



Binky

THE RABBIT AND GUINEA PIG CARE MAGAZINE

SPECIAL
INTRODUCTORY
PRICE

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ISSUE 1

Healthcare
needs

Feeding rabbits
correctly

How to bond
bunnies

Guinea pig care

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Welcome to the first issue of Binky magazine!



If you are new to owning rabbits or guinea pigs or want to brush up on your knowledge then look no further - Binky magazine is for you!

Binky is brought to you by the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund; the largest UK charity dedicated to improving the lives of domestic rabbits through education and campaigning.

We all know that caring for new pets can be daunting, exciting and indeed worrying at times, and this is why Binky has been created. In every issue we will bring you features

to enable you to care for your pets correctly.

Binky is mostly about rabbits, but we know that many people who own rabbits also own guinea pigs, and have therefore given guinea pigs their own 'Popcorn pages'. In this issue we look at what basic care guinea pigs need.

Rabbits have very species specific needs and getting these correct can go a long way to keeping your rabbits happy and healthy. Feeding, housing, healthcare, entertainment and how to bond rabbits are all covered in this issue. We also learn what rabbits are saying to us through their body language. There are also fantastic competitions for you to enter.

We would love to see your photos of your rabbits and guinea pigs and they may even make it into a future issue of Binky. You may also have a story to share with other readers or a tip you have found really useful and would like others to benefit from too.

Happy reading...

Claire Speight - Editor



Cover picture: Rebecca Hammerton



**Rabbit Welfare
Association & Fund**
A hutch is not enough

Binky is published by the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund, which exists to improve the quality of life of pet rabbits in the UK. For further information about day-to-day rabbit care and health issues please visit the website at: www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk

To see the benefits of becoming an RWF member and how to join please go to the website or telephone the Helpline on: **0844 324 6090**.

Feeding your rabbits correctly

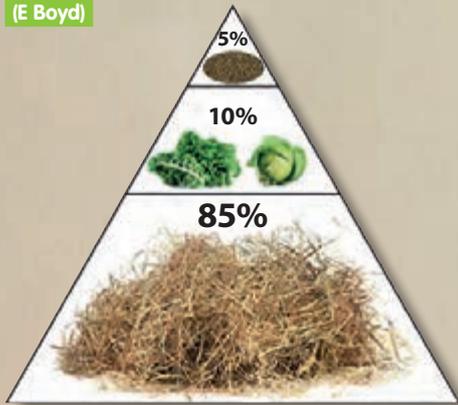
By Emma Boyd, Team RWAf

Wild rabbits eat grass and lots of it! They will consume grass for hours each day as well as wild plants of vegetables. Our pet rabbits' diets are usually far healthier, when in reality they should mimic their wild cousins as much as possible.



Figure 1: The rabbit feeding pyramid

(E Boyd)



Portion sizes

Think of your rabbit's daily food intake as a pyramid (figure 1). It should make it clear to understand how much they should be eating. Ideally, 85% of their diet per day should be hay/grass. If you put the pile of hay alongside the rabbit it should be at least double its body size. 10% should be made up of mixed greens/veg (at least 2 large handfuls per rabbit) and 5% of complete pellets. This should be no more than an eggcup full per rabbit per day.

Hay/Grass

Rabbits are natural grazers and eat for long periods – mainly at dusk and dawn. Good quality hay or fresh grass should be the foundation of a healthy diet. This ensures they will get the nutrients they need. It cuts down on dental problems too. These will arise when the diet is incorrect. Rabbit's teeth grow continuously and the shearing

action of eating hay is what keeps their teeth worn more naturally. This is what happens for wild rabbits. If your pet rabbit's diet contains less roughage, the teeth begin to overgrow and develop abnormalities. It is easy to spot when the front (incisor) teeth overgrow. However the back (molar) teeth can develop spurs which cut into the gums and tongue. This restricts the rabbit's ability to eat properly and can cause extreme pain and discomfort. This isn't something the owner can easily see. Clues may be subtle changes in food preferences. Easier to spot is dribbling from the mouth or weepy eyes.

Good quality hay should be long stranded, stalky and free from dust or mould. It should not be thin or powdery. All major supermarkets and pet stores sell hay. It's more cost effective to buy it in bulk from online suppliers or local farm or horse feed suppliers.



Offer a selection of fresh vegetables daily

(S Hibbert)

Hay provides the teeth with the correct wear
(S Hibbert)



Many rabbits will use their hay to hide or burrow in. It provides enrichment for them but they can eat it as they go. It must be kept dry in their enclosure. If hay is used in their litter tray it must be fully changed daily as it will not be eaten once soiled. Small hayracks or hay rollers may not be big enough for a day's hay supply but can be useful for different types of hay or for dried grass being fed as treats. Many rabbit owners provide a large indoor cage base or plastic box/litter tray as a feeding area – line the base with wooden or paper cat litter and top with lots of fresh hay.

What if your rabbit is fussy?

If rabbits are fed too much commercial diet (pellets or muesli mix), they are less likely to eat hay, but because it's vital that they receive enough hay daily owners need to try and improve the diet quickly. Make hay more interesting, mix different types together and add dried grass or herbs, or fresh vegetables to encourage the rabbit to eat more. This can also provide a welcome change to non-fussy eaters and will give them a

treat and provide some environmental enrichment. Hay can be stuffed into tubes, willow balls or hanging baskets to make feeding more exciting.

Greens/Veggies

A multitude of vegetables and plants are safe for rabbits. They will definitely let you know which ones they prefer. Below is a list of the main delights you can easily buy from your rabbits from shops:

- **Spring Greens/Spring Cabbage**
- **Kale/Cavolo Nero (black kale)**
- **Spinach**
- **Watercress**
- **Pea Shoots**
- **Carrot tops (not the carrot – this should only be fed in small 1cm pieces every few weeks as a treat)**
- **Fresh Herbs – parsley, coriander, mint, basil.**
- **Broccoli**

Fruits and carrot are high in sugar. So they should be classed as a treat and should not be eaten regularly.

Wild plants such as dandelion, plantain and bramble will also be enjoyed, if picked from safe areas with no pollution. Fruit tree branches such as apple can be a new and exciting item to nibble on.

Hay ideas in the run
(RWAF)



Place hay in different feeding containers
(S Hibbert)



Commercial complete foods

Pellets/nuggets are always recommended over muesli type feeds; this is because rabbits will selectively feed with a muesli mix. They will usually choose the highest sugar content items first. Pellets/nuggets are bite sized pieces and each mouthful has the same composition. This means they cannot selectively feed. Why not hide the pellets around the rabbit's enclosure, scatter them through the hay or feed from a treat ball. This will result in the rabbits taking longer to find their food and therefore being more active and moving

Large piles of hay should be freely available
(S Hibbert)



Freshly picked dandelion leaves are normally a firm favourite
(S Hibbert)



more. All of this will prevent boredom and encourages mental stimulation rather than just sitting with a large bowl in front of them.

Water

Water bottles are not as reliable as bowls for a number of reasons. They are prone to leaking and empty quickly leaving the rabbit with nothing left to drink. They can freeze in the winter, in particular the metal spout. However the water may not look frozen inside the bottle. It means though that no water can pass through and if the owner doesn't notice the rabbit cannot get any water from them.

The rabbit cannot take a large mouthful/gulp from water bottles. Rabbits are a prey species. That is they are hunted by other animals for food. So they must always be on the lookout. Spending a lot

of time drinking is not normal for them. A bowl provides access for large gulps of water at once which is a more natural behaviour. Use a large ceramic bowl so

that it isn't easy to tip over. It will need to be changed and freshened daily. In low temperatures the water may freeze but the rabbit can still lick the ice to get moisture from it. They can't do that with a bottle.

Feeding Fun

Owners are always looking for ways to make feeding more fun for their bunnies – take a look at some of the photos for ideas. Be as imaginative as possible and keep things changing and new so that the rabbits are kept engaged and happy.

Remember – never change a rabbit's diet too quickly – introduce new foods over 7 - 14 days. This avoids dietary upsets which can make the rabbit extremely unwell.

Rabbits like to forage in piles of hay for vegetables
(S Hibbert)



Keeping rabbits healthy

By Ros Lamb, Team RWAF

There are some things you need to know about so you can look after your pet rabbits well, and a good rabbit vet is the person you need to help. You can find a list of good rabbit vets on the RWAF website. It's updated regularly.

