



## Caring for your new RABBIT

Rabbits were introduced into Britain in the middle Ages. Some rabbits escaped and colonized the countryside. Later, fanciers bred rabbits for exhibition, which is why there is such a variety of rabbits available today. (Lops, Lionhead, Neatherland, Dutch, Rex, etc...)

They can be kept indoors or in an outdoor hutch. Rabbits are social animals, usually enjoying the company of other rabbits. Though, if you wish to keep 2 or more rabbits, the best option would be for them to be neutered.

The average life of a rabbit is 8 years.

### Choosing and buying your rabbit

With so many different varieties of rabbits available that vary in size and temperament it is important to do a little research first on which would be best suited for your lifestyle.

Dwarf lop eared rabbits are popular due to their appealing looks, attractive colors and docile nature. Although a dwarf lop is smaller than English or French lops, they can still be quite large when fully grown and can weigh more than 2kg.

Lionhead are popular because of their lion-like appearance in the way their "mane" looks. They are in need of more grooming attention which can be time consuming and must not be neglected.

Whichever variety you choose to be your pet, rabbits should be at least 8 weeks old. When you buy a new baby rabbit you should keep it on a little bit of hay and water that has had tummy care added to it for the first day and allowed time to adapt to its new home. Keeping the diet the same as whatever he/she is used to is essential, though should you want to change the food, do it slowly over a period of 10-30 days.

### Housing

Rabbits should be provided with as large a cage as possible; a cage which they can stand comfortably on their hind legs. A hutch for outdoors should be sturdy and waterproof. It should be raised off the floor by about 25cm and placed in a sheltered position or inside a shed. Rabbits must be protected from inclement weather as well as strong sunlight as well as being protected from any insect infestations like fly strike.

All rabbits benefit from access to a pen or a run in the garden. Avoid using pesticides in or near the hutch. A hutch or cage should have a layer of shavings on the floor with straw for bedding and hay or hay cookies for eating.

Hygiene is extremely important especially in the summer. If not kept clean the hutch or cage will attract flies. Cages should be cleaned regularly, at least once a week, if not more often with a suitable pet-safe disinfectant; bedding and shavings to be replaced with a fresh supply. Rabbits often use often use the same area as their toilet every day. You can help train them to use a specific corner if you leave one corner empty of food, water and sleeping area.

- Toys should be provided to break boredom. Try to buy a selection of toys and rotate them to avoid boredom
- Gnaw blocks should be provided to help wear down teeth from growing too long

### Feeding and Water

The most important part of a rabbit's diet is good quality hay or freeze dried grass. This should be fed liberally and be available at all times. Rabbits need to nibble all day so hay gives them something to do. Most importantly, it provides the fiber needed for a healthy gut and helps to prevent dental problems. Fresh foods can be given in small quantities. Kale, spring greens, broccoli and carrot as well as fruit like apple...etc (ask if you are unsure). Fresh foods should be washed thoroughly before feeding and should not be allowed to become frosted or frozen. Anything uneaten should be removed regularly.

Fresh clean water must be available at all times and is best provided by a gravity-fed bottle. Tummy Care is an excellent complementary feed for pet rabbits that is added to the drinking water. It helps the digestive system in settling in animals into new environments as well as giving them the nutrients they need in a healthy diet.

You can give your pet the occasional treat. If you are unsure on what you can give, please ask.

## General Care

Adopting good routine and feeding plenty of hay will help you keep your rabbit healthy. Pet rabbits should be allocated some of their owner's time every day. Grooming them with a soft brush can be an excellent bonding activity for you and your rabbit to share with each other.

Rabbits can become stressed very easily and are prone to digestive disorders. Any signs of ill health should be reported immediately.

Vaccinations against myxomatosis and other serious diseases known as VHD are available and recommended. Especially if you are going to let your pet run outside or have an outside hutch. It is also strongly advised to have your rabbits neutered as this helps prevent some behavioral and health issues.

Fly strike: It is strongly recommended to check your rabbit underneath regularly, especially during the summer months to ensure they are clean. Flies are attracted to soiled areas around the rabbit's tail and can lay eggs there, which will then develop into maggots. To avoid this there is an insecticidal spray and fly strike protecting spray for animals and hutches.

## Shopping List

- Food (Beaphar/Russel Rabbit)
- Water bottle/Food Bowls
- Cage/Hutch
- Transportation Carrier
- Brush/Comb
- Treats
- Bedding
- Straw/Hay
- Fly strike/insecticidal sprays
- Gnaw blocks
- Salt Lick
- Shampoo
- Minerals/vitamins (Vionate)
- Litter
- Corner Litter Tray
- Litter scoop
- Pet Safe disinfectant

- Book on care specific to your rabbit

**For more information feel free to talk to any of the Jumanji Pets employees, we are here to help!**

0207 372 5693