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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 a great bedding option for most rabbits. Some are allergic to pine though & recycled paper litter pellets are the best option for those 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 1/2 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 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. In the summer months as they can easily overheat. Shade & air circulation is key in the summer & you should keep 2-liter bottles frozen to put in the cages during hottest summer days. Some 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 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 straight alfalfa prior to about 3 months of age. It's very rich & if offered to babies free choice can cause severe diarrhea. We use alfalfa/timothy hay cubes for our rabbits & they love them. We feed fresh fruits & veggies regularly. 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.

Toys for your Rabbit: Rabbits enjoy having something to keep them busy. 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.

Keeping more than one Rabbit: By nature, rabbits are solitary animals. They only come together to breed & females are only with their kits for about a month before they all go their separate ways. We do not recommend keeping 2 rabbits in a single cage together at any time. They will almost definitely fight at some point & both will be unnecessarily stressed all the time. If your rabbits have free range of your house, you can keep more than one. If they have ample space to spread out & find their own place to rest without another rabbit always in their space they can do quite well together in pairs or groups. Females can do fine in pairs or groups in this setting but if you want to introduce a male or keep multiple males, I do highly recommend neutering the males. A single male can do just fine intact but multiples will fight if not neutered.

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 small chunk of bell pepper or 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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