A Zoom Groom is useful for grooming

(J Hinde)



Groom your rabbits regularly

They groom themselves and each other a lot, but if you do it too, it gets them used to you handling them gently and gives you the chance to check their bodies for any lumps and bumps. If they have longer fur sometimes they can't get tangles out themselves. Use your fingers to tease them out, very gently. If they are larger matts that you can't untangle it's better to see if your vet or vet nurse can clip them out. Rabbit skin tears very easily, so it is not advised to try and cut them out yourself, or even to pull too hard on matts.

When they are moulting it's very important to groom them every day. You can use a Zoom Groom to remove fur and make your rabbits much more comfortable. You'll see that they groom themselves and each other a lot, and they swallow fur when they do that. That's an awful lot of fur when they're moulting and it can lead to the gut slowing down, the stomach contents drying out and causing a blockage, so it's very important for you to help them by removing a lot of the dead fur for them.

Bunnies can get mites

These are tiny parasites that eat mostly dead skin cells. There are different kinds. Some live in the fur, others in the ears. Usually there are a few around that don't cause any problems but sometimes your rabbit will get too many to cope with. You'll see a lot of scratching, fur loss and red skin if they have fur mites. If they have ear

mites there will be head shaking and scratching. If they get really bad, their ears will be crusty. Good rabbit vets know the right medicines to give to get rid of them. Don't use treatments for other animals unless your vet says they are safe for rabbits. Some really aren't safe to use on rabbits. Go to your good rabbit vet to get what your rabbit needs and to find out why there are so many mites in the first place.

Claws need to be kept short

So that your rabbit can move around comfortably, claws need to be kept short. If the claws on the back feet get too long, the feet can't rest flat on the ground. That will cause problems with joints, especially hocks (heels). If the feet don't rest flat on the ground your rabbit can get pressure sores on the soles of his feet and hocks. So keep claws short, on front and back feet. Only the very tip should show through the fur. Your vet or a vet nurse will show you how to cut them safely. Overly long claws can also get caught and break. This is painful for the rabbit.

Keep a close eye on eyes, nose and ears

They should all be clean and clear, eyes should be bright. There shouldn't be any discharge. Your rabbit shouldn't be constantly rubbing at them or scratching. If you see any of these problems, take your rabbit to the vet for treatment.

Keep an eye on your rabbit's bottom

They should always be clean. Usually they'll keep them clean themselves but sometimes some of their soft poos (caecotrophs) may get stuck on the fur. Clean them off gently. Don't bath the whole rabbit – it really scares them. Just clean the dirty parts using a pet shampoo and warm water and then dry thoroughly.

An important reason for keeping their bottoms clean is flystrike. It's a nasty condition where flies are attracted to the dirt and lay eggs on the dirty fur. They hatch into maggots that will eat your rabbit alive! It's an emergency and they need to see the vet straight away,

Regular grooming, especially when moulting is essential

(L Yates)

Your rabbits ears, eyes and nose need monitoring

(H Cassell)



not tomorrow, not later – NOW! Use tweezers to pick off any maggots you can see but don't wash the rabbit – your vet will need to shave your rabbit and wet fur is very hard to shave.

They get a dirty bottom because they have a bad diet or are too fat or they have pain somewhere. Ask your vet to check your rabbit over if there are often poos stuck to the bottom, to find out how to stop it happening

It's very important to keep their home clean. Any dirt will get onto their fur. Clean out their bed every couple of days, and scoop any dirty litter out of litter trays every day. Once a week give it a really thorough clean and disinfect. If it's dirty germs will increase. It'll attract flies too, and that makes flystrike more likely.

Nutrition

Make sure they have a good diet. It's important to give them the right foods so that they have plenty of energy, stay well and don't get overweight. Getting too fat will put strain on their hearts and other organs. It will put strain on their joints too, and make it harder for them to keep

themselves clean. They need to have fresh grass or hay all the time. Make sure hay is clean and not dusty. They will make a bed in it, use it as litter, but most importantly, they will eat it. Every rabbit should eat its own body size in hay every day, and hay (or grass) should be 85% of the diet. Give them some greens too. They'll love cabbage, kale,

broccoli and the green tops from carrots. There are safe wild plants they can have too. Dandelions, plantain, brambles, sticky weed and lots of other plants are safe. But make sure you know what's safe and what isn't. And don't pick wild plants from places where there's a lot of traffic, or where people take their dogs for walks, or where chemicals might have been sprayed. To find out what plants are safe, get our book 'Foraging for Rabbits' from the RWAf shop. They shouldn't have muesli type mixes. They should have good quality pellets instead, Burgess Excel for example. Each rabbit only needs an eggcup full per day though. You can give them a tiny bit of apple or carrot as a treat. A half cm cube is enough for a treat, but only give it to them once or twice a week. Keeping slim will mean they can exercise better and keep themselves clean.

Vaccinations

Bunnies can catch some really nasty illnesses that can kill them. The only way to protect them is to make sure they are vaccinated every year against each one. Speak to your vet to make sure that the vaccinations you give your rabbits protect them against Myxomatosis and strains 1 and 2 of Rabbit Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (RVHD1 and 2). They require a booster every 12 months. Your vet will be able to offer you further advice.

Rabbits must be vaccinated against

myxomatosis, RVHD1 and RVHD2

(L Noble)



Neutering

One of the most important reasons to see the vet is to have your bunnies neutered. There are tens of thousands of rabbits in rescues that need homes, so there is no need to breed. That would just add to the problem. Neutering will make your rabbits easier to get along with and it will mean your female can't get cancer of the uterus. It isn't cheap, but it's only once in your rabbit's whole life. Males can be neutered (castrated) from 3 months old and females can be neutered (spayed) from 4 months. It's best to do them as close to these ages as you can. They live together most happily if you have a male and female bonded pair, so neutering is a must. A good rabbit vet will tell you all you need to know about neutering, and you can ask the RWAf for advice on your bunnies' care after the operations.

Emergencies

We've made a poster to show when you really need to get your rabbit to the vet as quickly as possible. It shows things that are life threatening and can't wait. Some are covered in this article, but if you see any signs of any of these, act fast! This can't wait until later.

It's a real emergency if your rabbit stops eating and you should never try home remedies. Get him or her to the vet as quickly as possible even if it's the middle of the night. There are lots of possible causes. Sometimes the gut is blocked and trying to force feed a rabbit with a

Signs your rabbit needs to see a vet
(RWAf)

15
Emergency Reasons
why you need to see a rabbit savvy vet NOW

- 1 Not moving around. Sitting hunched up
- 2 Change of food preference or loss of appetite
- 3 Smaller, fewer or no poos
- 4 Broken bones / legs
- 5 Collapse
- 6 Mouth breathing
- 7 Runny eyes/nose/coughing/sneezing/wheezing
- 8 Flystrike
- 9 Blood in urine
- 10 Dribbling / wet fur around mouth
- 11 Haemorrhage
- 12 Fitting
- 13 Screaming
- 14 Diarrhoea
- 15 Significant wounds

RWAf
Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund
A touch is not enough

Neutering of both sexes is recommended from an early age
(V Also)



blocked gut will kill it. Your vet will know what the best treatment is.

Dental problems

Sometimes the cause of loss of appetite is a dental problem. Rabbits' teeth grow all their lives and are worn down if they have a good diet of mostly hay or grass. Other foods won't wear down the back teeth, because hay and grass are chewed in a particular way. Sometimes a sharp point (spur) will form that will make your bunny's mouth sore and you need your vet to find this and remove it. We always recommend that vets do this with your rabbit anaesthetised. There are many other dental problems and your vet is the person to deal with these.

