Things to do with your rabbits

Rabbits are great fun, and can become very affectionate. Here are some ideas for how to have fun with your bunny!

- Get down on the floor – rabbits are ground-loving animals!
- Find out your rabbit’s favourite foods, and hand-feed him... many rabbits will come when called if they know they’ll get a treat!
- Gently scratch your rabbit’s forehead
- If you need to move your rabbit (for example, from hutch to run) carry him in a box, not in your arms

NOTE TO PARENTS:
- Tens of thousands of rabbits end up in rescue centres every year because “the children lost interest”. Please, please don’t get a rabbit unless you are prepared to look after it for the next ten years – because that is what is very likely to happen!
- Never allow pre-school children to interact with a rabbit unsupervised. If they try to pick the rabbit up, they are likely to be scratched or bitten and the rabbit can be injured or killed if dropped. Teach young children to sit on the floor and stroke rabbits using the back of their hands.

What are the alternative to rabbits?
If you want a small furry pet, but decide a rabbit isn’t the right choice, think about:

RATS
- Brilliant pets, enjoy being handled.
- Live 2-4 years

HAMSTERS
- Popular pets, but often dislike being handled.
- Live about 2 years

GERBILS
- Lively and quick moving.
- Live about 3 years

GUINEA PIGS
- Not very friendly but probably don’t enjoy it.
- Live 6-7 years

CHINCHILLAS
- Some tolerate being handled.
- Live 10-15 years

Chipmunks
- Not very friendly, and their tails are not very long.
- Live on average 5-7 years

For more information, read the RWF leaflets:
- “Hey look at me, I’m a Houserabbit” (indoor rabbits)
- “Bunny Buddies” (why rabbits need company – and how to introduce two rabbits)
- “Feeding your pet rabbit (healthy eating!)”
- “Having your rabbit neutered”

“I have only been a member since January of this year (2005), but already my membership has been invaluable. It is so good to know that there are like-minded people either on the end of a phone or an email who are only too happy to help with queries or problems. The more people who join, the more likely we are to be able to spread the word that rabbits deserve better!”

Tracey Poul, Cambridge

This leaflet is brought to you by the Rabbit Welfare Fund - the charitable wing of the Rabbit Welfare Association.

If you love rabbits, please consider supporting the Rabbit Welfare Fund. You can make a donation, or you may like to join the RWA. As well as fund-raising activities, most RWA members kindly make a small donation to the RWF in addition to their annual RWA membership fee. RWA members receive a fabulous quarterly magazine packed with health, behaviour and care advice to help you to build a wonderful relationship with your bunny – whether she/he lives indoors or out.

To contact the RWA/Rabbit Welfare Fund:
- Ring the RWA National Helpline on 0870 046 5249
- Write to us at PO Box 603, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5WL.
- Log onto our websites http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk http://www.rabbitwelfarefund.co.uk

Love rabbits? Read this!
Already got a pet rabbit?

How to check you’re doing everything possible to keep your rabbits happy and healthy.

Thinking of getting a rabbit?

Here are all the things to think about first!

1. Rabbits are active – in the wild they run about for several hours every day. WHICH MEANS … Rabbits shouldn’t be kept in cages/hutches all the time, or they develop weak bones. Do your rabbits have plenty of space to run around in?

2. Rabbits can live indoors as house rabbits, or, outdoors in a large hutch plus access to an exercise run. There are lots of options: indoor cages of different designs; adapted wooden playhouses for the garden; and even space-age insulated plastic igloos! whichever you choose, your family will need to adapt part of the house and/or the garden to your pets. Why not go along to a garden centre, or look on the internet for some ideas?

3. Rabbits love to chew and dig – it’s what they do when making burrows! WHICH MEANS … Pet rabbits need things to chew (e.g. hay; apple or willow twigs; kitchen roll inner tubes) and somewhere to dig. You can make a ‘digging box’ by putting peat into a cardboard box and cutting a hole half way up the side, let your rabbit play in a sandpit; or just accept he is likely to burrow in the garden!

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6. Rabbits are inquisitive, and love exploring. This is why wild rabbits always need to know the quickest way back to their burrow, and where to find the best food. WHICH MEANS … Rabbits are introduced to new toys. So give them cardboard boxes, large pipes, or lots of rolled up carpet to play with. They also love searching for tasty food, so you can hide titbits and watch your bunnies hunting for them!

7. Rabbits like somewhere to hide. A rabbit in the wild has to hide from predators, so they need a place to relax in safety. WHICH MEANS … Bunnies need a dark hidey-hole where they can chill out in peace. Never force your rabbits to come out of his hidey-hole: they will become frightened of you, and may bite or scratch in protest.

8. Rabbits are designed to eat grass, grass, and more grass. WHICH MEANS … Pet rabbits should eat mainly grass or hay. You can give fresh leafy greens as well. Rabbits should only have very small amounts of processed rabbit food. But remember – never change your rabbit’s diet suddenly, or you might cause serious tummy upsets. Make any changes to his diet over at least two weeks.

9. Wild rabbits don’t live very long… but a well-cared for pet rabbit can live a very long life – 10 years or more! WHICH MEANS … You need to find a good rabbit vet! Even healthy bunnies need to see the vet regularly (just like you, they need to be immunised against deadly diseases) and if your rabbit is ever injured or ill he will need rapid veterinary care. It’s also a very good idea for pet rabbits to be neutered.

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I need looking after properly!