

Is this the right pet for me?

Rabbits are clean and intelligent animals with a playful and affectionate nature that make wonderful pets. Rabbits are quite hardy and can be kept indoors or outdoors. Several different breeds of rabbit are available with different coat types, sizes and characters, so choose your rabbit carefully to suit your family and lifestyle. Giant breeds need a lot more space than dwarf varieties and long haired Angoras will need regular grooming.

Recommended for...

- People with time to spend with their rabbit each day
- Singles, couples, families with young or school-aged children
- Apartment dwellers

Lifespan

6-10 years

Feeding

Rabbits are herbivores and their diet should be high in roughage. Feed your rabbit a mix of good quality pellets or packaged food (see packs for feeding advice) and food including grasses and fresh vegetables, e.g. hay (grass or oaten), celery tops, broccoli leaves, carrot and apple. Rabbits also like to nibble on weeds such as milk thistles. Don't change your rabbit's diet suddenly and avoid lettuce and cabbage and Lucerne hay, as these can cause problems. Don't be alarmed if you see your rabbit eating some of its own droppings, as this is a perfectly natural and, actually, a healthy habit. Rabbits' teeth grow continuously, so give them wooden toys or mineral stones to chew on and wear down their teeth.

Always provide plenty of fresh, cool water especially in summer.



NEW RABBIT CHECKLIST

Here's a list of the essentials you'll need for your new rabbit. Please ask any of the Best Friends team to help you with your selections.

Essential equipment

- rabbit hutch (outdoor living) or cage (indoor living)
- heavy feed dish (so it doesn't tip over) or bowl which attaches to the side of the cage
- heavy water bowl or a bottle which attaches to the side of the cage
- food mix and fresh vegetables
- litter box and litter (especially if it is a house rabbit)
- wooden chew toys
- grooming brush (especially for long haired rabbit)
- harness & lead (yes – you can walk your rabbit!)

Special Offer:

Joanne Hewett
BestFriendsTM
Pet SuperCentre

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Dunnings Road, Point Cook Town Centre, Victoria 3030
Store 9394 6000 Grooming 9394 6099 OurVetTM 9394 6055
www.bestfriendspets.com.au

Caring for your Rabbit



Joanne Hewett
BestFriendsTM
Pet SuperCentre



Caring for your rabbit



Housing

If kept outdoors, your rabbit needs a secure and weatherproof hutch. The hutch should be high enough to allow your rabbit to stretch up on its back legs and as large as possible. Your rabbit needs a secure, cosy sleeping area with some type of bedding such as hay, newspaper or wood shavings. Keep the cage clean, but wait until your rabbit is out of the cage before cleaning it.

It is very important to put the hutch in a cool and shady spot in summer and an area protected from the wind and rain in winter. Because rabbits don't perspire, they are prone to heat stress, so in very hot weather cover the hutch with damp sacks and place frozen plastic bottles of water in the cage to allow your rabbit to cool off.

Rabbits can be quite territorial, so if you have more than one rabbit they are best housed separately. Your rabbit is quite happy kept on its own provided it gets plenty of human attention and handling.



If kept indoors, your rabbit can be given the run of the house like a cat, or simply live inside at night and go outside to an exercise pen by day. If your rabbit is going to live inside it will still need a cage to provide a safe retreat and somewhere to sleep.

Handling

Rabbits need to get use to being handled, or they become harder to catch and they may scratch or bite in their struggles to get away. Always handle your rabbit gently and never pick it up by the ears or touch its sensitive nose. Support your rabbit under its bottom with one hand, and place your other hand under its chest and forelegs when picking it up. Hold your rabbit firmly, close to your body, or gently wrap it in a towel to help it feel more secure.

Kids care

Children need to understand the need for gentle and calm handling before being allowed to handle rabbits and should be supervised to avoid problems. If either your rabbit or child is nervous, an adult should pick up the rabbit and place it on a folded towel on the child's lap, or let your rabbit sit beside the child rather than picked up. Show your child how to pat your rabbit with long slow strokes from their head to rump and massaging around the ears.

Exercise

Rabbits enjoy coming out to exercise, either outside or indoors. Your rabbit may enjoy a short run outside (under your supervision) in an enclosed run or safe exercise area. Be wary though, if you allow your rabbit to run loose in your garden for long periods you may find that it will start to make large burrows and may become difficult to catch. If your rabbit is loose in the house, make sure that all electric cords are out of reach as rabbits love to chew them.

Grooming

Like cats, rabbits prefer to clean themselves. Long haired rabbits may need extra help with their fluffy coats through brushing, to get rid of excess and dead hair. If you do wish to wash your rabbit, use gentle shampoos that can be found in store.

Your rabbit's sharp nails may also need trimming. Ask OurVet™ staff to show you how to do this at home.

House Training

Rabbits are naturally clean animals and can be trained to use a litter box. Put a litter box where your rabbit usually chooses to go, in a place it knows will not be invaded by others. Start with a litter box in the cage, and one or more boxes in the rabbit's running space, and when your rabbit is sufficiently well-trained, gradually give it more space.

Some rabbits love to kick their litter out of the box. You can get a covered litter box (with a hood) to help solve this problem. There are many different types of natural litters available for rabbits made from hay, alfalfa, paper or you may choose to just use newspaper.

Health

Most rabbits are pretty hardy, but in Australia they are exposed to two serious viral diseases, Rabbit Calicivirus and Myxomatosis.

Rabbit Calicivirus is usually spread by rabbit to rabbit contact. As there is no treatment, protect your rabbit with an annual Calicivirus vaccination available at Our Vet and prevent contact with wild rabbits and unvaccinated rabbits.

Myxomatosis is a viral infection spread by biting insects such as fleas and mosquitoes. Symptoms include running and swollen eyes, swollen ears and face. Rabbits with this fatal disease should be euthanased to relieve suffering. There is no treatment or vaccination available, so to protect your rabbit keep it indoors when mosquitoes are active and secure mosquito proof netting over your rabbit's enclosure.

You should have your rabbit vaccinated against calicivirus and if you have any other concerns about your rabbit's health, you can go to the Our Vet™ counter in store and talk to the Team.

Desexing: Female rabbits have a short gestation period of 30 days. If you have 2 rabbits (a male and female together) you could have more than you are prepared for in a very short space of time. So keep male and female rabbits in separate areas, or have your rabbit desexed. They will generally be healthier, more sociable and amore easily trained to use a litter box when desexed.

Emergency Treatment during the guarantee period: If your rabbit develops diarrhoea which persists for more than 24 hours, or becomes severe, or has any other health problems during the guarantee period please contact the team at Our Vet™ in store.

Responsible pet ownership

In some areas there are restrictions on the number and types of pets you are allowed to keep. Check with your local government for further information on your rights and responsibilities.



Best Friends Pet Guarantee: At Best Friends Pet SuperCentre we take the utmost care of all animals living under our roof to ensure they are happy and healthy whilst in our care. After purchase, if you are not satisfied with the health of your new pet or you are having second thoughts on pet ownership, you can return your pet to us with the receipt within 14 days of purchase for vet treatment*, refund or replacement pet†. We are unable to provide a refund for any equipment you purchased and have used for your pet during this time. * Vet treatment includes 1 free consultation and appropriate treatment for illnesses that are considered by OurVet™ to have been present in the pet and have further developed after the pet was sold. New illnesses and injuries that have occurred after the pet was sold are not covered. Treatments provided are at the sole discretion of Best Friends & OurVet™. †Replacement Pets are offered at the same value as original pet purchased.