The Dictionary of rabbit 'Speak'

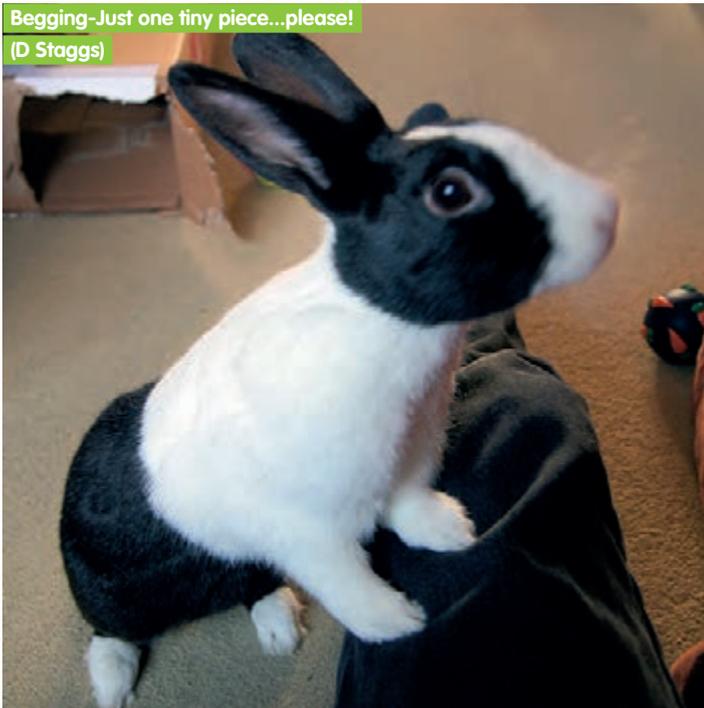
By Deborah Staggs



Grooming is a sign of affection
(D Staggs)

As a new rabbit owner, you may assume rabbits are silent and cannot communicate. Rabbits are one of the most neglected domestic animals, possibly because they cannot vocalize their needs. However, you can learn to 'listen' to your rabbits' body language and vocalizations. This understanding will enrich your relationship with them, and help to detect problems. Here are some basics - remember, language will vary with personality, context... and style of ears!

Begging-Just one tiny piece...please!
(D Staggs)



Your rabbits way of ignoring you
(D Staggs)

- **Back deliberately turned to you:**

Ignoring you: You have caused upset (common after a trip to the vet).

- **Begging:**
Shamelessly teetering on hind legs whilst you are eating: Try not to reward begging, or you will soon have an overweight, bad-mannered pet!

- **Binkyng:**
Acrobatically springing up,

turning mid-air, shaking head, or racing around: The rabbit is VERY happy.

- **Boxing:**
Sitting on hind legs and boxing/scratching: Rabbit is defending something, or warning you to back off.

- **Chinning:**
Rubbing items with underside of chin: Rabbit is marking territory, using scent glands to say "this belongs to me", or "I was here".

- **Circling:**

Circling another rabbit or your feet: Rabbit may be courting another rabbit, or demanding your attention.

- **Droppings:**

Scattering droppings: Some rabbits always scatter droppings to mark territory, reminding everyone "this area is mine", or it may be due to a change in the environment or introduction of another rabbit.

- **Ears back:**

Closing ears together and relaxing: Rabbit is relaxed and resting.

Tensing body, with ears back, slightly apart, and tail up: Rabbit is feeling threatened and may lunge or bite if you come any closer. You will soon learn to detect this subtle change in ear position.

- **Ears forward:**

Positioning both ears forward, radar-like: Something has caught the rabbit's attention. They will stretch out inquisitively, hind legs glued to the spot, ears pointing forward.

Holding one ear forward, one back: Something has caught their attention, but it's not worth investigating... yet.

- **Flat on ground:**

Lying with head flat and stretched forward, ears flat, bottom may still be up: Rabbit is saying "hello, now give me a nose rub/lick" to you/another rabbit.

Lying tense and flat with head and ears down: Rabbit is scared and trying not to be seen.

- **Flipping hind feet:**

Hopping away, flipping out back legs/feet: Rabbit is disgusted with you – something you have done/offered/said has caused upset.

- **Flopping:**

Falling/throwing body onto side/back, lying with hind feet stretched out: Rabbit is completely relaxed, content, in bliss. Don't be fooled, they will move the second you try to take a photo!

- **Growling:**

Making a growling or grunting sound: Rabbit feels threatened and may bite or box if the threatening behaviour continues from human/other rabbit/other animal. May occur if someone attempts to pick them up, or food/territory/space is invaded.

- **Humming/Honking:**

Making a soft sound, often accompanied by circling the object of affection: Rabbit is in love with you/another rabbit.

- **Licking:**

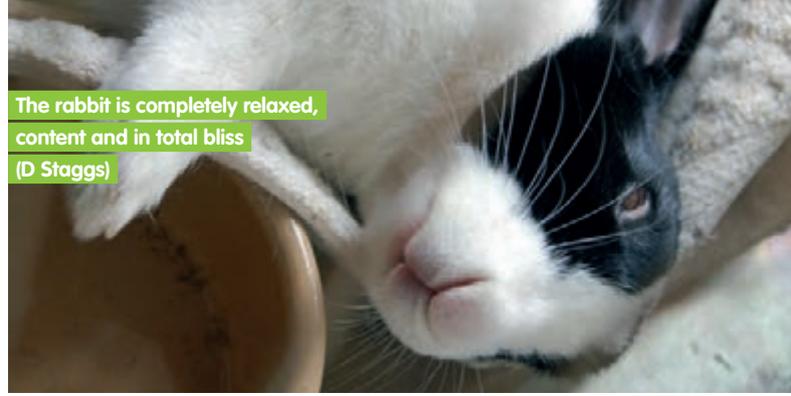
Licking you or another rabbit: This form of grooming shows that the rabbit loves/trusts you/ the other rabbit and expects cuddles in return. Some rabbits lick more than others.

- **Lunging:**

Lunging defensively, often accompanied by a growl, then possibly a bite/box: You've gone too far, or moved too suddenly. The rabbit may be warning you to take your hand out of the cage. Try approaching more slowly.

- **Mounting:**

Climbing on top of another



The rabbit is completely relaxed, content and in total bliss (D Staggs)

rabbit or even a soft toy: Most common in unneutered rabbits, but also seen when a rabbit is trying to assert dominance (e.g. during early stages of bonding, or during scuffles to remind the other rabbit who's in charge).

- **Nose twitching:**

Nose twitching faster than usual: An interesting smell has been detected. This can also signal anxiety or illness, so must be taken in context.

- **Nipping:**

Pinching you with the teeth: Rabbit may be warning you to stop (or else they will bite properly), seeking attention, telling you to move, or even grooming you.

- **Nudging:**

Nose-nudging something/ someone: Rabbit is trying to move item out of the way, or demand attention/cuddles.

- **Periscoping:**

Standing on hind legs, or stretching out and turning head to achieve best view: Something new has entered the environment and caught rabbit's attention.

- **Screaming:**

Emitting a terrible squealing sound: Hopefully your rabbit will never scream, as it indicates excruciating pain or extreme terror.

- **Soft squeal/squeak:**

Whimpering (as opposed to a scream): Rabbit is displeased or anxious, especially heard during unwanted advances from a male.

- **Spraying:**

Spraying urine (mostly by males): Rabbit is marking territory. Spraying usually stops after neutering.

- **Tail shaking:**

Subtly shaking tail: This act of

defiance is usually shown when a rabbit has been made to do something unreasonable, like move away from a source of mischief. This is the ultimate bunny back-chat.

- **Throwing:**

Tossing or pushing an object: Rabbit is moving it out of the way or playing. Rabbits love to have toys to throw around.

- **Thumping:**

Thumping hind feet: Rabbit is warning others of danger. Also used to express annoyance, and sometimes excitement.

- **Tooth grinding:**

Loud grinding, often accompanied by other body language (the rabbit may be in an unusual position, tense, hunched up in a corner, or stretched out awkwardly): This grinding is much harsher than tooth purring, and indicates severe pain, discomfort, or stress. Rabbit needs to see a vet urgently.

- **Tooth purring:**

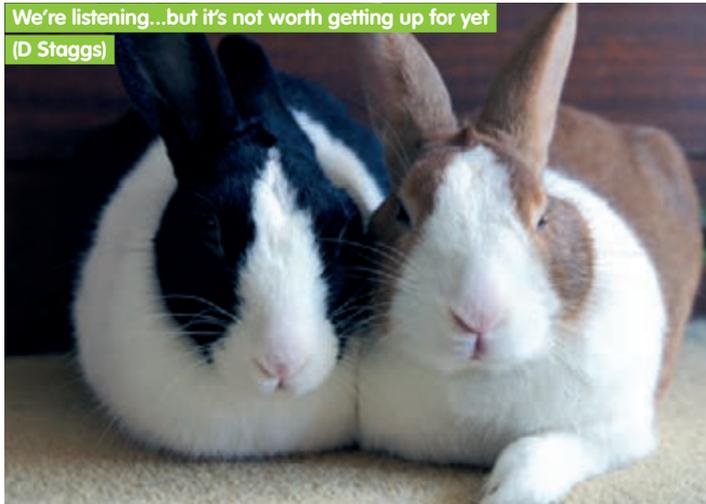
Grinding back teeth gently, head/mouth shuddering with the action, eyes may be closed: Similar to a cat purring, this indicates happiness, often whilst being stroked.

