

Rabbit Care & Information

Thank you for deciding to purchase a Westy Rabbitry rabbit. Your new rabbit has a lifespan of approximately 7-10 years. With some basic care, your rabbit can have a long and happy life. Below you find some basic care instruction but you can always contact us at our website or email address if you have questions.

Handling your rabbit – It is best to handle your rabbit daily to ensure that she will stay calm around you. It will also help to build trust. This will keep your rabbit calm and prevent stress when you do handle it. You will want to place one hand behind the neck scruff and the other under its belly or hind quarters for support. Always support your rabbit underneath to avoid getting scratched or dropping your rabbit.

What to feed your rabbit- Rabbit pellets made from compressed Alfalfa is the staple for rabbits to live healthy. We feed Manna Pro rabbit pellets in our rabbitry – it comes in three varieties (SHO, PRO & GRO). We feed a 50/50 mixture of PRO & SHO together and our rabbits have thrived on this for years. The SHO formula has Papaya & Yucca, which helps with digestion. If you choose to feed a different brand, please use the transition food you received and slowly wean your rabbit off our feed and introduce your feed gradually, over the course of a week. Instead of pellets, you could choose to feed your rabbit Timothy/Alfalfa Hay, but you would need to make sure it is getting enough hay daily to survive. Many people just stick with pellets. When rabbits are babies we have food available all day for them to free graze as they wish. At about 4 months old they start to get fed only ½ cup of pellets twice a day. Once they are 5 months old that is cut down to a once a day feeding. Rabbits will become overweight if given too much food as adults. The rabbit food that you get at pet stores with the extra little “goodies” like corn, and other oddly shaped nuggets is not good for your rabbit. Rabbits do not need daily treats. An occasional handful of fresh hay is always the best choice if you feel your rabbit should have a treat, but pellets are all she really needs to stay healthy. Sweet mix with molasses should only be given on very rare occasion. While molasses has a lot of nutrients, it is very dense and will make your rabbit drink more water and increase its appetite, which it then may put on too much weight too fast. Sunflower seeds can also be an occasional treat. They are very high in protein, and if your rabbits gets too much protein in its diet it can cause diarrhea and it will go into a molt. It is best to buy your pellets from a feed store and always check the date on the bag for freshness. If the date is more than 4-6 months old, do not buy it. Your rabbit does not need anything other than pellets to grow. Veggies are another treat and should only be given to your rabbit on occasion. Celery stalks should never be given to rabbits as the strings can get wound up in their digestive track. Iceberg lettuce should never be given to rabbits, it is very bad for them. Carrots can be given occasionally, but only a few bites at a time as the rabbit can get too much Vitamin C and get sick. If you see your rabbit getting diarrhea, eliminate all the goodies and just stick with the pellets, her stools should return to normal in a few days. Diarrhea is usually caused from too much change in the diet. Rabbits don't do well with constant changes to their diet. Even letting

them run around in the backyard and eat the grass can upset their stomachs. You should transition your rabbit slowly when adding a new food or changing to a new pellet brand. Start by adding about ¼ of the new food to her daily ration, then ½ of the new food with ½ of the old food, etc. Over the course of a week slowly add more new food and less of the old food until the old food has been eliminated completely. Always have fresh water available to your rabbit. Not all rabbits can drink from a water bottle. If you notice that the water bottle level does not go down in a 24 hr period, put a bowl of water in her cage. Some rabbits may eventually figure out the water bottle, but some do not, so make sure she has a bowl of water to drink from at all times.

Where to house your rabbit- Rabbits do not need elaborate housing. As long as they are out of the elements they will be fine. An indoor cage or an outdoor cage works fine, as long as they are out of direct heat. If you use a solid bottom cage, you can line it with straw, hay, or wood shavings, but do not use cedar shavings and make sure to clean it on a regular basis to avoid “hutch burn.” A wire bottomed cage is better to keep your rabbit clean, but they may need a setting area placed in the cage, such as a piece of wood to avoid sore hocks.

Heat & Cold Extreme – Rabbits are very hardy animals and can take extremely cold temperatures as long as they are given shelter and are kept out of the wind. They do not need extra heat or insulation to keep warm. The opposite is the case with extreme heat. If the temperature reaches 75 degrees and above, your rabbit will need assistance in keeping cool. If you see your rabbit panting, you need to get it cooled down very quickly. If the panting has caused the rabbits nose to start running, bring your rabbit to a sink and run cold water over its ears if it is a lop eared rabbit. This should cool it down in a hurry. When you see your rabbit getting hot, you can use a fan, or spray your rabbit with cool water, especially the ears or give her something to lean on that’s chilled. You can place frozen water bottles in her cage to give her a nice cool place to rest. Or freeze small floor tiles for her to sit on. If your rabbit does not cool down in time, it can die very quickly, so it is a good idea to place her outside cage under a tree or other shady spot to keep them cool during the warmer months.

Litter box training your rabbit – If you choose to litter box train your rabbit, get a box and fill it with some type of nesting material and place it in the corner of her cage. She will soon start use the box as a toilet as she will naturally use the corner as place to relieve herself. You will want to clean the box out on a regular basis. Do not use cat litter in the box, you can use straw, breeder’s choice litter (which is a paper based litter), wood shavings or wood pellets.

Grooming your rabbit - Your rabbit will not need a lot of grooming. She will only need an occasional brushing and nail clipping. But be careful not to cut the blood vessel (quick) that runs through the nail bed. If your rabbit has white nails, it is pretty easy to see this at the base of the nail. If your rabbit has dark nails, it is much harder, so only clip a little bit off the tip of the nail. If the nail quick gets cut and the nail starts to bleed, put something on the nail to stop the bleeding. You can use cornstarch, flour, styptic powder or even dirt if that is all you can get to

quickly. The cornstarch, dirt, etc. will come off once the nail has stopped bleeding. Check the nail in a few days and make sure it is healing well.

If your rabbit is a wool breed, a weekly brushing is necessary to keep her from getting matted. About once or twice a year, your rabbit will start molting (shedding) off all the dead hair and growing in a new coat of fur. You will see a lot more hair in its cage and on you. You can get a slicker brush and help the process along or just let nature run its course. If you do brush it out, be careful not to brush too hard and scratch the rabbit's skin. Some rabbits lose a lot of hair all at once and may look like they are wearing a skirt or some just lose it gradually and you will only see a slight color difference in their old and new fur. Either way, it is perfectly normal for them to molt unless it is happening more than 2X a year, or the hair is not growing back. If the rabbit is getting too much protein all of a sudden, it will start molting as well, so keep her diet consistent.

Toys for your rabbit – There are all kinds of things to entertain your rabbit. Some rabbits crave extra toys and want to play a lot, while others will not touch them at all and are content to just sit all day doing nothing. If your rabbit likes to chew and push things around you can make all kinds of toys from everyday objects. To give you some ideas:

- a) Stuff some hay into an empty toilet paper roll.
- b) Tie a bunch of twigs together with rope.
- c) Break off a leafy branch of a small tree.
- d) Tie a big bunch of hay with a rope and tie it to the side of the cage.
- e) Give her a few pieces of bark that may have fallen off a tree.
- f) Sometimes just a small bowl makes a great toy.

Be careful that what you give your rabbit to play with does not have little plastic pieces that may break off. If your rabbit eats these pieces, they could get lodged in her throat. Stick with natural things like wood, branches, sticks etc.

If you have any questions about your new pet, you can reach us by email or Facebook or visit our Website.

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