

Keeping Rabbits Fact Sheet

Rabbits can make very good pets, they do not take up a lot a space and can become friendly with humans. They will though need to be given some attention every day and require regular handling to keep them tame. You will need a safe environment for your rabbit so they can come out of their hutch for exercise, grooming and feeding.

Rabbits are herbivores and spend a lot of time eating. It is best to give them a diet of vegetable matter, a selection of foliage, grasses, leaves and roots. You can either give your rabbit hay, or place the hutch over an area of grass. You will need to move your hutch to stop the ground becoming bare and muddy in the wet.

Hutches should be large in size, providing plenty of room for the rabbit to move around and stretch out. It is best to have two areas, a raised section for sleeping, lined with hay and enclosed. The other area should be open with space for your rabbit to move around, stretch out, catch some sun and play. They will also need something to chew on to keep their teeth in check. Try to make the area exciting with tubes and tree stumps so that it can play. Beware that rabbits burrow so the hutch should either have a wire base or the fence should go into the ground. You should check regularly for signs of burrowing.

A rabbit likes to lead a stress free life, this will also ensure that it stays healthy. The hutch should be kept clean with plenty of hay and food. This should not be allowed to get stale and accumulate. Room for exercise will also keep your rabbit happy.

There are several signs that your rabbit may be ill among these are:

- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- looking depressed
- skin trouble
- runny faeces and urine soaking into the back legs

A loss of appetite or your rabbit not eating may indicate a blockage in their guts, this should be looked at by your vet immediately. This can be due to furballs and other obstructions. For this reason your rabbit should be frequently groomed, also their teeth and claws should be checked often.