

Rabbits make great pets! They are generally very curious, friendly and affectionate animals that quickly become apart of the family.

Rabbits generally live for around 6-10 years. There is a variety of rabbit breeds that are popular to Australia, these include; Dwarf Lop, Mini Lop, Netherland and mixed breeds. They also range in size, often varying between 1-8kg. They do very well either a solo house-pets, or kept as desexed pairs of either 2 males or a male and female.

Vaccinations & pest prevention

To prevent your rabbit contracting the potentially deadly calicivirus, it is important that your rabbit receives regular vaccinations. The vaccination should be given around 8 weeks of age, then again 4 weeks later for juveniles and every 6 months for adults. There are new strains in Australia causing sudden death so it pays to be vigilant with vaccination schedules, especially for outdoor bunnies.

Bunnies should also be treated regularly for external parasites like fleas and mites, just like our cats and dogs. We recommend using the same products used for puppies and kittens, like the Advantage spot on or Revolution.



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Rabbit Information Handout



Dental health

Correct dental alignment and wear is so important in rabbits. The reason for this is because their teeth are constantly growing throughout their lives. They have 28 teeth in total; incisor teeth (front teeth) can grow around 3mm per week and the cheek teeth can grow around 3mm per month.

The pattern in which they chew their food is actually what helps to wear their teeth. Rabbits chew in a side-to-side motion which causes tooth on tooth grinding and helps wear down the teeth.

Diet plays a huge role in this chewing pattern as the types of food and how much chewing is needed for that food item is what helps the teeth to wear on each other. Feeding your rabbit hay and grasses requires your pet to put in a lot of effort and force into chewing their food, therefore grinding more with their teeth.

Diet

A good rabbit diet will be high in fiber with moderate protein levels as well as provide some fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Diet is key for bunnies! Too much high energy food contributes to dental disease, obesity, and can cause gut issues like gut stasis- a bit like when our larger herbivores get colic or bloat.

When do rabbits become sexually mature?



Rabbits will start to become sexually active from around 3 months of age. Female rabbits do not have a set oestrous cycle; instead, they undergo a process called induced ovulation (in which mating will bring on ovulation).

Average rabbit litter sizes range between 4-12 babies and the average pregnancy period of a female is between 28-32 days. Baby rabbits (kits or kittens) will live in a nest made by the mother for about 3 weeks and should generally be fully weaned once they reach approximately 6 weeks of age.

Desexing

- + Females are VERY prone to uterine cancers, so we STRONGLY recommend desexing even if they are away from pesky males. Desexing not only prevents this disease, it also prevents unwanted & unplanned pregnancies.
- + Reduces the risk of fights occurring if you have multiple rabbits.
- + Decreases aggression, urine spraying, and unwanted reproductive behaviours e.g. humping.

Rabbit Husbandry

Good husbandry is very important with rabbits, with many diseases being preventable with adequate care. Rabbits do well in a hutch or playpen that is either outside or inside that is out of direct sunlight, rain & windy drafts. Rabbits are very sensitive to the heat and may experience heat exhaustion when temperatures exceed 28 degrees. The great news is that bunnies are excellent at learning how to use a litter tray, and are fantastic indoor only pets.

If they are outside, the enclosure will need to have insect protection (netting &/or flyscreen) to prevent mosquitos and flies getting in. Mosquitos can carry the rabbit calicivirus and myxomatosis viruses and can potentially infect your pet rabbit. In Australia, there are no current vaccinations against the myxomatosis virus, however bi-annual calicivirus vaccinations are STRONGLY encouraged.

Newspaper can be used to line the bottom of the hutch, with a bedding substrate such as oaten hay on top of the newspaper. Bedding should be changed at least weekly, or more frequently as it becomes soiled. This will prevent the cage from becoming too dirty and smelly.

DIET BREAKDOWN

70% Fresh hay and/or grass

1-5% Pellets - as a general rule, ONE tablespoon per animal per day.

20-30% Dark green leafy veggies

1-5% Treats



TYPES

< 1yr old - Lucerne hay
> 1yr old - Oaten hay**
Small handful for each

We recommend Oxbow and Vetafarm

Herbs, kale, broccoli, spinach are all great options

Commercially available healthy treats
1-2cm cubes of:

- Fresh fruit (apple, banana, pear, strawberries, blueberries)
- Red vegetables like carrots or sweet potato
- Hibiscus flowers, fennel, almonds (1-2), sultanas & cranberries (up to 5) and rose petals (fresh or dried)

DO NOT GIVE

Seeds, bread, oats, high grain mixes or high starch foods.

Supermarket 'cereals' (often contain above food)

Iceberg lettuce, potatoes, onions, garlic, corn kernels

Dried fruits

**Bunnies are prone to urinary crystals if they have too much calcium, however baby bunnies need lots of calcium to promote growth!