

enough fur to cover the bottom of the feet to provide cushioning from the pressure of the wire floor. Rex-furred breeds or extremely large breeds such as Flemish Giants are most susceptible to sore hocks. To prevent this from happening, provide a piece of clean plywood in the cage so the rabbit can get off the wire. If sore hocks already affect the rabbit, apply a small amount of bag balm or preparation H daily to the affected area.

Various environmental factors can add stress to a rabbit's life, such as drafts, extreme temperature changes or unsanitary conditions. When the immune system is compromised, a rabbit may not be able to fight off bacteria such as Pasteurella and Bordetella. If your rabbit sneezes and appears to have nasal discharge, consult your veterinarian for advice. Some antibiotics are harmful to rabbits, so it is best to seek professional help.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The American Rabbit Breeders Association, Inc. recognizes the need for information about rabbits, and offers many sources to the experienced breeder as well as the novice.

Membership in the ARBA includes the Official Guidebook to Raising Better Rabbits and Cavies. Over 190 pages of helpful articles written by knowledgeable breeders from their experiences, as well as tips passed down from the pioneers in the rabbit industry. Read about the rabbits value commercially, for exhibition, and as pets.

Learn techniques on breeding, general care, determining pregnancy, and much more.

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Caring For Your Pet Rabbit

FEEDING



EQUIPMENT



HEALTH



Rabbits can make excellent pets. Whether you have just acquired a bunny, or you are considering a long-eared addition to your family, you will want to know something about bunny care. The following suggestions are the basics of the health and happiness of your furry friend.

It is easy to house train rabbits. They can be taught to use a litter box and to be put on a leash. Rabbits like to chew. If given the run of the house, you may see the results on your furniture, carpets and electrical cords. This is destructive to your belongings and harmful to your pet bunny, as carpet fibers can become impacted in the bunny's digestive system or worse yet, the bunny can be electrocuted from a live electrical cord. If you wish to keep your bunny indoors, a cage with a removable bottom tray is recommended.

Rabbits can be housed well in outdoor hutches if you live in a mild climate. The hutch does not need to be fancy, but it should provide good ventilation, protection from rain, sun, snow and harsh winds. The hutch should be at least three feet above the ground to help protect against attacks from dogs, raccoons, possums and other predators.

If the rabbit is to be caged when you are at work or at school, the cage should be spacious enough that he can exercise, stand up, and stretch out without problem. A good rule of thumb is that the cage should be $\frac{3}{4}$ square foot of space for each pound of rabbit. For instance, a 10-pound rabbit would need 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ square feet of cage area. A cage measuring 30" x 36" would accomplish this. Very large or very small breeds could be adjusted for larger or smaller size cages.

You can find plans for building hutches in rabbit care books or on the internet. It is advisable to use all-wire cages because they can be easily cleaned with a brush and a safe detergent or disinfectant. Common household bleach mixed with water is excellent. Keep in mind the cage must be protected from the elements.

FEEDING

Clean fresh water is vital to a rabbit. Without water, your rabbit will not eat its solid food, and soon will become dehydrated and malnourished.

One of the major foods that rabbits eat is rabbit pellets. Most of the good quality rabbit pellets contain the nutrition a bunny requires. An adult rabbit takes about 1 ounce of pellets per pound of body weight a day. For instance, a 4-pound Holland Lop would take about 4 ounces of pellets or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup a day. Bunnies could be free fed until they are about 3 months old and each has a separate cage. Some supplemental feeds that are beneficial are various grains such as whole oats, Barley, Milo, Wheat, Sunflower seeds; hays such as timothy, oat, wheat, and alfalfa; dried breads; fruits and veggies such as carrots, bananas, apples, etc. All should be provided in moderate quantity. Avoid feeding lettuce or cabbage to a rabbit especially if it is young. These veggies could upset the rabbit's digestive system and cause life threatening consequences.

EQUIPMENT

In addition to the cage, you'll need a water bottle or a crock. For a feeder, you can use a

crock or a "J feeder" which will allow you to fill it with pellets from outside the cage. These items are available through feed stores, pet stores, equipment suppliers, internet sites or mail order catalogs.

Rabbits also enjoy toys to toss around. A clean tuna fish can or a soda can make a good toy. All sharp edges should be smoothed before you place the can in the rabbit's cage.

Do not put soft wood, such as pine blocks, in the rabbit's cage. The splinters could cause life threatening injuries to rabbit's intestines.

HEALTH

Rabbits are generally hearty animals. They do not require immunizations like cats and dogs do. If kept clean, dry and out of drafts, they can live in surprisingly low temperatures. However, they do not do well in extreme heat because they cannot perspire. During warm weather, make sure your bunny is shaded from the sun and has plenty of fresh water. Freeze a couple of 2-liter bottles or gallon jugs of water in your freezer. If the temperature goes over 85 degrees, place a frozen bottle in the cage to keep the rabbit cool. If the temperature goes over 95 degrees, it will be safer for you to take your rabbit inside the house to prevent heat stroke.

Rabbits may get ear mites or fur mites. Commercial cat ear mite medication is effective in eradicating ear mites. Flea powders for cats can also be used to treat fur mites. A product named "Ivomec" can be used to treat both mite problems. Consult your veterinarian for advice. Some breeds of rabbits easily get sore hocks because they do not have

