



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

TEACHER NOTES:

The main aims of this activity is for students to understand the basic requirements of homing a pet rabbit. The “Caring for your Rescue Rabbit” document is given to pet owners adopting rabbits from any of our centres.

Following the main text are some questions about the care advice sheet.

This activity could be used following a talk or tour of an animal rescue centre. Our Hertfordshire, Berkshire, Bedfordshire and Somerset centre all care for rabbits. Please visit our website at www.nawt.org.uk/contact for details of how to get in touch with your local centre to organise a talk and tour.

Curriculum links:

English – Reading

- 🐾 Word reading.
- 🐾 Comprehension.

English – Writing

- 🐾 Transcription.
- 🐾 Composition, articulating ideas and structuring them in writing.

Please visit our website for details of how to get in touch with your
local rehoming centre: www.nawt.org.uk/contact



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

Thank you for giving a rescue rabbit from the National Animal Welfare Trust a good home. Rabbits make lovely pets but do need lots of care to keep them healthy. This information will help you keep your rabbit as happy as possible.

Companionship

Rabbits are sociable animals and are much happier living in pairs or groups. The most successful combination is a neutered female with a neutered male rabbit. Same sex littermates can also get along fine, but to prevent fighting it is best that they are both neutered. Guinea pigs are not suitable companions for rabbits; they are a completely different species with different needs.

Accommodation

Rabbits need a living area, where they can relax, eat and sleep, and a run to exercise, play and explore.

The living area (e.g. a large hutch) needs to have a darkened sheltered area for sleeping and a separate area for eating, toileting and relaxing. It should be as large as possible: big enough for your rabbit to lie down and stretch comfortably in all directions, high enough for your rabbit to stand up on their back legs without their ears touching the top and long enough so your rabbit can take at least 3 hops from one end to the other. Two rabbits living together will need a separate sleeping area each and of course a bigger relaxing/eating space.

The living area needs to be sturdy, raised off the floor and in a sheltered position so your rabbits stay safe from excessive sun, wind, rain and cold.

The exercise area (the run) needs to be high enough so your rabbit can stretch to full height and large enough so your rabbit can run around. It should have a raised area to jump on and a sheltered area for each rabbit. Rabbits are curious animals and need mental stimulation. Placing empty plant pots, large bore tunnels or a cardboard box with an entrance and an exit in the exercise area makes the area more interesting. You could also hide some of their food or hang a carrot on a string in their run. If you cannot have the run permanently attached to the hutch, you can have it in a different place, but your rabbit will need to spend a few hours in the run every day; rabbits prefer to eat and exercise around dawn and dusk.

Both the living areas and the runs should be escape proof (bear in mind rabbits love to dig) as well as strong and secure enough to keep other animals out such as foxes, but also cats, dogs, birds and rats. A wooden Wendy house or small shed with a large run attached would make an excellent home for a pair of rabbits.

To keep your rabbits warm in the cold winter months you can give them extra straw and cover the living area with blankets or carpet. The blankets etc will need a waterproof cover, but take



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

care to leave enough space for ventilation. You may need to bring the living area into a shed or unused garage to keep your rabbits warm.

Bedding

Clean, bagged straw is the best bedding for your rabbits.

Once you know where your rabbits like to toilet, you can either put newspaper underneath the bedding there or try a litter tray to make cleaning easier. The litter tray needs to be big enough so the whole rabbit fits inside it.

Food

The main food your rabbits need is lots of fresh, green hay or grass (not lawn clippings though). Chewing the hay will give your rabbits the fibre they need and it helps to wear down their teeth, which continue to grow all their life.

They also need a small amount of rabbit food. If you feed your rabbits a nugget or pellet type rabbit food, you can be sure they get a balanced diet with every mouthful. Many rabbits only eat the bits they like with a muesli type diet, so these diets are not as good for them.

To give your rabbits some variety you can add small amounts of vegetables like kale, broccoli and carrots (especially carrot tops) to their diet. Treats made for rabbits are fun to give and are fine in moderation; avoid treats with sugar though as they can upset your rabbits' digestive systems. Any new food needs to be introduced gradually over 7 to 10 days.

Water

Clean drinking water needs to be available all the time. Most rabbits prefer to drink from a water bottle with a metal spout. If your exercise run is separate from the living area, this needs a water bottle too. Clean the water bottle daily and make sure it doesn't freeze in winter.

Cleaning

Remove the faeces, all wet or soiled bedding and any uneaten food daily. Clean the food bowls and water bottles and provide fresh food and water every day.

The hutch and the run need a weekly clean up. The toilet area in particular will need a thorough clean with a rabbit friendly disinfectant. Replace the bedding with a fresh supply but put a clean bit of the old bedding on top so it still smells of home.

Microchip

Your rabbit will have been implanted with a microchip. Please make sure you inform PetLog of any change of address, as they won't be able to reunite you with your rabbits without your current details.



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

Vaccinations

While your rabbits were in our care, they would have been vaccinated against myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease. The vaccination record will show when the boosters are due.

Fly strike

All rabbits are at risk from this condition. It is caused by flies laying their eggs on your rabbit, near their rear and the maggots then eating the rabbit's flesh. Check your rabbit daily (twice daily in warm weather) for any signs of maggots, particularly under the tail. Maggots on your rabbit is an emergency, contact your vet immediately.

Parasites

The most common parasite in rabbits is *E Cuniculi*. Most rabbits do not show any symptoms, but it can cause eye problems, back leg weakness and problems with balance. Ask your vet for advice about prevention and treatment.



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

Questions:

Are rabbits social animals?

Do guinea pigs make suitable companions for rabbits?

Finish this sentence: Rabbits are curious animals and need_____

What is the best bedding for rabbits?

Can rabbits learn how to use litter trays?

How gradually should new food be introduced to rabbits?

How often should a rabbit's water bottle be cleaned?

How often should rabbits be checked for flystrike?



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

Answers:

Are rabbits social animals?

Yes, they are much happier living in pairs or groups

Do guinea pigs make suitable companions for rabbits?

No, they are a completely different species with different needs

Finish this sentence: Rabbits are curious animals and need _____

mental stimulation

What is the best bedding for rabbits?

Clean, bagged straw

Can rabbits learn how to use litter trays?

Yes

How gradually should new food be introduced to rabbits?

Gradually, over 7 to 10 days

How often should a rabbit's water bottle be cleaned?

Daily

How often should rabbits be checked for flystrike?

Daily, twice a month in warm weather



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

Questions:

How high should the rabbits living area be?

What should you remember when making the rabbit area escape proof?

How can you keep rabbits warm in winter months?

What benefits (other than nutritional) are there to rabbits chewing hay?

Whilst in the care of the National Animal Welfare Trust, what have rabbits been vaccinated against?

What is the most common parasite in rabbits?



Caring for your Rescue Rabbit

Answers:

How high should the rabbits living area be?

High enough for your rabbit to stand up on their back legs without their ears touching the top

What should you remember when making the rabbit area escape proof?

That rabbits love to dig

How can you keep rabbits warm in winter months?

You can give them extra straw and cover the living area with blankets or carpet. You could bring the living area into a shed or unused garage to keep the rabbits warm

What benefits (other than nutritional) are there to rabbits chewing hay?

Helps to wear down their teeth

Whilst in the care of the National Animal Welfare Trust, what have rabbits been vaccinated against?

Myxomatosis and viral haemorrhagic disease

What is the most common parasite in rabbits?

E Cuniculi