- **Twitching and rocking:**

Eyelids twitching, ears moving like radars, whiskers vibrating, paws scrabbling, mouth picking at invisible grass, sometimes falling to one side: Close inspection will reveal that the rabbit is fast asleep and probably dreaming!

If you watch patiently, with time and experience you will learn what your individual rabbits are saying. As with human babies, the 'speech' will develop if you respond appropriately, showing them that you do understand, and encouraging them to continue the conversation.

We're listening...but it's not worth getting up for yet (D Staggs)



Bunny Buddies

Bonding rabbits

Why does my rabbit need company?

Rabbits are extremely social animals and in the wild they live in large groups, with an estimated 10-50 rabbits per warren. Our pet rabbits might look very different, but they are still closely related to their wild cousins and feel safer and happier in friendly pairs or groups. They help keep each other warm, groom each other and provide support and comfort during times of stress. Most importantly a friend of the same species can prevent boredom and loneliness. Although many people still keep lone rabbits there really is nothing quite as enjoyable as seeing a pair of rabbits lying together, grooming each other and playing.

All welfare organisations encourage owners to keep their rabbits in neutered, compatible pairs.

What does the term 'bonding' mean?

Bonding is the term used to describe the process of safely introducing rabbits to each other in the hope that they will form a close and long lasting relationship and friendship.



This article is based on the 'Bonding Rabbits' book by Fiona Firth. Here we have printed all the basics to help you get started.

Grooming each other is a positive sign

(J Grantham)

How do I 'bond' my rabbit to another rabbit?

It is very important to remember that you cannot just put 2 rabbits together and expect them to get along. They will more than likely fight if you do this. Never ever put one rabbit in to the hutch, run, shed, cage etc where another rabbit already lives. There are some basics that you need to get in place first:

- 1 A neutered male and neutered female are most likely to become friends
- 2 They both need to have been neutered for at least 3-6 weeks before you introduce them. Your vet can advise you on this also.
- 3 You will need a neutral area (or areas) where neither rabbit has been before
- 4 Make sure that your vet has checked your rabbits and is happy that they are healthy and can cope with the bonding process. More on all of this later.

What combination of rabbits should I try?

A neutered male and a neutered female generally make the best combination. Same sex match-ups can work i.e. two males or two females, but they are often tricky and are most likely to succeed if they were introduced as young rabbits of 8-10 weeks old. For same-sex pairs to work in the long-term they should both be neutered as soon as they are old enough. If you would like to try introducing adult rabbits of the same sex, you should get expert help, i.e. ask a rescue centre to do it for you and remember that there is no guarantee of success.

Neutering

All rabbits should always be neutered before bonding begins. There are many other benefits to neutering and bonding should not be attempted in adult rabbits until all of them are neutered. Neutering cuts down the hormones they produce making both male and female rabbits less aggressive so bonding is easier. So even if you are trying to bond two males or two females, all rabbits should still be neutered.

Rabbits are happiest with a companion
(N Boddy)



In female rabbits neutering is called spaying; in males neutering is called castration and involves the removal of the testicles.

Other benefits of neutering:

- Males are less likely to spray urine to mark territory
- Litter training is much easier
- Neutering prevents false pregnancies in females (where they can become aggressive to owners and other rabbits and lose their appetite leading to digestive problems)
- Prevents uterine (womb) cancer in females. Sadly, it is estimated that up to 80% of females develop this by the age of 5.

The easiest way to get a neutered rabbit is from a rescue centre, and they can help you with the bonding process. You might need to get your rabbit neutered before you begin, so you will need a 'rabbit savvy' vet (look on rabbitwelfare.co.uk for a list of rabbit friendly vets). Males can be neutered from 12 weeks and females from 16 weeks, but discuss this with your vet.

Time of the year

Believe it or not it can be more difficult to bond rabbits, even neutered ones, in the spring time. Changes in day length and temperature indicate the breeding season causing an increase in hormone levels and the appearance of some sexual and aggressive behaviours. Even previously bonded rabbits can quarrel more at this time of the year.

Preparation before bonding

Before attempting bonding make sure you are fully prepared. Having everything ready BEFORE you put your rabbits together is less stressful and means the bond is more likely to succeed.

You will need:

- ALL rabbits to be neutered, no matter what sex they are
- Plenty of time. If you are attempting the slower method of bonding this means you will need some spare time every day for a few days or even weeks
- A neutral territory. This means a room or part of a room or outside area that neither rabbit has ever been in. We like to use the living room so we can supervise from the sofa, watch TV as things progress and sleep next to the pen if necessary. A small room such as a bathroom instead of a pen can also be used
- A run, play pen or animal pen to be used as your bonding pen. It should be open at the top so you can access it easily if you need to intervene. It shouldn't be too big or rabbits can sit in corners and make the corners their 'territory'. It shouldn't be too small so they can't sit apart
- You don't want your rabbits fighting for resources or guarding things, so ensure there is plenty of food, hay and water bowls/bottles. You can also provide boxes or tubes that they can hide in if they need to get away.

The best combination is a male and female, both having been neutered

(B Shipsey)



If the bottles, bowls and other items you place in the pen are not new they should be thoroughly cleaned and then sprayed with a 50:50 white vinegar to water mixture to neutralise any smells

- Big, thick gloves at the ready in case you need to separate fighting rabbits
- Neutralise the old environment. If the bond goes well in neutral territory eventually you will want to move them into their permanent home. If this has previously been occupied by your existing rabbit you should thoroughly clean it all then neutralise

the smells. A mixture of white vinegar and water at a 50:50 ratio is excellent for this. The place will smell like a chip shop initially but eventually this will disperse as everything dries

- Learn about rabbit body language in advance (see below).

Learn to read rabbit body language

Before attempting bonding you should familiarise yourself with some of the behaviours you can expect to see. This will help you to decide if and when you need to intervene during the bonding process.

Rabbits gain a great deal from company of their own kind

(A Stuart)



Positive signs

These indicate that your rabbits are getting on well:

- Grooming themselves
- Grooming each other
- Eating
- Lying down near each other
- Lying down side by side.

Neutral signs

Although normal, these signs can sometimes be upsetting for the owner. You should usually allow them to continue unless one rabbit is persistently showing this behaviour or there is a danger of this escalating:

- Ignoring each other
- Mounting each other
- Chasing
- Fur pulling
- Nipping

Nipping is very different from biting. Nipping should not break the skin and can occur when a rabbit is a little over-enthusiastic during grooming. Males should not be allowed to mount females face first. This can result in bitten genitals!

Although rare in neutered males, another sign you may see during bonding is the male rabbit spraying urine over the female. This behaviour should decrease as the bonding session goes on, however if the spraying seems excessive and is coupled with persistent mounting it is likely that the other rabbit will soon get fed up and a fight will follow.

Negative signs

- Lunging
- Fighting

Lunging is not a good sign, the ears (except in lop eared rabbits) will be held back and the tail will be held up at an angle of 45 degrees. You should intervene at this point to stop the behaviour from escalating.

Rabbits that fight within minutes of going into neutral territory are unlikely to be compatible partners. When fighting, rabbits will try to seriously injure each other, often biting around the areas where they can do more

damage such as the face and genitals. In addition to this they may be rolling and kicking. Fighting rabbits must be separated immediately but be careful you don't get bitten.

Different methods of bonding

Getting a rescue to do it for you

Many rescues will offer a 'match-up' service if you are planning on adopting your second rabbit from them. There are many benefits to this. Rescues usually bond rabbits on a regular basis and are experts in this field, they know what signs to look for during the introductory process and usually have plenty of neutral territory to choose from. This is ideal if you have never tried to bond rabbits before and are a bit anxious about it. By getting a rescue to bond your rabbits it also means that there is a choice of potential partners for your rabbit – not all rabbits like the friend that you choose for them. If the rescue has the time and boarding space to supervise the whole bond rather than just some initial 'dates' you will need to be prepared to leave your existing rabbit there for a few days.

This is the method we would recommend, especially if you have never tried it before.

Bunny Dating

You will need plenty of time and patience if you decide to try the slower method of bonding. You will also need to create two environments prior to starting any introductions.

