

Rabbit

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There is a reason that domestic rabbits are now found in almost as many homes as dogs and cats. Available in a variety of sizes, fur colorations, and breeds, rabbits can make wonderful pets. In fact, these naturally curious, intelligent, and social animals are widely kept in both apartments and homes throughout the world. Like other pets, many rabbits can be trained to use a litter box and come when their names are called. However, rabbits do need a dedicated and prepared owner to offer the constant care each needs. In addition, many rabbits do not enjoy being picked up, hugged, or cuddled; therefore, they are usually not good pets for small children. But when daily exercise is offered, their dietary needs are met, and their behaviors are indulged (such as their need to both chew and dig), a rabbit can make an ideal companion.

INTERESTING FACTS

Characteristics: Rabbits vary in size and weight depending on breed. The life expectancy can reach up to 10-12 years. Rabbits are rapid breeders and can mate as early as 3 months of age with gestation lasting 31 days, producing a litter size of 4-12 kits.

Appearance: There are over 45 recognized rabbit breeds in the United States, varying in size from dwarfs (2-1/2 lbs) to giants (16 lbs). Coat type includes short (requiring less grooming) to long hair (requiring more grooming) with glossy to wooly texture. Coat colors range from solid, to spotted, to bi-color and chinchilla.

#1 Preventable Health Problem: Malocclusion (overgrowth of teeth) and gastric stasis (food does not move properly through the digestive tract). In the past, this was commonly diagnosed as hairballs. Prevent both with chew toys and an unlimited supply of hay.

Preferences: Domestic rabbits require regular mental and [physical](#) stimulation. They enjoy supervised physical activity out of the [cage](#) in a safe place such as an [exercise pen](#) or rabbit-proof room with plenty of [chew toys](#).

Best Features: Rabbits can make excellent house pets. They're generally clean and can be housetrained to use a [litter box](#). Not only are they interesting and docile, but they are affectionate and interact well with people.

Housing: Rabbits need room to stretch without feeling confined, so the bigger the [cage](#), the better. Provide enough room so your rabbit can stretch out in any direction with plenty of room to spare. Don't forget to leave enough space for a [litter box](#), [food dish](#), [water bottle](#), [hay manger](#), and other [accessories](#).

Diet: Rabbits are herbivores and should be fed a small amount of nutritionally complete, commercial pellet rabbit [food](#) as well as an unlimited amount of [hay](#). Add fresh vegetables such as dark leafy greens, carrots, or sweet peppers daily to vary the diet and ensure proper nutrition. Remember to always provide a supply of fresh water.