

SUNFLOWER NURSERY

New Rabbit Care Sheets

Care & Product Advice

2009

Hello,

Buying a new rabbit like me is an exciting and fun occasion. We love attention, food and fun things to do. Looking after us is very simple if you know how, get it right, and we will be a very rewarding pet for you to have.

My hutch should be nice and spacious, the more space the better. If possible I would love a hutch or cage with a sleeping compartment and either adjoining or separate run area so that I can get plenty of exercise. Without exercise and things to do I will get very bored and might end up doing things that you don't want me to do, like chewing and digging. A good type of hutch, such as Sharples 'N' Grant, will be sturdy, secure and big enough. Sharples 'N' Grant do a nice, wide range of hutches from singles to double tiers from 4ft to 6ft long, these are all available from Bobtail Pets, Sunflower Nursery's pet supplies outlet. Bobtail Pets also sell a good range of large, spacious indoor cages that come with some fun and exciting accessories.

My hutch or cage can be placed either indoors or outside. If outside I need to be in a secure hutch in a sheltered area of the garden, somewhere that isn't too hot nor too wet and windy. During the winter months it is a good idea to move my hutch either inside a shed or unused garage or to buy a thermal, waterproof cover for over the hutch at night. The Sharples 'N' Grant range of hutches have fully waterproof covers available which can be placed over the hutch keeping them warm and dry with flaps for easy access to the doors. I would also be very happy as a house rabbit and will quickly learn to use a litter tray.

Making my hutch or cage feel warm and cosy is very easy, all I need is a layer of dust-free wood shavings which help to keep the cage dry, a nice pile of straw in my sleeping compartment and lots of hay for me to munch. Putting a litter tray in my cage will make keeping it clean much easier. I promise to try my best to use it. I am very clean and tidy and like to keep my toileting to one corner. I will choose where I want the litter tray to go, just watch which corner is my favourite for relieving myself and pop the tray there. A small animal litter can be used but a handful of shavings do just as good a job.

After a nice hutch and place to live, my second favourite thing is food! Getting my diet right is one of the most important parts in ensuring I live happily and healthily. A good, high quality dried rabbit food should be given twice a day. I prefer pellets rather than a muesli version as muesli has some nice bits and some not so nice bits, and being picky I tend to only eat the nice parts! I have been brought up on Argo Rabbit Pellets, a very tasty good quality food, and would love to stay on this food if possible.

The majority of my diet should be made up from a good quality hay such as a timothy hay or meadow hay. Hay is vital to keep my tummy and teeth healthy and without enough of this I start to feel quite poorly. Animal Dreams are just one brand of hay that I enjoy, and it even comes in large bales so that you will never be short of handfuls of hay for me – heaven!

Fruit and vegetables are a great treat for me but too much and my tummy won't like it! I shouldn't really start eating fruit and veg in quantity until I'm around 3 months old, and then you should only give it to

me in small pieces. Save it as a treat when I do something good or when you come out to play with me. When I am grown up I can have fruit and vegetables in larger quantities and as part of my daily diet.

A rabbit's stomach is very sensitive, especially in a baby rabbit like me. A lot of things can upset my tummy, causing me to feel poorly, especially during the stressful time of moving to my new home. An advisable product which can help to stop any tummy upsets comes from Carr's. Carr's sell two extremely good products: Bums n Tums and Entracare. Both of these products can be placed in my drinking water and will give me plenty of good bacteria and helpful minerals to keep my stomach healthy. I can be given this all of the time or just when you think I need a boost. I have been brought up on Entracare and it makes my tummy feel a lot better, ensuring I am a health, happy rabbit when I come home with you.

After all that talk about food I had better mention how important it is to get me a good food bowl and water bottle. The food bowl needs to be sturdy, preferably ceramic, as I can be a bit naughty and throw my bowl around the cage – what fun! A good water bottle such as those from the Classic's range helps to keep my water clean and fresh. My water should be changed daily, even if I have some left in my bottle so that I always have fresh water.

As well as feeding and housing me, another thing you will need to do is keep me entertained. I like things to do, especially when I am left alone. Toys come in all shapes and sizes. Here are some of my favourites:

A k-bob stick – this is a great toy, a very simple metal stick that hangs from the top of the cage. There are many, many toys that can be hung on this stick, from wooden fun blocks to chews such as Bag 'O' Chews and Bark Bites, or Mineral Stones and even a Salt Lick. Hanging fruit and veg from this is also a great treat.

