

Boutique Bunnies

Care Sheet

Housing

Rabbits can be kept indoors or outdoors; they need a lot of room to move around so make sure the hutch is spacious. The hutch needs to be lined with hay (not alfalfa), wood chippings (not pine or cedar) or shredded paper. Rabbits enjoy chewing so ensure that the hutch is rabbit proof so that they cannot chew their way out or escape, also make sure that the rabbits are unable to dig out of the bottom of the cage. A litter box filled with hay or shredded paper should be provided for the rabbits, they will usually go in the same area and always prefer the darkest most secluded corner of the hutch for their litter box. Every night, mosquito netting should be placed over the cage to protect the rabbit from contracting a deadly disease carried by mosquitoes called Myxomatosis.

Nutrition

A rabbit should always have an unlimited amount of hay as it is the main component of its diet. The rabbits should also have a dish of pellets available, younger rabbits can eat as many pellets as they wish as they are still growing but as they get older the amount of pellets given should be reduced to prevent obesity. Rabbits should be provided with plenty of vegetables, usually 2 cups a day is sufficient and preferably green leafy vegetables such as: spinach, cabbage and turnip greens. Carrots and fruits should only be given to rabbit's on occasion as special treats and foods such as iceberg lettuce and onions should be avoided as they are toxic to rabbits. Clean drinking water should be provided in a bowl or water dispenser available at pet stores, it should be checked every day.

Exercise and entertainment

Rabbits need plenty of exercise so therefore they should be let out of the hutch for a minimum of 1 hour per day. Never leave the rabbit unattended outside as it may find a hole in the fence that it will escape through. Rabbits should also have something that they can chew on in their cage, things such as a piece of wood, branches or even a telephone book will keep them entertained and stop them from chewing on other things instead.

Handling

When picking up a rabbit hold the rabbit under its rear and at the front of its legs with two hands and hold it close to your body. Rabbits are very uneasy when being picked up as they are ground based animals, try to avoid letting the rabbit kick its feet when being picked up as it can cause spinal damage. Never pick a rabbit up by its ears. Rabbits will enjoy being petted on the head and under the chin, petting a rabbit roughly should be avoided as it will cause the rabbit a great deal of stress.

Health

Rabbits are social animals, in the instance that you believe that you will not be able to spend enough time socialising with the rabbit it is recommended to get another rabbit, this will keep them both happy when you are not around to socialise with them. The litter tray should be cleaned out every second day and the entire hutch should be cleaned out every fortnight, to avoid any insects or pathogens taking home in the hutch. Rabbits do not need to be bathed and washing them should be avoided as they are not very capable of regulating their own body temperature and can quickly develop hypothermia. When it is summer a frozen bottle of water or cool tiles should be placed in the rabbit cage that they can lie on when they feel too hot.

Disclaimer: This care sheet is provided as a reference and has been compiled from the experience of fellow rabbit owners. The information is intended as advice only.

