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How to care for your new Rabbit

Housing your Rabbit: Rabbits can live indoors or out. If you choose to keep your rabbit indoors, 2 cage types are available. There are cages with wire bottoms & catch pans, & there are cages with solid bottoms. Rabbits like to dig, so if you get a solid bottomed cage & put bedding in the cage, they will scatter some bedding around their cage. Pine shavings or pellets are the best type of bedding for rabbits although some are allergic to pine. Recycled paper litter pellets are the best option for rabbits that don't tolerate pine well. Cedar is never a good choice. A corner litter pan in either cage type is a good idea. Rabbits are like cats & like to stay clean. Introducing a litter pan at a young age almost always yields a litter trained rabbit & most times you can let them out in the house & they will return to their open cage to use the bathroom. If your rabbit is going to live outdoors, a wire bottomed hutch that is up off the ground is the best option. However, there should either be a second layer of wire 2-4 inches below the main floor, or ½ of the floor should be solid. This gives the rabbit a safe place to go if a stray dog or other animal gets under the hutch. Dogs can easily remove all of your rabbit's toes or their entire legs through the wire floor of a hutch. Some dogs can tear through wire so the best option for an outdoor rabbit is within a well secured yard. Outdoor rabbits need shelter from wind & rain in the winter & may need a heat lamp in the coldest weather and they can easily overheat during the summer months. Shade & air circulation is key in the summer & you should keep 2 liter bottles frozen to put in the cages during hottest summer days. The rabbits will lay right against the bottles to stay cool.

Feeding your Rabbit: Rabbits need 2 types of food: Rabbit pellets & hay. You can feed any plain pellet rabbit food from a pet or feed store, but I personally use & recommend the Tractor Supply store brand or Purina. An adult Holland Lop should eat no more than 1 cup of feed per day, usually less. They will beg for food like dogs & can become overweight very easily. Because of this, I recommend keeping hay in their cage at all times. You can use Timothy hay from the pet store or regular baled hay that you would feed horses & cattle. Hay is very important for their digestive systems & it helps curb that appetite! Alfalfa is also good for rabbits, either cubed or in hay form, but it MUST be introduced slowly & we don't feed alfalfa prior to about 3 months of age. It's very rich & if offered to babies free choice can cause severe diarrhea. We feed fresh fruits & veggies at least twice a week. Carrots, apples, & bell peppers are always good choices, but they enjoy most fruits & veggies. Don't start feeding fruits & veggies until your rabbit is at least 3 months old & NEVER feed your rabbit broccoli, citrus fruits, or lettuce. Broccoli is toxic & lettuce can cause fatal diarrhea. Citrus is just too acidic for their systems. We also feed grass from the yard regularly. They love clover & dandelions as well as clippings from the trees.

Toys for your Rabbit: Rabbits enjoy having something to keep them busy in their cage. You can find toys specifically for rabbits at most pet stores, but some cat toys also work well. They seem to like the little balls with bells in them & an empty toilet paper roll or pop can makes a great toy too. Wooden chew toys are always a good option, they like to chew & it helps keep their teeth from growing too long.

Bonding with your Rabbit: Going to a new home is stressful. When you get your new rabbit home, put him/her in their new cage & let them settle down for a full day. Once they have gotten accustomed to their new surroundings & have started nibbling on food you can start handling them. Start out just sitting with the rabbit in your lap for a few minutes at a time – letting him/her smell your hands & get used to your scent & voice. They will look forward to attention very quickly. A small treat each time you take the rabbit from the cage is a good idea as well – a raisin or small chunk of carrot works great. Holland Lops become almost dog like if they are handled daily. They run to the cage door when you go into the room & they will roll over to have their bellies rubbed.

If you cannot keep your Rabbit: Please contact me if you need to give up your rabbit & cannot find them a home. I am always willing to take my babies back, no matter how old they are or what the problem is.

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