Wooden Toys – wooden toys are vital to keep my teeth healthy and trim. I need to have something to chew at all times otherwise my teeth will become over grown. Some of my favourite toys that I have played with already include the Crazy Carrot Toy, a fun colourful wooden toy that hangs from the roof of the cage, an Ancol Roll 'N' Chew, a colourful wooden ball that can be chased round and chewed and a Chew Cube, wooden block with holes in that can hide treats and other goodies.

Throwable toys – The Carrot Toss Toy and Sisal Carrot Toys are fun toys that I love to throw around the cage, a great pastime of mine.

Treat Toys – I love treats, of any kind, and making them fun to find just adds to my excitement. Something like a Treat Ball or Food Ball can hide treats and vegetables, making it challenging and interesting for me, giving me something to do and adding to my enrichment.

There are many other toys available so don't let your imaginations stop there. I love to play and chew and anything suitable for rabbits will go down a treat. Even something as simple as home made toys won't be sniffed at – one of my favourites is an empty toilet roll tube filled with hay and treats. As I have grown up I have watched my Mum play lots of games. One of her favourites is the hide a carrot game. A

cardboard box is filled with hay and a carrot placed at the bottom – she loves having to dig to find the carrot!

Being a rabbit I am very clean and don't need a lot of help but every now and again a quick pamper session will go down a treat. My nails may need trimming every couple of weeks if I don't have any hard flooring to wear them down on. My coat will stay healthy and clean on its own but going over it with a slicker brush and then a soft brush will help me out a lot, especially during molting season. I can be given a bath using a small animal shampoo every now and again but this doesn't need to be done very often. Mites like to live in sawdust and straw dust so if you're not careful I may end up with a few of those nasty little things every now and again. Don't worry though, they don't cause much harm if they are caught early, I can be protected against mites like this by using a spot on treatment such as Bob Martin Small Animal Spot On, especially made for Rabbits and other small pets.

Finding a good vet is very important, they don't always know a lot about rabbits so it is good to ask around a few. I might not always like to visit the vet but when I don't feel very well I will need to get to one, and a good one, as soon as possible. Giving me my vaccinations early on, for myxamatosis and VHD, can help prevent some of these nasty illnesses and a check up at the vets every now and again can help to spot early warning signs of any problems. Having me neutered or spayed will also help. I might feel reluctant to say this but neutering a male and spaying a female will not only help to calm them and make them tamer but it can also stop many illnesses, especially in older females.

Keeping me happy and healthy is very simple, feed me the right diet, give me plenty of space and things to do and don't forget to give me lots of attention. If you ever have any questions regarding me or any other rabbit then feel free to get back in touch with Sunflower Nursery. They are friendly people who are always happy to give information; help and advice on rabbits where possible so don't hesitate to contact them if you have any worries or concerns. And don't forget, if you ever go away on holiday you can always bring me back to stay at Sunflower Hotel.

Suitable Vegetables

Select at least 2/3 kinds of vegetables daily for adult rabbits. A variety is necessary in order to obtain the necessary nutrients, with one each day that contains Vitamin A, indicated by an *. Add one vegetable to the diet at a time. Eliminate if it causes soft stools or diarrhoea.

Alfalfa, radish & clover sprouts
Basil
Beet greens (tops)*
Bok choy
Broccoli (mostly leaves/stems)*
Brussels sprouts
Carrot & carrot tops*
Celery
Cilantro
Clover
Collard greens*
Dandelion greens and flowers (no pesticides)*
Endive*
Escarole
Green peppers
Kale (!)*
Mint
Mustard greens*
Parsley*
Pea pods (the flat edible kind)*
Peppermint leaves
Raddichio
Radish tops
Raspberry leaves
Romaine lettuce (no iceberg or light colored leaf)*
Spinach (!)*
Watercress*
Wheat grass

(!)=Use sparingly. High in either oxalates or goitrogens and may be toxic in accumulated quantities over a period of time.

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About Sunflower Nursery

Useful Information

2009

We are Manchester based breeders of rabbits and guinea pigs in various breeds. We breed for personality and family pets and choose only tame, friendly and laid back parents, which in turn produce friendly, loving babies which will grow up to be part of your family for many years. We have many years in experience in caring for rabbits and guinea pigs and are always happy to give help and advice on choosing your perfect pet.

