

Responsive
Affectionate
Beautiful
Burrowers
Inquisitive
Trainable
Sociable

The minimum standard for the welfare of any animal is summarised by

THE FIVE FREEDOMS

- 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst**
- 2. Freedom from discomfort**
- 3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease**
- 4. Freedom to express normal behaviour**
- 5. Freedom from fear and distress**

Accordingly, your rabbit will need:

- **Appropriate food**
- **Drip water bottle**
- **Comfortable shelter**
- **Companionship**
- **Neutering, where necessary**
- **Toys for play**
- **Exercise**

HOW TO CHOOSE A RABBIT

Look for a healthy looking rabbit with bright eyes, an alert expression, a plush coat and good body condition. Consider that different

breeds may have specialised requirements; for instance an Angora rabbit, with its long soft hair needs regular grooming to prevent painful matting.

COSTS AND TIME

Costs must be considered, these include feeding, neutering, toys and veterinary care. Like any other pet a rabbit needs basic care, attention, and love.

NUTRITION

Rabbits need variety: Best quality rabbit pellets, plenty of fresh grass, hay, fresh greens and vegetables. Rabbit feeds in pet shops come either as pellets or muesli mix. As rabbits can be selective feeders, pellets may be the better choice. Treats including fruits should be given sparingly.

WHERE DO I GET A RABBIT FROM

A reputable breeder, or - even better - a Rescue Centre.



TOYS

Rabbits are playful and curious; they need a good selection of toys, including tubes for hiding, balls, logs, etc. They have a propensity for chewing, and providing them with **chewable toys** helps keep them entertained while wearing down their teeth, which are continuously growing.

Over-grown teeth are a common and serious – but easily prevented – health problem in rabbits.

NEUTERING

Neutering prevents unwanted litters when a pair of rabbits of opposite sex is housed together; in addition, it helps with social aspects and reduces fighting.

HANDLING

Never lift a rabbit by the ears. Hold your rabbit with both hands to support the hind legs and prevent struggling. A rabbit which is not handled correctly may become very fearful and may scratch and bite in self-defence. Also, fractures of the spine can easily result from improper handling.

HOUSING YOUR RABBIT

The minimum cage space for a single rabbit is 2' x 4'. It should be tall enough for the rabbit to be able to **stand** on its hind feet, as this is part of their normal behavioural repertoire. As rabbits are highly social animals it's better to house them in a pair or in a small group. Two females from the same litter or a male and female which should be neutered can make great

companions for each other, while two males are likely to show aggression. Some cages sold for rabbit are made from wire, but it is important to provide a floor area made from solid material (either plastic or wood), in order to prevent sore feet. Good ventilation is fundamental, in order to avoid respiratory disease.

Unlike cats and dogs, rabbits are **prey animals** that are constantly wary of potential predators. The presence of a **house box** and/or other hiding areas is fundamental to their welfare.

Rabbits in the wild make use of latrines; therefore they can be easily **potty-trained** by placing a tray in a corner of the cage and/or the room with suitable litter. The floor of the cage can be lined with newspaper, covered with saw chippings and/or straw. Rabbits live naturally in burrows, and deep bedding can satisfy the rabbit's need to burrow. This need can also be met by providing a variety of **tunnels** and **tubes**. Soiled bedding must be removed regularly and the cage/hutch thoroughly cleaned on a weekly basis.

EXERCISE

The cage/hutch should not be a place to confine your rabbit all the time. Rabbits need plenty of exercise and room to run around. If the rabbit is kept indoors, it should be allowed to run free for a few hours a day in an area where cables and other items that may be chewed are out of reach. Regardless whether the rabbit is housed indoors or outdoors, an **exercise**

run on grass is ideal to allow both grazing and some freedom. A run should be wired on all sides to prevent burrowing and swooping predators from above. The presence of a box or sheltered area to hide in is fundamental.

RABBITS AND CHILDREN

Teach your child to be responsible for another life, to be gentle and caring. Never get a rabbit or any other animal as a toy for a child.

HOLIDAYS

As part of your planning for holidays, you will need to ask a trusted person to look after your rabbit while you are away.



**THERE IS A RABBIT NEAR YOU
LOOKING FOR A LOVING HOME**

simply because we care
**Kilkenny
spca**

**Caring for
your RABBIT**



Contact details for the Kilkenny SPCA
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