



Every year as we approach Easter we know that some people are considering getting a rabbit. You would think that this would fill us with joy, but sadly we know for a fact that many of the rabbits that are purchased at this time of year end up as unwanted pets within a year of their lives.

Out of 20 pet rabbit adverts that I recently checked online, 75% of them refer to rabbits that are still under one year old. Why is this?

RABBITS ARE ONE OF THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD PETS.

Most people think rabbits are an “easy and cheap” pet to look after and therefore an ideal pet for small children. However, rabbits are time consuming to look after and can cost a great deal of money. They also live for a lot longer than you might realise and can often outlive common dog breeds such as Golden Retrievers!



**EVERYONE KNOWS THAT A DOG IS FOR LIFE, NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS,
THE SAME APPLIES TO RABBITS.
THEY ARE FOR LIFE, NOT JUST FOR EASTER.**

Now I can hear you saying “so you don’t want me to get a rabbit? Won’t that leave a load of unwanted rabbits out there?”. We’re not saying don’t, we’re saying that you should **be prepared before you commit**.

Rabbits make an excellent pet if they are properly cared for. They are loving, curious and intelligent creatures and can provide years of fabulous companionship, but all this only comes as a reward to those owners who are dedicated to their pets.

Leaving your bunny at the bottom of the garden in a hutch all alone and just feeding and cleaning it is not going to be best way to get the most out of your rabbit relationship.

Where do you start?

If you’re thinking of getting a pet, no matter what species, make sure you research their every need. The very minimum you must provide is:

- A suitable place for them to live
- A healthy diet of food and water
- The ability to behave normally
- Appropriate company
- Protection from pain, suffering and disease

Once you know that you can meet these basic needs, then we recommend you also consider the following:



TIME

This is one of the most popular reasons for rabbits being placed on rehoming lists. *“We just haven’t got the time anymore”* or *“She’s not getting the attention she deserves”*.

Rabbits can be litter trained to use litter trays, but the tray still needs cleaning daily along with sweeping of the accommodation, fresh water changes and feeding. You should also ensure you have time for play, grooming and health checks. Daily tasks are much more than just putting a bowl of pellet in the hutch and shutting the door. It all takes time.

Young children often get excited about pets when they are first introduced to the family, but quickly become bored and uninterested leaving you doing the looking after and entertaining. As a family you may already have commitments so think about how much spare time you can dedicate to the new pet.



COMMITMENT

Remember, your rabbit could live for as long as 12 years! The average lifespan of a pet rabbit is between 8 to 12 years, but some can go on for longer! If you get a rabbit you should be able to commit to caring for the duration of their life. You would never consider getting a dog without thinking about this long-term commitment so please give the same consideration for rabbits.



COST

Whilst the cost of food for a pet rabbit may seem relatively low compare to dogs, you would be mistaken if you thought that they were cheap pets overall.

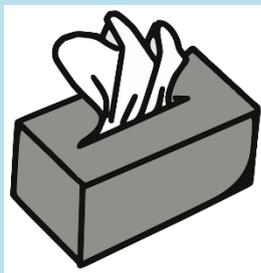
The initial outlay to properly provide for a rabbit can go into the hundreds of pounds very quickly. Make sure you do your research, make a list of items you need and price it up to ensure you can afford it.

Rabbits are social animals and should be kept in pairs so ensure you keep this in mind.

Remember to include veterinary costs, find out how much neutering will be at your local vet and ask them for costs of vaccinations and ongoing care. Neutered rabbits are less likely to fight and un-neutered females carry a high risk of developing womb cancer.

Consider pet insurance and look into cover for teeth problems as a lot of insurers will not provide cover. This can mean costly care if a rabbit does require regular teeth maintenance.

Work out what the weekly cost of feeding will be. Remember that rabbits main diet is hay (80-90%) and there should be an unlimited supply of it available to them, fresh greens (not lettuce) and a small amount of pellet daily. Rabbits digestive systems are complex and feeding the correct food is vital to their wellbeing.



Allergies

Not everyone thinks of this, but it is very important, especially if you are considering housing your rabbits indoors. Rabbits have very fine, soft fur and it's often more irritable than the courser hair of dogs and cats. Make sure that everyone who will come into regular contact with the rabbit does not have an allergy.



Your Home

If you don't own your home, then check with the Landlord to ensure that you have permission to keep a pet.

If you are considering keeping your rabbit indoors then ensure you make it rabbit proof first.

The time you spend now to research and learn about your future pet's needs can save you money, time and heartbreak. It also helps us keep down the number of unwanted animals. Don't let yourself become one of those owners that gives up a pet through lack of knowledge.



Learn about rabbit keeping

Investigate the costs

Find out if anyone has allergies

Enjoy your rabbit relationship

Find out more: <https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/rabbits>



**RSPCA Milton Keynes
& North Bucks Branch**

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