

*Full of advice  
on caring for  
your pet*

## *Your guide to* **Rabbits**



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# Are you ready?



Rabbits make lovely pets. They possess very caring and loving natures and really thrive on companionship and human interaction. Rabbits are very sociable animals, therefore, it is always recommended they live in neutered pairs eliminating feelings of loneliness which can cause unnecessary stress.

Owning and caring for a rabbit can be a very rewarding experience, but it is important to realise that they are a big commitment and will require a lot of time and care.

**Rabbit claws need trimming every 6 weeks**

The average life span of a rabbit can range anywhere from 8 to 12 years, although the oldest rabbit to date was recorded as 18 years old.

Once you are certain that you and your family can provide a loving and long lasting home for your rabbit, you must consider the following issues. Rabbits are a long-term commitment and will require a lot of time spent on them throughout their life.

## Selecting your Rabbit

**Selecting your Rabbit** - There are actually over 45 breeds of rabbit that you can choose from. Rabbits come with all types of personalities and certain breeds have specific characteristics. Do your research and know the breed that will suit you and your family.

**What to look out for** - You should always ensure that you buy your rabbit from a reputable pet shop or breeder. Make sure that your rabbit looks healthy and has no signs of sickness such as a runny nose or diarrhoea.

**When is the best time to buy my Rabbit** - The best time to buy a rabbit is when they are about 6 to 8 weeks old and have been fully weaned.



**Re-home a Rabbit?** It is worth considering adopting your rabbit, as there are many rabbits that require a loving home. Rabbits from re-homing sanctuaries are usually vaccinated and neutered.

**Male or Female?** A male rabbit is known as a buck and a female a doe. Both are great pets to have, though males are known to be more attentive and affectionate.

**Spay or neuter?** Spaying and neutering are essential for good health and it has been known to extend a rabbit's life. It can also eliminate bad behaviour such as spraying and defensive tendencies.

**Vaccinations** - All rabbits should be vaccinated against myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease (VHD or HVD). Your local vet will advise you on ages and frequency of these vaccinations.

## At home with your Rabbit

Once you have selected your rabbit it is important to consider whether you should keep your rabbit indoors or outdoors.

Always provide a hutch at the minimum size of 6'x2'x2' allowing your rabbits adequate space to move, stand and shelter. A hutch should not be the sole accommodation, in addition, an exercise run is thoroughly recommended which allows your rabbits to run and play at their leisure.

Indoor rabbits are becoming increasingly popular and are known to be easy to litter train. They love human interaction, so an indoor environment makes for a very happy bunny. Keeping your rabbit indoors has also been known to extend their life span quite considerably. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that you will have to litter train your rabbit and bunny proof your house, as they do love to chew, especially on things like exposed wires.

Outdoor rabbits also enjoy a very fulfilling life. However, it is important to ensure that the hutch provides a large enough space for your rabbit, as they need plenty of space to stretch and stand



**Rabbits are generally happier in pairs**

up on their hind legs. Your rabbit will also need an ample size run so that they can get daily exercise and run around. Rabbits that do not receive enough exercise may be prone to health problems at a later stage. It is important that your outdoor rabbit receives a lot of attention and human contact, as they will become lonely and bored if left unattended for long periods of time, which results in a very unhappy bunny. Like humans, rabbits do not like being cold so it is worth providing them with extra bedding in the winter or bringing their hutch into an inside space.

**Taking my Rabbit home** - When taking your rabbit home, you must allow them to settle into their new surroundings. Do not handle them for the first 24 hours. This will allow them to relax and get used to their new home without too much stress.

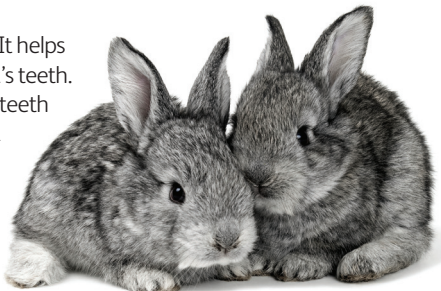
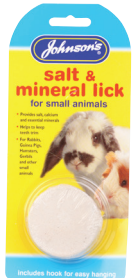
## Diet

**What should I feed my Rabbit?** A healthy diet should comprise of good quality rabbit food, fresh hay or grass, water and vegetables. Green food should be introduced to baby rabbits a little at any one time otherwise this may cause bloat and diarrhoea.

**How often should I feed my Rabbit?** Provide your rabbit with plenty of fresh clean hay or grass on a daily basis and feed them once a day. They will eat as much as you put in front of them, so don't provide too much food as this can lead to obesity and health problems. Follow the feeding guide on the packet.

**What foods are bad for Rabbits?** Do not feed your rabbit lettuce or avocado, as these can be very harmful. It is advisable to give them small amounts of fresh vegetables such as carrots and broccoli.

**Why is hay important?** It helps to grind down your rabbit's teeth. If left unchecked, rabbits teeth can grow up to 5 inches a year. Hay also provides good roughage, which reduces the danger of hair balls and other blockages.



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**Treats** - Always ensure any treats are given in moderation.

**Water** - Check the water bowl or bottle every day and ensure it is always filled. Refill the water every day even if it is not empty.



## Health

Please ensure you are aware of the health related problems that can occur in rabbits.

**Overgrown teeth** - Rabbits can suffer with overgrown teeth therefore, always check regularly. Daily chewing of fresh hay or grass will significantly reduce the risk of overgrown teeth as it is the chewing action which will keep teeth trim. Always ensure any overgrown teeth are always burred by a vet.



**Digestive disorders** - These can be a common problem with rabbits and in some cases can be fatal. A rapid change in diet, change in environment or over-handling can cause this. Ensure that you contact your local vet if your rabbit stops eating, has diarrhoea or a bloated stomach.

**Fly strike** - This is a serious condition that occurs during summer. Flies lay their eggs around the rabbit's rear end, which turn into maggots that eat away at the flesh. This can be fatal to your rabbit so they must be checked regularly in the summer months.

**Rabbits  
are natural  
chewers**

**Myxomatosis & VHD** - (viral haemorrhagic disease). All rabbits should be vaccinated against myxomatosis and VHD, including indoor rabbits. Both diseases can be deadly so you must ensure your rabbit has been vaccinated accordingly. Register your rabbit with your local vet as soon as you get them to ensure all vaccinations are up to date.

**Nails** - Check the length of your rabbit's nails regularly as they can become uncomfortable if left too long. You can buy clippers and do it at home, but it is advisable to let your local vet show you the first time as they have veins in their nails which you need to avoid cutting.



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# Shopping Checklist

We recommend the following items for your new rabbit.

## Rabbit Checklist

- Large hutch or indoor cage
- Litter tray for indoor Rabbits
- Run for the garden
- Hay, straw and woodchips for bedding
- Hay rack for the hutch/cage
- Food bowl
- Water bottle
- Complete rabbit food
- Vitamin drops
- Treats
- Salt lick
- Gnaw sticks
- Toys
- Rabbit safe disinfectant
- Grooming brush
- Nail clippers
- A book on Rabbit care

It is now time to enjoy your rabbit and watch him grow into an important member of the family.

### *For further information contact:*

Jollyes Petfood Superstores  
1 Lea Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1AS

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