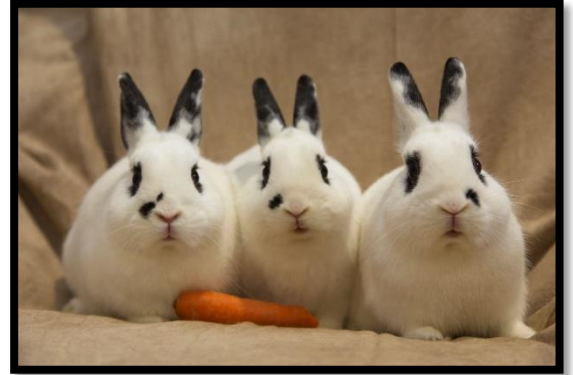


So, You Think You Want a Rabbit?

Rabbits are among the most abused and neglected pets, the world over. Countless rabbits spend miserable lives confined to a hutch outside or a cage inside, alone and with little or no space to exercise, mostly because owners don't realize what's involved before taking them on.

Once that rabbit doesn't live up to the unrealistic expectations that were put on them, they are often relegated to a cage in the basement or garage or dumped, outside to fend for themselves. This is no life for these intelligent, sentient beings.

These points will help you to get an idea of what is involved in their care – hopefully before you adopt, but if you already have a rabbit, maybe the advice here can help you give your rabbit(s) the full, content, healthy and loving life they deserve. If you can't commit to giving them what they need to live full and contented lives then rabbits are not for you.



Are rabbits right for you?

It's an important question because there are a lot of myths about what rabbits are like as pets, so it's important to know what's involved. But it's just as important to think about the following question...

Are you right for rabbits?



Countless rabbits suffer neglect at the hands of owners who don't understand, have been misinformed, or aren't ready to commit to their rabbits' needs.

Rescue shelters are bursting at the seams with rabbits abandoned by owners who didn't take the trouble to find out what was involved. Since we opened our doors over 10 years ago, we have had close to 1,000 rabbits come through our small rescue.

Rabbits are very intelligent and given the proper home and environment will surprise you with their antics and abilities.

Below is a small list of **MISCONCEPTIONS** to consider:

- **Great pets for children – FALSE!**

Rabbits are rarely cuddly – as prey animals they are nervous by nature and can bite or scratch when stressed. Building a relationship with a rabbit takes time and patience and has to be on the rabbit's terms. Children often lack this patience.



- **Happy to be picked up/petted – FALSE!**

Rabbits are a prey species, so when they're picked up their instinct tells them they have been caught by a predator, and they often react aggressively. Most good owners will only pick up the rabbits to check their health unless they are one of the personalities (there are many, just like humans) that love to climb up and sit with you or on you. The pleasure is in watching them display their true personalities and behaviours. You work to train them just as you would any other pet.



- **Happy in small spaces – FALSE!**

Pet rabbits need to live in your house with you. They should never be kept outside or confined to a cage. Exercise pens or part of a room (or a whole room) is really the best way to keep your rabbit happy and healthy. Rabbits still need time to run outside of their pen – a hallway or rabbit-proofed room are great options for running and playing time for your pet rabbit.

- **Happy living alone outside or in a cage – FALSE!**

Studies show that rabbits value companionship and are very social animals - in the wild they live in large groups and social setups much like humans - they want to be with you and live with you, not confined to a cage or a room alone. This can be with just you, their human or watch a pair or group of bonded rabbits snuggling up together and cleaning each other and you'll see exactly why it's cruel to keep a rabbit without spending quality time with them, like any other pet.

- **Easy to look after - FALSE!**

Rabbits should be cleaned out every day and given *fresh hay* (at least a ball the size of themselves twice a day) and bedding. They can live for over ten years so that's a long term commitment! They can be susceptible to medical problems – *such as GI Stasis* – and are considered exotic so you will need to find a rabbit-savvy vet to take care of them. Rabbits use cat litterboxes for their bathroom and are extremely clean animals using the same spot each time



- **Cuddly toys – FALSE!**

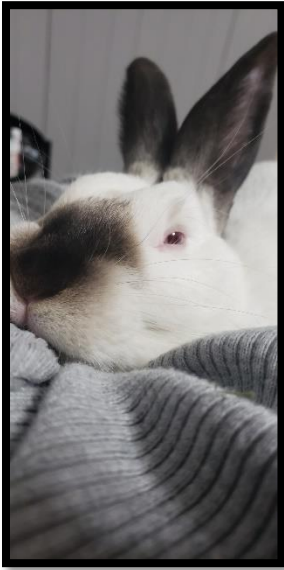
Rabbits suffer for their looks. Children see a cute and fluffy rabbit in a pet shop and pester their parents to buy it. But as with their toys, children often lose interest quickly and the rabbit is abandoned or endures a miserable life alone in a hutch at the end of the garden or as food for a predator.

- **Cheap pets – FALSE!**

Pet rabbits are inexpensive to buy (think online or the side of the road in the valley), but caring for them isn't. You'll need a large, good quality indoor pen as well as good quality food, lots of hay and a litter box. A bored rabbit is a destructive rabbit, so toys, treats and other things to keep your rabbit busy all add up. Spaying / neutering and vet trips all cost money, and finding a good rabbit-savvy (has lots of experience specifically with rabbits) veterinarian are all important things to think about before committing to any pet.

Rabbits are beautiful, curious animals that deserve to live full and enriched lives.

The list above highlights just some of the misconceptions about rabbit care. The bottom line is that looking after rabbits is a big commitment.



You must...

- have them neutered or spayed
- provide them with an environment that keeps them safe and allows them to get lots of exercise - they love to run and are designed to run and jump and hop happily. A dog needs daily exercise and a rabbit is no different - they need at least an hour a day to run around and play if you keep them in a pen. You should NEVER keep rabbits in a CAGE.
- clean them out and check them over every day
- trim toenails every 4 - 6 weeks depending on how fast they grow - their nails are nails, like a dog's nails and have to be trimmed or it causes pain and mobility issues - imagine letting your toenails grow long and never trimming them.
- take them to the vet for check-ups and for any treatment they might need
- feed them daily unlimited good quality hay, water (wash with dish detergent their water bowl every day - you do not want to have the orange mildew/mold growing or it can kill them) along with limited amounts of fresh vegetables and some good quality pellets

It doesn't make you a bad person if you don't think that's for you. In fact, if there were more people who really thought about what was involved in caring for pets and decided that it wasn't for them, then rescue shelters wouldn't be at crisis point and there wouldn't be so many rabbits neglected and suffering at the end of the garden, all but forgotten.