Stage 1. You should start with two hutches/runs or one that can be split by a fence. The fence must be made from closed mesh so that the rabbits cannot bite each other through the wire. Indoor rabbits can be kept in the same room but again they should be in separate cages/areas. The rabbits should be able to see, sniff and smell each other but not have access to be able to bite or injure the other rabbit.

Stage 2. For the next few days (or weeks) you should start to swap litter trays and toys between the two environments. By swapping their bedding and other items it helps them to get used to each other's scent. If they

react positively (and show no signs of stress) by continuing to eat, play and groom themselves as normal you can proceed to the next stage.

Stage 3. This is the dating stage! You can now start to put your rabbits together for short periods of time. You must use a neutral territory where neither rabbit has been before. It's essential that you supervise them at all times. If you don't have access to a bonding pen you could try somewhere like your bathroom.

If these meetings appear to be going well you can gradually increase the time they spend together each day. They should remain in their separate areas the rest of the day when you are unable to be there to watch them. Ensure that there is plenty of food available as eating is a social behaviour and will encourage them to get along.

Some chasing, nipping and mounting is normal and does not indicate that the relationship is doomed. However, excessive mounting, fur-pulling or chasing may trigger fighting so it is best to intervene early if this continues. Ignoring each other, grooming themselves or each other, eating or lying down either apart or together are all good signs. Stop the date immediately and try again the next day if you see lunging.

If a fight starts, it can be very alarming for the owner. The rabbits will grab hold of each other with their teeth and end up 'rolling about' together kicking. They shut their eyes when they do this and will indiscriminately bite your hands if you try to separate them, so have thick gloves at the ready. You don't really want to ever get to this point as it can be hard to continue the introduction from here. This type of behaviour needs to be prevented. Try to read their body language and separate when early signs of tension are spotted.

Stage 4. If the dates are going well and you've started to see signs of mutual grooming or sitting together you should try to keep them together permanently. After 48 hours together in neutral territory with no problems your rabbits can be left together unsupervised and you can move them into their permanent home. As discussed earlier, if the environment they are to share was



Before bonding is attempted all rabbits must be neutered (A Cummings)

previously occupied by one rabbit it must be thoroughly neutralised before you introduce the newly bonded pair to it.

Rabbits and guinea pigs

Rabbits and guinea pigs are often still housed together in pet shops encouraging prospective owners to believe that this is a good combination of pets to have. Some owners may think one rabbit and a smaller guinea pig is less work and expense than having two rabbits. It is not something we recommend at all. Rabbits and guinea pigs don't make good partners.

If you are not sure, then the safest thing is to leave this to the experts and ask a rescue centre to do it for you. You can find a list of rescue centres on these websites:

Rescuereview.co.uk

Saveafluff.co.uk

Rabbitrehome.org.uk

If you want to read more, you can order this book from our on line store:

<https://shop.rabbitwelfare.co.uk/product/bonding-rabbits-by-fiona-campbell/>

NewsReel

News, stories and information from around the rabbit and guinea pig world...



Rescuing Olaf

Olaf arrived at Camp Nibble in need of some TLC

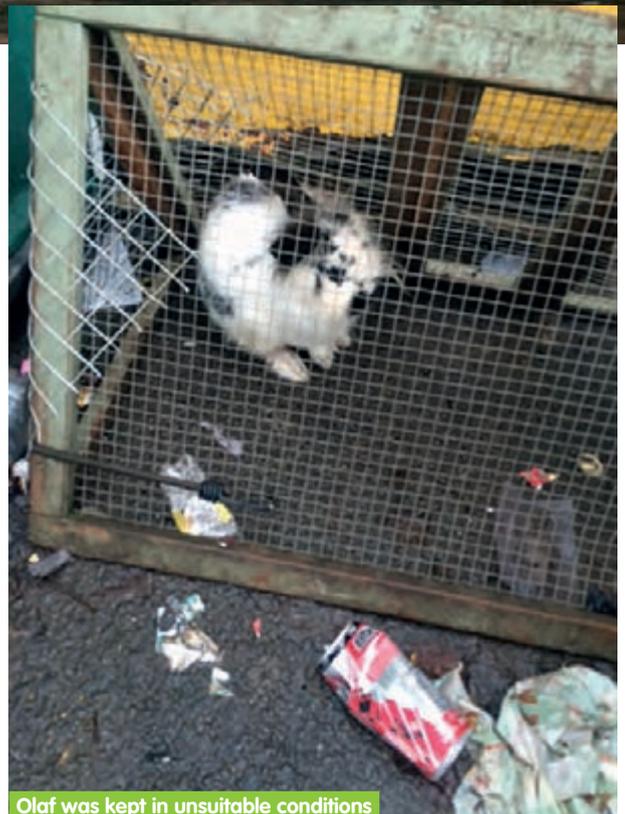
Olaf was brought to us by the council in early 2016. He was severely neglected. He arrived completely soaked through as he had no shelter and it was during a period of prolonged, horrendous weather. He was dangerously thin and had a wounded leg caused by a piece of wire tied around his foot which was almost certainly a tether.

We rushed him to our rabbit savvy vet. We guessed that he was very old, or desperately in need of a dental from his condition. However, he was actually healthy and a young adult just desperately in need of some nutrition. Our vet thought he would not have lasted much longer if he hadn't been rescued. Over the next few weeks with some TLC and good nutrition he became a very handsome chap and was well enough to be neutered and find a new friend and home.

Despite his ordeal he is such handsome bunny and he has a gorgeous nature. We were delighted as he was soon reserved by one of our vet's lovely clients who were in need of a friend for a lonely lady bunny. The pair of them bonded beautifully on 'bunnymoon' for a week with us before leaving to set up home together. He has a wonderful free range house bunny life now getting up to all kinds of fun and mischief with his partner in crime Dolly.

Hannah – Camp Nibble (registered charity no. 1137407)

www.campnibble.com



Olaf was kept in unsuitable conditions



The Pet Detectives book series

Renowned vet and animal lover Emma Milne has written a series of books called The Pet Detectives Series – including a fantastic fact-packed book on rabbits! The books are crammed full of information about how best to look after, feed, house and keep your rabbit happy and healthy. The books are great for experienced bunny owners but also test new owners and people thinking of bringing a new rabbit into their family. Emma uses a series of detective challenges to see if you pass the detective challenge and are

indeed qualified to be a bunny owner.

The books cost £9.95 each and can be ordered from www.5mbooks.com.

Here are some of the tips and advice Emma offers readers in the book:

First of all, keep things simple and think back to the wild. Just like their wild relatives your rabbits need lots of what's called long fibre foods to keep their teeth and guts healthy and that means fresh grass and good quality hay. A good rule of thumb is that your rabbits need about their own body size (not weight!) of hay every day but an unlimited supply is best. If they have safe access to grass all the time then don't worry too much, they won't go hungry, just make sure hay is always there if they want it. Sometimes they might not feel like going outside if they are frightened or if the weather's horrible and if they always have hay they can choose what they want to do. Fresh grass is lovely for rabbits but don't give them clippings from the lawnmower. These can go off very quickly and make your rabbits ill.

In the wild rabbits nibble lots of different leafy plants and a good variety for your pet rabbits is also important. Lots of plants are safe to give like dandelions and clover. If you've rabbit-proofed your garden you need to make sure you know which plants you

have growing there that the rabbits might get to. This is important because some plants can be very poisonous like foxgloves and ragwort.

Lots of rabbits love fruits because they are sweet but this can be a problem. Fruits are the rabbit equivalent of a pick 'n' mix; high in sugar and irresistible! They can make your rabbits fat and cause tooth problems so should be a very occasional treat at the most.

Try and make sure that grass and hay is about 85% of what your rabbits eat. 10% should be leafy plants and vegetables. Make sure you vary the plants they are given to keep the diet balanced and interesting. Try to avoid too many vegetables like carrots because they are full of energy and can make your rabbit fat. Bugs Bunny wasn't a real rabbit remember!



Emmas new book offers lots of practical advice

Snugglebunnies expands range further to raise funds for the RWAF

Since Rosie started the Snugglebunnies Facebook page in November 2015, she has become increasingly busy with orders. Originally she only sold her fleece heat pad covers, and she gradually built up a loyal customer base. They soon wanted her to make other items and expand the range further. Early additions to the range included fitted covers for the popular Ikea 'Duktig' doll bed, padded cushions for carry cases and cushions to fit the 'Bunny Business Hideaway'. These all remain popular products and are available in a wide range of fleece patterns from beautiful floral designs, stripes and spots, to tartan, harlequin and animal prints. Whatever your style and taste, there is certainly a fleece for you!

