Introduction Guide To The Care Of

Rabbits

Scientific Name: Leporidae

Life Span: Approx 6 – 12 years in captivity

Size: varies from breed to breed

Appearance: The rabbit's long ears, which can be more than 10 cm (4 in) long, are probably an adaptation for detecting predators. They have large, powerful hind legs. The two front paws have 5 toes, the extra called the dewclaw. The hind feet have 4 toes.Wild rabbits do not differ much in their body proportions or stance, with full, egg-shaped bodies. Their size can range anywhere from 20 cm (8 in) in length and 0.4 kg in weight to 50 cm (20 in) and more than 2 kg. The fur is most commonly long and soft, with colors such as shades of brown,gray, and buff. The tail is a little plume of brownish fur (white on top for cottontails).

Temperament and Handling: Generally rabbits are best housed alone. Two female rabbits are sometimes placid enough to live together if introduced young enough, however you must be prepared to separate them should fighting occur at a later date. Males should be separated by twelve weeks of age, as they will act aggressively towards each other. Rabbits should be handled regularly if they are to remain tame, but do not handle your rabbit for the first 24hrs after taking it home. Give it time to settle into its new home first. Small children should sit on the floor when handling a rabbit to avoid it being injured if dropped. Talking to your rabbit will help calm and re-assure it. Weekly grooming using a soft rabbit brush will help maintain a healthy shiny coat.

Housing: Rabbits are very hardy animals but will need protecting from extremes of weather. They can live outdoors during the summer months so long as their hutch is positioned in a shady area. Damp and draughts can kill rabbits therefore they should be housed inside a shed during the winter months. The minimum hutch size is 3ft for a dwarf rabbit and 4ft for a medium sized rabbit. Giant breeds should be given as larger hutch as possible. But obviously the more space you can give your rabbit the happier it will be. A good hutch will contain two compartments. One side should have a solid door to provide a sleeping area for the rabbit and will act as a shelter from the wind and cold. The hutch should be on legs or positioned off of the ground to protect the rabbit from rising damp, rats and mice. The roof of the hutch must be covered in felt to protect the rabbit from rain. A run is essential for providing exercise during the summer months. Shelter must be available at all times to prevent the rabbit suffering heat stroke. Rabbits love to play with toys and food balls. They also like to shelter under wooden fiddle sticks and cardboard tunnels available at surrey feed. They may also enjoy going for a walk around your garden wearing a rabbit harness. Rabbits are most active during early evening and night. But rabbits must be shut away in their hutch at night for their own safety. A

rabbit hutch should be cleaned out at least once or twice a week depending on how much time the rabbit spends on it. They often use one corner of their hutch as a toilet, so this area may need cleaning more frequently. Small animal hutch disinfectant should be used on a regular basis to prevent the hutch from smelling. Otherwise flies will be attracted to the hutch causing serious health risks (such as fly strike) to the rabbit. Rabbits will often gnaw at their hutch to wear down their continuously growing incisor teeth. This can usually be avoided by providing them with wooden gnaw treats.

Heating and Lighting: (see above)

Feeding: Rabbits enjoy a wide range of fruit and vegetables such as apple, banana, beetroot, broccoli, cucumber, melon, carrot, celery, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, parsnip, pear, spinach, swede, turnip, and tomato. But too much fruit and vegetables will cause diarrhoea. They will also enjoy the vast range of treats available at Weird N Wonderful as well as rabbit diet food. Rabbits will occasionally been seen to eat their own droppings. This is necessary, as their digestive system cannot extract all the necessary vitamins the first time around.

Please note that this is only an introductory guide based on our opinions and experience, we advise you to continually research and learn as much as possible from as many sources as you can, every animal is different and new care and information is always being developed and found ☺