Rabbits: Is One Right For You?

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Rabbits can make excellent house pets. They are generally clean and can be housetrained to use a litter box. They are interesting, docile, interact well with people, and can become quite affectionate. But before acquiring a pet rabbit, there are some things you should consider:

1. Rabbits come in various sizes, breeds, and have individual personalities: As with other pets, rabbits develop their own personalities. Personality is greatly influenced by their early socialization with people, and much less by their breed or size. If you are interested in showing rabbits, then it is important to research and determine which breed most appeals to you.

2. Rabbits require a time commitment: They will need daily attention to their diet, fresh water, and clean cages. To prevent obesity, most adult rabbits should be fed twice a day, and not have food always available. They need daily attention such as grooming, affection, and mental stimulation. They are social, and do not do well in isolation. Like dogs and cats, well-cared for rabbits can live into their teens.

3. Rabbits are herbivores: Most pet owners are familiar with dogs and cats, who eat food out of a can or bag. Rabbits will need hay and fresh pellets which may not be as readily available. They should also be fed fresh vegetables daily.

4. There are start-up and continual costs of keeping a rabbit: Potential rabbit owners may only consider the cost of the rabbit and cage, and not realize there will be regular annual costs as well as food, bedding, veterinary care, grooming supplies, flea prevention items and an unending supply of chew toys. You will need to have:

- Cage
- "Nest" box where the rabbit can sleep
- Bedding (aspen chips, paper, straw)
- Fenced outdoor play area, indoor exercise pen, and/or items to rabbit-proof your house
- Litter box
- Cleaning supplies such as litter scoop, disinfectant, small vacuum cleaner or broom
- Food dishes (ceramic) and water dishes/bottles
- Small sturdy carrier (for traveling and trips to the veterinarian)
- Chew toys
- Grooming items
- Flea preventives, if needed

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- Food items: Fresh pellets, hay, fresh vegetables

5. Rabbits can be difficult to handle: Rabbits often resist being picked up, and if not handled correctly, they can become afraid and kick, bite, or scratch. They can also injure themselves trying to escape. This is one of the reasons rabbits may not make ideal pets for small children, who like to hug or cuddle their pet.

6. Rabbits can be destructive: Rabbits are natural chewers, and they do not know the difference between chewing on appropriate items or inappropriate ones such as electrical cords, furniture, and books. You will need to "rabbit-proof" whatever areas in your house your rabbit is allowed access to. You will need to provide your rabbit with suitable chewing toys and constructive ways to burn off energy.

7. House rabbits are not a good "first pet" for children: In addition to being difficult to handle, rabbits may take more time to feel comfortable around people and bond with them. This can require patience, and this may be difficult for small children to understand. Although rabbits play, they are less likely to interact with people and toys, unlike dogs and cats who enjoy games of fetch and pouncing on toys manipulated by people. A rabbit will need to be cared for by an adult who can provide the proper diet and sanitation. Rabbits can make excellent and interesting pets for older, quieter children.

8. House rabbits require exercise: They should not be kept isolated in a small cage, but be allowed to move about in an exercise run, playpen or rabbit-proofed room.

9. Unneutered rabbits will usually display territorial marking: Male and female rabbits who are house pets should be neutered. This will decrease the risk of territorial marking and increase chances of litter training success. Neutering also decreases aggression and the tendency to chew. Most rabbits are neutered between the ages of 3-1/2 and 6 months. And of course, if neutered, you will not have to worry about them "breeding like rabbits."

10. Rabbits have certain health concerns you should be aware of: House rabbits will need regular veterinary health exams, just like other pets. Overgrown teeth, foot problems, digestive problems, and respiratory diseases can be common, more so in rabbits who are not housed correctly or are given an inappropriate diet. Before acquiring a rabbit, identify a knowledgeable veterinarian in your area who may also be helpful in providing you a reputable source for healthy rabbits.

Properly cared-for rabbits make excellent, long-lived pets. By giving appropriate consideration to the issues before you acquire your rabbit, you will enjoy your rabbit for many years to come.

WE RECOMMEND

Small Pet Playpen

Alfalfa & Timothy Hay

ZuPreem Nature's Promise Timothy Rabbit Food

CareFRESH Bedding & Litter

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