In addition to these original products, there is now a new and exciting range of bespoke designs available, where customers are able to actively get involved with the design process and create something extra special. Starting with a base colour of their choice, the buyer



The bespoke range is now available



The colourful array of products from Snugglebunnies

can add bunny and heart silhouettes to make a unique product that is tailored to their own colour scheme. Fleece covers (which fit both the Snugglesafe heat pads and the Scratch and Newton ice pods) can come with either a single bunny silhouette or a large love heart applied on, whilst bed covers can be embellished with either a large silhouette of a reclining bunny or the very popular 'bonded bunnies' design, in which two bunnies sit either side of a heart shape. The same designs can also be used for the padded cushions and Rosie is always happy to help with ideas and provide inspiration!

To date the Snugglebunnies page has gained over 900 Facebook likes and raised several hundred pounds by donating all of its profits to the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund. So please add your support and take a look at all the lovely things to buy at:

www.facebook.com/snugglebunniesfortheRWAF

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Foraging for Rabbits

Our very own, fantastic new book, written for us by Dr Twigs Way

We all know how important it is for rabbits to have a good diet, as close as possible to what they'd eat in the wild. Many of us go out foraging, but what should you gather for them? What should you not? How do you stand regarding the law? Where is it best to get foraged plants from? How can you have a year-round supply of wild forage?

All these and many other questions answered in this great little book, that you can fit into your pocket and take with you on foraging expeditions. It's fully illustrated to help with plant identification, contains common and botanical names of plants so you can look them up for even more information and it even has nominess ratings for each plant!

No self respecting forager can afford to be without it. Your rabbits really will thank you.



Foraging for Rabbits
£5.00
Plus £1.50 P&P

The RWF guide to Pairing up Rabbits

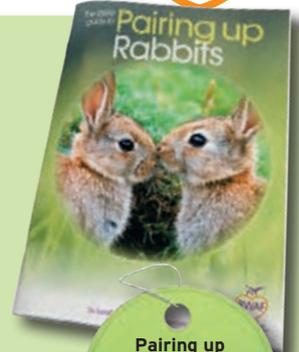
By Fiona Firth

At last it's back, refurbished and updated, the best advice available on pairing up rabbits

This book gives super advice on getting through that often tricky and stressful process of pairing up rabbits.

Being highly social animals they need the company of their own species but there can be problems in the process of getting them together and Fiona tackles these in a structured way, giving suggestions for setting up bonding areas, strategies, what to look out for, when to intervene and so much more.

Super book, anybody faced with pairing up should have a copy. This is an all-new edition and available exclusively from the RWF. We're showing some of the pages in the product gallery so you can see the attractive design and take advantage of what the author has to say.



Pairing up Rabbits
£5.00
Plus £1.50 P&P

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Entertaining your Rabbit

By Kirsten Russell
of The Binky Shop Ltd



Image 3: Rabbits love cardboard box tunnels to play with
(Photos: K Russell)

Keeping your rabbit happy through mental and physical stimulation is important. It prevents boredom, depression and possible destructive and behavioural issues from developing. Rabbits are an extremely intelligent species and require a variety of toys, tunnels and foraging opportunities to keep them occupied. They need to be able to exhibit natural activities, as close as possible to those you would see occurring in the wild. Examples are digging, stretching, grazing and exploring. I have found that the majority of rabbits enjoy natural forage based toys and chew toys that can be tossed and thrown around.

Adding in hay and toy rotation

Adding different hay types and tasty dried forage to your toys can also encourage fussy hay eaters to begin to enjoy their hay and help reduce the risk of future dental problems.

Offering an ever-changing selection of toys to your rabbit will deter them from digging your carpet, chewing your furniture and peeling your wallpaper.

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Image 1: Cardboard tubes are easily turned into toys

Entertaining your rabbit in this way does not have to be expensive or too time consuming. There are many toys that you can make at home, which will enrich your rabbit's life and provide them with hours of fun. This article will suggest a few options that are easy and don't take too much time to put together.

Making Your Own Toys

Cardboard Tubes: Empty cardboard toilet or kitchen tubes are top of the list. They are an excellent example of an item that we all have in our homes. With a little time they can be made into interesting toys for our rabbits. They love

to throw these, chew and generally rip them apart.

You can leave them empty and just let your rabbit have fun throwing and destroying them. However, playtime is extended by filling them with different hay types, dried forage, a small amount of fresh vegetables or herbs, such as mint, parsley, dill, basil or thyme.

Place them on the floor of your rabbit's enclosure or hang them up to encourage your rabbit to stretch and balance, which helps to keep their leg and back muscles strong (*image 1*). If your rabbits attempt to eat any of the

Image 2: Paper bags filled with hay



cardboard, you must remove them straight away.

Paper bags: We are all sometimes given brown paper bags whilst shopping for clothes or vegetables and these can add another level of playtime for you and your rabbit. The bag can be filled with hay, dried leaf forage, fresh herbs and anything else your rabbit enjoys. Watch your rabbit fling the bag around and rip it open or venture inside the bag itself to reach the goodies inside. You can either leave the bag open, or tie the opening up with natural gardener's twine to make the rabbit work harder for the contents inside.

The bag you use should be brown and not coloured. The dye used for coloured bags may not be animal friendly if eaten so please avoid. Make sure you check for and remove any staples which may be on the bag before using it (*image 2*).

Cardboard Boxes: Cardboard boxes can offer months of entertainment for your rabbit. I am yet to meet a rabbit who didn't enjoy ripping these apart.

If the box is large enough, cut small holes in the sides to encourage the rabbit to investigate what is inside. Fill boxes with hay and forage leaves/plants that are a popular choice with rabbits to encourage playful investigation.

To add even more adventure, you could build a cardboard city which would offer a series of bolt holes for your rabbit to hide in. Double walled boxes are super strong and excellent for this purpose, enabling your rabbit to jump onto the box without it collapsing in on itself. Different

size boxes offer different heights and which will challenge your rabbit.

Tunnels: You can make your own tunnels out of cardboard boxes, which is a cheap and easy option. Tunnels don't just have to be round! They can be any shape, square, triangular, etc., your rabbit will get a huge amount of enjoyment out of them. They can make fabulous links to join your cardboard city together. They also offer excellent bolt holes and hiding/foraging opportunities (*image 3*).

Plastic Flowerpots: Plastic flowerpots are another opportunity for your rabbit to forage and discover. Most of us will have a plastic flowerpot or two of varying sizes hanging around. If you have, these can be filled with anything your rabbit enjoys. Try a favourite dried or fresh forage, for example dandelion, plaintain or herbs and hays. These pots can be hung up to make your rabbit work harder for their treat, or placed on the floor for some flinging and digging fun.

Terracotta flower pots: Terracotta pots (if large secured with bricks either side to stop them rolling) can be used as a cool resting place for your rabbit in the summertime.

Alternatively, fill them with soil and either grass seed or turf the tops. These make brilliant hopping stools and grazing opportunities for rabbits. They're ideal if your rabbit has a run set on slabs or who has free range of a hard-landscaped garden area with no access to grass (*image 4*).



Image 4: Large flowerpots can be planted with grass

Pots and suitable garden trays will make good outside digging areas which your rabbit can enjoy without destroying your garden.