At Sunflower Nursery we believe it is very important for perspective owners of rabbits to buy from a breeder. This said not all breeders are the same and some can be more trusted than others. Sunflower Nursery uses techniques from the most recent and trusted research to provide rabbits which are good natured, friendly and tame.

Socialisation & Habituation: You may aware that puppies and kittens have well defined "socialisation periods" when young animals learn to recognise and interact with the species with which they live - which needs to include humans, as well as their own species, and any other they are likely to come into contact with.

There is now evidence to suggest that rabbits have a socialisation period, although the exact timing and duration of it are not yet certain. This conclusion is based upon experimental work showing that handling baby rabbits between days 10 and 21 resulted in them being more willing to approach humans at 48 days of age; and early exposure to cats reduces their fear of them later.

Hence, breeders must start to handle baby rabbits before 21 days of age to begin the socialisation process. Many novice rabbit breeders are afraid of handling baby rabbits until they leave the nest, in case doing so triggers maternal rejection of the litter. Although this is a theoretical risk, with a few simple precautions there should be no problems, especially once the litter have opened their eyes at 10 days. Such early handling is vital, and in fact, if breeding does are relaxed and well socialised themselves it does not usually cause any problems to briefly pick up babies even in the first week of life.

Our does are relaxed and are happy for us to help them with their litter, they allow us to touch and handle the litter when needed. Sunflower Nursery employs the Socialisation and Habituation method and in doing so are able to provide rabbits which are not afraid of human contact and life as a pet.

Along with socialisation comes "habituation", which has been defined as "the process whereby an animal becomes accustomed to non-threatening environmental stimuli and learns to ignore them." Baby rabbits should become accustomed to as many people and experiences as possible before they are sold. We bring litters into the house to hear household noises; our rabbits are handled by children of various ages (our family and friends) who stroke and carefully handle the young stock under close supervision; we even take them for a short ride in the car as this will take away much of the stresses involved in travelling to their new home and through out their life.

The brutal reality is that baby rabbits whose breeders don't bother with a programme of socialisation and habituation are at higher risk of joining the thousands of other fearful, aggressive, unwanted and neglected pet rabbits that lead a miserable existence in back gardens across the UK. *We are committed to our Socialisation and Habituation programme.*

We have 4 breeds of rabbits here at Sunflower Nursery, mini lops, mini lionheads, mini rex and dutch. These breeds were chosen for their placid, loving temperaments, breeds that are ideal as house rabbits,

family pets and first pets for young children. We believe that it is very important that a child's first pet experience is an easy and fun one.

Looking after a new pet is a big responsibility and making this responsibility fun and enjoyable will prevent a child from becoming bored and uninterested in their new pet. Having a friendly, relaxed rabbit that is happy to tolerate cuddles, grooming and playing will ensure that a child can interact and bond with their pet easily and quickly, a bond and an interest that will last much longer. We ensure that our rabbits are prepared for their new homes and lives by socializing and habituating them to the vital experiences, sights and smells of everyday activities. All of these lead to a far more relaxed rabbit, one that will settle into their new homes well.

All our rabbits and guinea pigs are brought up on a diet consisting of high quality hay, food and a product which we love, Entracare. Entracare is a vital supplement for baby rabbits to ensure that their digestive systems mature properly with no problems. This helps to prevent illness and stress and can greatly reduce the risk of stress-related illnesses when they first move to their new environment. Using Entracare ensures that we provide only healthy, happy rabbits to you.

Alongside Sunflower Nursery we also run a pet supplies business which means we are able to provide you with all your rabbit needs, including a hutch, food, accessories, toys etc at the best possible prices. We are also happy to give advice on any products not purchased from us so please feel free to ask our opinion on any products you might have seen elsewhere. All of our products can be found in our rabbit catalogue which can be emailed directly to your email address or downloaded from our website.

If you are going away on holiday and aren't sure of who is going to be able to look after your rabbit or guinea pig, or other small pet, then please get in touch as we also board small animals throughout the year. Your pet will be cared for to a very high standard and will receive a free toy to take home after its stay with us – its own holiday souvenir. Prices start from £2 per day for small pets, £3 per day for guinea pigs and £3.50 per day for rabbits. Discounts are available for multiple pets and for weekly and fortnight long stays.

If you have any questions feel free to contact us, we are always happy to help and we hope that we can make your new pet experience a very enjoyable one.

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