



Rabbit Care

Rabbit Statistics;

- Life expectancy is 6 – 14years
- Breeding may commence between 4 – 10months. Female rabbits (does) do not have a set oestrous cycle; instead they undergo a process called induced ovulation, in which the act of mating will bring on ovulation in a doe.
- Adult body weight 2- 6kg
- Pregnancy 31days
- Litter Size 1 -12
- Weaning 4 – 6weeks

Rabbits can make ideal loving pets. There are many aspects to housing, feeding, health & veterinary care which are important to keep your new pet rabbit happy and healthy.

Housing;

- A hutch should serve as a temporary enclosure only. It needs to be safe & secure for the rabbit & provide protection from predators. It should be large enough to allow the rabbit to exhibit its normal behaviours. All pet rabbits should be given the opportunity to exercise outside of the hutch for a few hours each day
- Hutches should be easy to clean. Remove soiled bedding daily & totally clean the hutch at least once weekly
- If kept outdoors ensure that the hutch is rain proof & avoid extreme weather conditions. Rabbits can succumb to heat stroke very readily in hot weather. Hutches need to be well ventilated. Mosquito proof the hutch using fly-screen wire. Biting insects such as mosquitos and fleas are how the deadly myxomatosis virus is spread to pet rabbits.
- Suitable bedding includes hay, straw or shredded paper. An all wire floor is unsuitable. Change the bedding regularly
- If you allow your rabbit to come indoors, be aware of them chewing electrical cords & furniture.
- If you intend to keep more than one rabbit (which is recommended as rabbits are sociable animals), suitable mixes include 2 females, or mixes of neutered rabbits.
- **Exercise** is important. Allow rabbits to exercise and graze freely. Time in a safe lawn or garden area every day is ideal. This promotes good physical & mental health.

- Your rabbit requires **access to unfiltered natural sunlight daily**. Rabbits require the vitamin D from sunlight in order to be able to absorb the calcium in their diets. This is important to prevent metabolic bone disease and dental disease.

Feeding;

- Correct feeding is the most important way to keep your pet rabbit healthy. Wild rabbits live on a diet of grass, and we need to imitate this type of diet to keep your rabbit's teeth, their gastrointestinal, skeletal and urinary systems in optimal health.
- Rabbit's teeth grow continuously. A **high fibre, roughage based diet is essential to prevent dental disease in your pet rabbit**.
- Rabbits are also naturally 'coprophagic', meaning they eat some of their own droppings. They need to do this in order to keep themselves and their digestive tract healthy.
- Feed your rabbit a **hay and vegetable diet**.
- **Hay and grass** should make up 80% of all the food eaten- provide them with a constant supply of good quality fresh grass or grass hay ; Timothy, Oaten, Pasture, Paddock, Meadow or Ryegrass hays. Do NOT feed Lucerne hay as it is too high in protein and calcium for rabbits.
- Feed **fresh leafy greens & vegetables** every day. As a guide, feed around 2 packed cups of leafy greens per kilogram (at least 3 different varieties) per day, some examples are; broccoli, cabbage, celery, endive, beet/carrot tops, brussel sprouts, spinach leaves, kale, bok choy/other Asian greens, dark leafed lettuce varieties Herbs such as parsley, dandelion, coriander, basil, dill, and mint can also be provided.
- **Treats** such as root vegetables (carrots/ sweet potato), capsicum and fruit should only be given in small quantities i.e. 1-2 tablespoons per day.
- Do not feed the following to your rabbit; Cereals, grains, nuts, seeds, corn, beans, peas, breads, biscuits, sweets, sugar, breakfast cereals, chocolate! These will make your rabbit obese and in some cases seriously ill.
- Muesli mixes should never be fed to a rabbit.
- Pellets are not necessary either- if desired you may feed 1-2 tablespoons per day only, but ensure the pellet is a high fibre, high quality formulation. One acceptable brand available in Australia are "Oxbow" rabbit pellets.
- Rabbits will benefit from having things to chew in their environment. Sticks and branches can be used (fruit tree branches are ideal), as can wooden chew blocks or cardboard.
- Make any changes gradually to minimise digestive upsets.
- Provide access to **fresh clean water**. Water bottles or water bowls may be used.

Health & Veterinary Care;

- Rabbits may require regular grooming with a soft brush and their nails may require occasional clipping.
- **Calici virus vaccination**- your rabbit will require regular vaccinations to protect it from this fatal disease. We recommend that a rabbit between the ages of 6-12 weeks be given 2 doses, 4 weeks apart. 6 monthly booster vaccinations will then be required for life.
- **Desexing** is recommended between 5-6 months of age for both does and bucks.