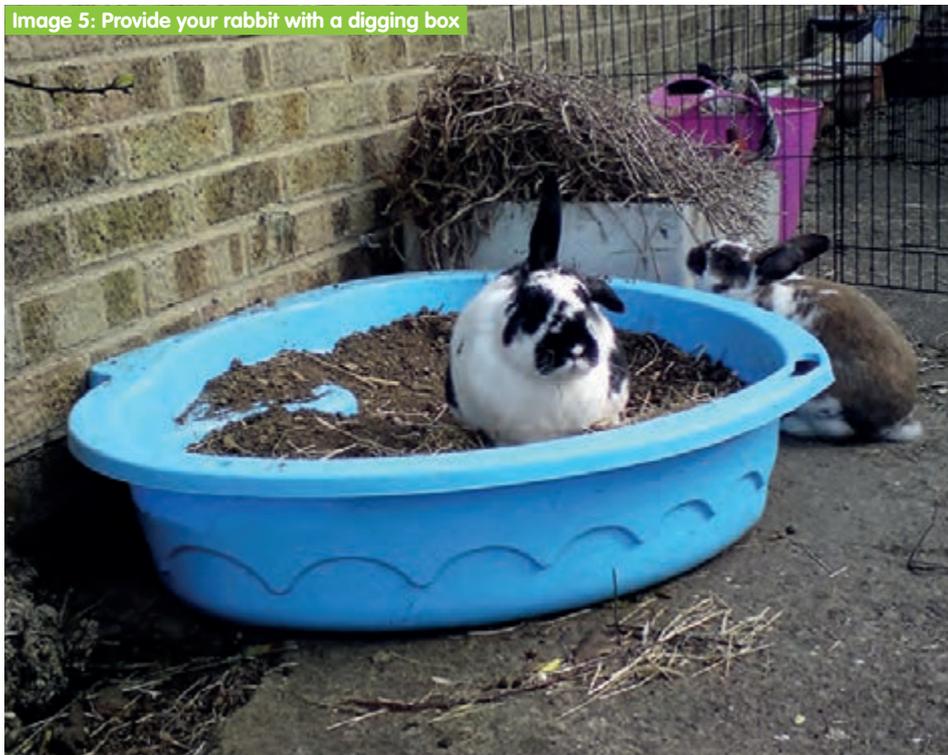
Digging Boxes: Digging boxes are an easy activity to introduce into your rabbit's life. For outdoor rabbits a relatively deep plastic tub with a lid can be used, or a child's sandpit if your rabbit free ranges in the garden or has a very large run. Cheap compost or children's play sand is ideal, just make sure the sand is kept damp to avoid inhalation.

If mess is a consideration, for example, if your rabbit is an indoor bun, an alternative cleaner substrate would be shredded paper or hay. If your rabbit is indoors and you are using either of these materials, a cardboard box can be used to contain this instead of a plastic tub, making this an even cheaper option. Make sure the shredded paper is not glossy and all staples are removed before offering this enrichment to your bun.

As always you should make sure your rabbit is supervised. If they start eating the shredded paper remove the box from them and only offer for short periods of time. If hay is being used, then dried herbs/forage can be hidden in it to encourage your rabbit to dig and forage around.

(If your rabbit is free ranging outside make sure you protect the digging box from cat invasion with a lid when the box is not in use and clean the contents out regularly.

Image 5: Provide your rabbit with a digging box



If you want to use a soil based material for your rabbit to dig in, it is recommended that you buy a cheap compost rather than using the soil from your garden. Unless you can say with absolute certainty that the soil in your garden doesn't contain any cat faeces, slug pellets or fertilizer which may be harmful to your rabbit (image 5).

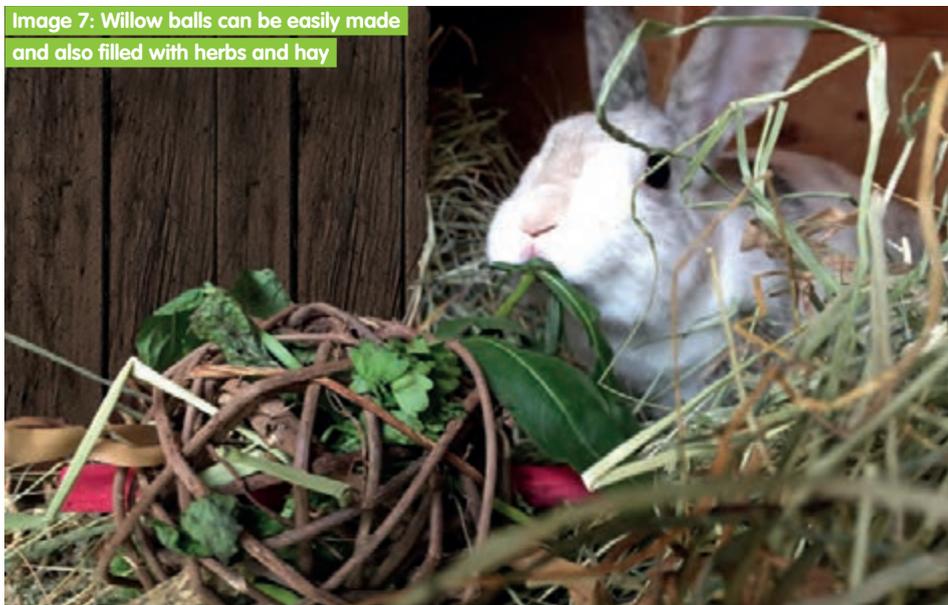
Plastic Carrier Bag Holder: These carrier bag holders make great hay feeders and are very cheap to buy. They can be filled with hay, forage and fresh herbs and either placed on the floor, hung onto a puppy pen or screwed to a shed wall. These do help to keep the hay clean and away from the rabbit's own urine/faeces, but I would still offer

hay in your rabbit's toilet areas because this is where they do eat a lot of hay (image 6).

Image 6: A carrier bag holder makes a great hayrack



Image 7: Willow balls can be easily made and also filled with herbs and hay



Branches: Tree branches can offer hours of chewing fun and are also excellent at wearing down your rabbit's front teeth. There are a few types of tree branches which are safe for rabbits to eat. The most popular is apple which rabbits adore. Just make sure any branches that you offer to your rabbit have not been sprayed with any pesticides.

Willow balls: Willow balls offer lots of fun for your rabbit. They are a little more time consuming to make yourself, but worth having a go. Rabbits love fresh willow so if you have a weeping willow tree in your garden, cut some lengths off and have a go at weaving your own natural, live willow ball. At the end of the day it doesn't bother the rabbit if the ball is not perfectly round. You can either leave your willow ball as it is or fill it with hay and a couple of treats to encourage your rabbit to investigate. Willow balls can be found in the shops but will not excite your rabbits as much as a fresh

willow ball. However, if your rabbit is on any medication please check with your vet first because fresh willow is not compatible with some medicines (image 7).

Purchasing ready-made toys from the shops or online shopping

Alternatively, if you do not have the time to make enough toys to allow you to regularly interchange your toys, then some natural toys are available from the shops. For example, our own Binky Shop toys, which are stuffed full of forage



Image 8: Willow or seagrass baskets provide the opportunity to chew

hays, dried and fresh herbs and flowers, offer healthy fun for your rabbit and can be viewed at www.thebinkyshop.co.uk.

Types of Natural Toys available in the shops

Willow/seagrass baskets: These toys are a natural product and offer your rabbit chewing opportunities. They are not harmful if ingested by your rabbit and so can be safely left in their run with them. These can be filled with hay and both dry and fresh forage/herbs if they are large enough you may find your

rabbit asleep inside them (*image 8*).

Hay roll: A hay roll is a wooden toy, this can be filled with your rabbit's favourite hay and forage. Because it is made of wood it also allows chewing opportunities. Because it rolls around rabbits will have to use their skill to access the contents inside (*image 9*).

Treat balls: Are an excellent toy to make your rabbit work for its food. Put the rabbit's daily ration of pellets inside and watch your rabbit run around rolling the ball and munching the pellets (*image 10*).

Image 9: A hay roll provides fun and may encourage the rabbit to eat hay

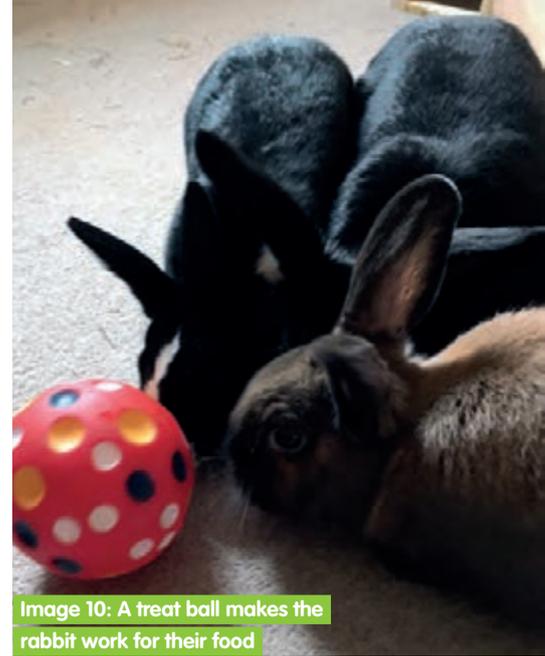


Image 10: A treat ball makes the rabbit work for their food

Safety Points

Here are just a few reminders of some safety points before you start making your own toys:

- If you are using treats for filling your toys, please keep these to an absolute minimum to avoid your rabbit becoming overweight and suffering from any health problems caused by obesity.
- Your rabbit should be supervised during playtimes to ensure they are not ingesting large amounts of paper, cardboard etc. If they are seen to be eating paper etc., the toy should be removed and the time the rabbit has to play with this type of toy should be reduced.
- Cardboard boxes should be of the plain brown variety and not heavily printed with logos or product information. This is usually glued on printed paper. If chewed it can create a nasty mush which can cause blockages in a rabbit's gut if ingested.
- If foraging for trees, leaves and plants outside of your own garden, please be aware of the code of conduct related to picking wild plants and the ownership of the land where you are foraging. Also, check for pesticide and fertiliser use before feeding as some of these could be harmful to your rabbit.

