a sipper bottle should be available at all times.

Cleaning

Remove soiled litter daily and wash food dishes, water bottles and the cage bottom weekly. Always rinse and dry the cage well before returning your pet.

Fertility

All pet rabbits should be spayed or neutered by an experienced rabbit veterinarian to avoid unwanted babies. Spayed or neutered rabbits also live longer, healthier lives and make better companions.

Health

Rabbits are prone to intestinal blockages, due to swallowing hair while grooming. Regular grooming can help minimize this problem. Be alert and consult an exotic animal veterinarian if you notice signs of illness or injury such as: lack of appetite; change in droppings; bloated abdomen; runny nose; labored breathing; head tilt; urinary problems; lumps or bumps.

Warnings

Antibiotics of the Penicillin family, such as Amoxicillin, are toxic to rabbits and should NEVER be used.

More Info

The House Rabbit Society: www.rabbit.org/index.html
House Rabbit Handbook by Marinell Harriman