

## RABBIT CARE GUIDE

The addition of a rabbit to your family is a very exciting time; however it can be a little frightening for your rabbit. They will be very dependant on you for feeding, attention, love and care and may be missing the company of their mum, brothers and sisters. So that your rabbit settles easily into their new home, you will need to provide a comforting environment. It is advisable to keep your bunny inside for the first few days, even if it will be an outdoor bunny. Letting them hear everyday noises, footsteps, TV, dinner talk will help him to get used to everything. Let him out on your lap for short 5 minute quiet patting times (3 to 4 times a day) and talk softly and constantly so he gets used to your voice. Children should understand excited squeals and loud talking are very frightening for him. In nature bunnies have many enemies and their instinct is to run and hide. They are fearful of being picked up because the experience mirrors being captured for dinner. When you pick up your bunny make sure you scoop him up from underneath and support his body in your hands. Hold him close to you so he feels safe. During playtime get down on the floor with him. Allow him to come to you and when he does, gently pat him - don't drag him onto your lap. Rabbits prefer to sit beside you. Be patient and don't rush your bunny - with consistent gentle coaching and stroking his face, ears and back of neck - it won't take long for him to be tame.

Lifespan - 7 to 12 years

### FEEDING

Rabbits need to have a well balanced diet to ensure that they stay in good health and to maintain their immune system. The ideal diet for your rabbit consists of:

- Good quality rabbit pellets (approx.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup per day) - Vetafarm rabbit pellets recommended
- Meadow Hay with a little Lucerne. Lucerne is very high in calcium so after 1 year of age, smaller amounts should be given.
- Fresh Fruit and vegetables (small amount daily or every 2<sup>nd</sup> day - handful at the most - with minimal fruit)
- Fresh clean water available at all times. Bottles recommended as bowls get dirty quickly.
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#### **Unsuitable and poisonous food:**

Potatoes, rhubarb, beans, salads with dressings, cakes, onions, pickled foods.

### HOUSING

A suitable hutch should measure at least 1200mm x 600mm (4' x 2') and be at least 600mm (2') high. The hutch should be of sturdy construction impenetrable by dogs or cats. Indoor or outdoor cages are available. If your cage is outdoors, weather proof tarp is recommended in wet seasons and shady positions for hot summer days. Mosquito netting recommended for summer to safeguard against Myxomatosis or Calicivirus.

The ideal nesting material is straw. Kitty litter trays kept in the cage - or outside in a safe run around area are great for the rabbit to go in. They will quickly adapt to using with a good litter. We recommend 'Oz Pet' as it keeps the odor away and attracts bunny to it. This will help cut down the cleaning time for your cage.

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## HEALTH

- It is advisable to buy a small animal wormer and administer as per instructions for 2 to 3 days every 3 months.
- Rabbits teeth are constantly growing and they need to wear them down. Give you rabbit a wood chew to gnaw on or untreated pine wood or fruit tree branch.
- Trim your rabbit's claws regularly. Toenail clippers designed for humans are ideal - avoid cutting the quick (bloody supply)
- Toys are great for a single rabbit to give him some entertainment and help with boredom. See range in shop.
- Never leave your rabbit unattended indoors as his natural desire to gnaw will lead him to chew furniture, electrical wiring etc.
- Toilet train your rabbit by placing a litter tray filled with Oz Pet Litter in his favorite toilet spot. Add a few of his droppings to help him get the message.
- Myxomatosis is a virus carried by mosquitoes and fleas. Best to keep netting over cages indoors at night and fly screen for outdoor cages.
- Calicivirus was introduced by CSIRO to control wild rabbits. It is advisable to have your bunny vaccinated by your vet after 10weeks to safeguard against this.

*Please don't hesitate to contact us at Pittwater Pets should you have any questions. We'd love to hear how your bunny is going and would like to offer you our continued support.*

*Pittwater Pets Management*