

## Feeding Your

The most important part of your rabbit's diet is HAY. Plenty of fresh hay should be given daily. Good quality forage has many benefits, including:



- Maintaining healthy teeth. Rabbits teeth grow 2–3 mm a week, so chewing forage helps keep them ground down.
- Keeping the gut healthy. The high levels of fibre found in forage are vital for healthy digestion.
- Preventing boredom. Foraging in hay will help keep your rabbit entertained



As well as forage, your rabbit should be fed on a complete pellet food which contains the optimum balance of nutrients.

Avoid feeding muesli mixes, as rabbits have a tendency to pick out the bits they like and leave the rest, missing out on vital nutrients. It is natural behaviour for your rabbit to eat it's own faeces. This usually occurs at night and is known as 'coprophagia', and is an important part of normal digestive function.

Make sure your rabbit always has access to fresh water.

## Handling

Regular interaction and handling can help to stimulate your rabbit and reduce anxiety when being held. This allows you to check your rabbits general condition, and alert you to any health problems, such as overgrown teeth, nails and obesity

## Rabbit Information

### Vaccinations



As with any pets, your rabbit should be vaccinated against diseases to ensure they live a long and healthy life. We can vaccinate against myxomatosis from 6 weeks of age, and the vaccine lasts 6 months. We can vaccinate against viral haemorrhagic disease from 10 weeks of age, which lasts for a year. Please be aware that if you want your rabbit to have both vaccinations, they will have to be done at least two weeks apart.

### Neutering

There are many advantages to neutering your rabbit, the most obvious being that it prevents unwanted pregnancies, saving you the trouble of finding homes for the offspring. It can prevent sexual aggression in males and females. For females, it prevents false pregnancies and nest building. Studies have also shown that neutering a female rabbit helps protect against uterine cancer.

Both sexes can be neutered from 4 months of age. It is important to remember though that a male rabbit can remain fertile for up to four weeks after the procedure, so they should not be kept with an un-neutered female.



Care and Kindness For Your Pet

**ABBAY VET CENTRE**

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# Housing



Your rabbit's environment should consist of a hutch or house with separate toilet and sleeping areas, as well as somewhere they can burrow or dig. A hutch should be dry and well-insulated, and kept at a cool temperature. It should be lined with newspaper, then covered with bedding, which could be hay, straw or dust-free wood chippings. It should be large enough to allow your rabbit to at least stand up on its hind legs and long enough to allow it to take 3 or 4 hops in either direction. Rabbits should also be exercised in a secure outside run as often as possible. These runs should also be covered from above, as rabbits are at risk of being taken as prey by wild animals. Their runs and hutches should include toys to stimulate your rabbit, such as plastic tunnels and plant pots. The hutch and run should be protected from the sun, rain and frost, and ideally raised a few feet off the ground to protect from predators. An outdoor hutch should also be covered at night.

Rabbits are clean animals, and require a separate toilet area within the hutch, ideally a litter tray, which should be deep-sided and lined with newspaper and hay which is regularly replaced. Rabbits are social animals and should ideally be kept in pairs of a similar size. They should never be kept with guinea pigs as they tend to bully them, and have different feeding requirements.



Some people prefer to keep their rabbits as house pets, choosing for them to live indoors and never go outside, whereas some prefer to keep them outdoors in a hutch as outdoor rabbits. Rabbits can be perfectly happy living either lifestyle, as long as certain precautions are taken:



## Indoor Rabbits

- Make sure your house is rabbit-proofed. Rabbits love to chew through wires and cables, so they must be protected to avoid injury
- If your rabbit is too warm, they are more prone to weight gain as they do not need to burn off calories to maintain heat. The hutch should be kept in a cool, but not cold, area
- Try to avoid access to wooden or laminate floors, as rabbits cannot grip these and are liable to slip and injure themselves



## Outdoor Rabbits

- Make sure your garden is free of poisonous plants such as bluebells, carnations, daffodils and ivy (this is not a comprehensive list)
- Outdoor rabbits can become stressed through fear of predators, so try to minimise cases where this may be a problem. For example, if your neighbour has a dog, keep your rabbit in an area where it cannot see the other animal.