RWAF note:

If your rabbits attempt to eat anything that isn't safe (cardboard, plastic etc), these must be removed immediately. Ingestion of foreign materials can prove dangerous.



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Safe wild plants



Agrimony

Wild rabbits eat a variety of grasses and wild plants. They learn from their mothers which foods are good to eat, initially from the scent in her droppings and the plants she uses in making the nest and then later by observing and copying her eating patterns.

It is natural for rabbits to be cautious about new foods for two reasons; they cannot vomit (a means other animals can use to eject poisonous substances that they've ingested) and there are a number of poisonous plants which they need to avoid.

There are plenty of good, and safe, wild plants that your rabbit will enjoy as part of a varied diet if you stick to the three Golden Rules.

- 1. Pick only in safe areas free from chemical or animal pollution.**
- 2. Feed only those plants which you can positively identify as safe.**
- 3. Feed small amounts of a range of plants rather than a pile of a single one.**

Many wild plants have medicinal properties which dictate their suitability. Rabbits love dandelions but too many will make a rabbit wee and poop too much and can lead to a smelly, sticky bottom. Fortunately most wild plants that are safe to feed are 'astringent' or drying, so when fed alongside a few dandelion leaves help balance things out.

In fields, gardens and allotments across the UK you should be able to

find at least a few from this safe list: Agrimony, Avens, Burdock, Chicweed, Cleavers, Clovers, Dandelion, Goat's Rue, Golden Rod, Heather, Mallow, Melilot, Plantain, Rosebay Willow Herb, Sanfoin, Shepherd's Purse, Vetch and Yarrow. Why not look on line at shop.rabbitwelfare.co.uk for a copy of our 'Foraging for rabbits' book if you are interested in doing this for your rabbits.

Rabbits can also be fed the leaves of apple, blackberry, currants, hazel, mulberry, pear, raspberry, rose, strawberry; culinary herbs and a range of garden flowers including calendula marigold, chamomile, echinacea, Jerusalem artichoke (sunchoke), lady's mantle, nasturtium, roses, sunflowers.



Avens



Bramble



Broad Leaf Plantain



Burdock



Calendula



Cleavers



Cornflower



Dandelion



Echinacea



Goats Rue



Golden Rod



Lemon Balm



Melilot



Mint



Mulberry



Nasturtium



Raspberry



Ribwort Plantain



Shepherds Purse



Wild Strawberry



Yarrow

Health check your rabbit

By Lisa Butwell, Veterinary Surgeon

As prey animal's rabbits try and hide signs of illness
(L Butwell)

Carrying out a simple weekly health check on your rabbit can be an easy way to learn what is normal for your rabbit and also enable you to pick up any potential problems early on.

Survival instincts

Rabbits are prey animals and it is important to remember that in the wild if they show any signs of illness it will limit their chances of survival. This means that rabbits will hide any signs of illness for as long as possible. Any change from their normal behaviour can be a sign of an underlying health problem and veterinary advice should be sought.

From a distance

Observing your rabbit from a distance can give very useful information about their health. It is important that during this time you don't disturb your rabbit and allow them to express their normal behaviour. You will become familiar with your rabbit's normal behaviour very quickly. Signs of concern to look out for include:

- Reduced exercise
- Reduction/loss of appetite
- Reduction/absence of droppings or caecotrophs
- Noisy breathing or finding it hard to breath

- Lameness/reluctance to jump or stretch
- Lethargy/extreme tiredness
- Hunched position
- Teeth grinding.

These may be the only subtle signs that there is an underlying health problem.

Weight check

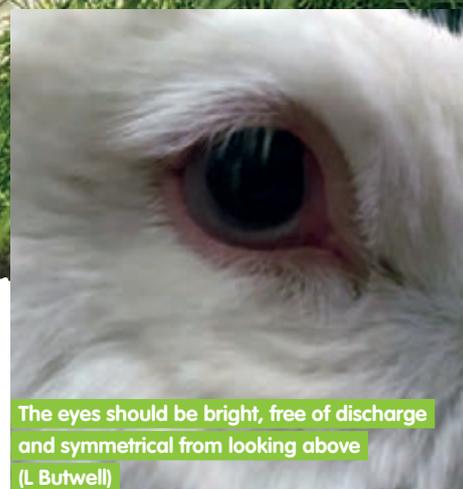
Weighing your rabbit every week allows any early weight loss to be identified and investigated at an early stage. Often a decline in weight is the first sign that something is wrong, so it is worth spending this extra time becoming familiar with your rabbit's normal weight.

Fur and skin check

The fur and skin should be checked by gently parting the fur and brushing it in a backwards direction. That is the opposite way to how it normally lies. The fur and skin should be checked all over for any signs of:

- Scaling or flaky skin
- Flea dirt (black flecks within the fur)
- Wounds
- Swellings in or under the skin

Parasitic infections can be common your vet will need to treat them. Do not use



The eyes should be bright, free of discharge and symmetrical from looking above
(L Butwell)

ectoparasite treatments designed for other species on rabbits, or vice versa, unless your vet specifically tells you that it's safe.

Head, eyes, nose and ears

When checking your rabbit's head, eyes, nose and ears you should spend time looking for any abnormalities, as well as feeling for any signs of lumps or swellings. Signs to look for include:

- When looking at your rabbit from the front, the head should look symmetrical
- Feel underneath the jaw for any swelling or bony ridges
- Feel along the head from the nose to base of the ears for any lumps or swellings
- Check the eyes for any signs of discharge, any bulging of the eyes or inability to open the eyes
- Check the nose for any signs of discharge. Rabbits breathe through

their nose meaning any respiratory problem can cause significant distress

- Check the front legs for any signs of sticky or matted fur. Sometimes a nasal discharge will not be noticed because the rabbit has already cleaned away the discharge
- Check inside the ears for any sign of discharge or scabs
- Feel around the base of the ears for any signs of swelling.

Teeth

Rabbits have continually growing teeth, which makes them very prone to dental problems. The front teeth, called incisors, are the only teeth that can be easily seen. The cheek teeth (molar teeth) are situated further back in the mouth and require examination by a vet. The rabbit has 4 upper incisors, as there are 2 small peg teeth found behind the main upper incisors, and 2 lower incisors. The upper lip is cleft and can be gently pulled back to see the incisors:

- From the side – the lower incisors should rest on the upper peg teeth with a chisel shape
- The upper and lower incisors should not overlap
- From the front – the left and right incisors should be level with a flat biting surface. There should be no angle to the biting surface.

Any signs of abnormal growth or overgrowth should be investigated by your vet.

Clean bottom

It is important to regularly check underneath the rabbit, around the anus and base of the tail, for any signs of urine scalding (red, sore looking skin) or faecal staining. As well as being a sign of an underlying health problem, these signs mean your rabbit will be in danger of fly strike (myiasis). Fly strike occurs when flies are attracted to the rabbit due to the presence of urine or faeces. They lay eggs on the fur. Over 12-24 hours maggots will hatch and cause life threatening skin and tissue damage. During the warmer months it is advisable to check for signs of fly strike twice a day, and if any signs are noticed get your rabbit to a vet immediately.

Feet and nails

Rabbits have very fine, delicate fur lining the underneath surface of their hind feet. They can easily develop hock sores (pododermatitis) in this area. This can develop for a number of reasons including; being housed on wire or abrasive flooring or obesity. If hock sores are noticed then veterinary attention should be sought, as these sores are painful and can be difficult to heal.

Many rabbits will need their nails trimming at regular intervals. It is important to check the length of the nails regularly, as overgrown nails can cause discomfort and can easily become caught, resulting in damage to the nail.

Guide to nail trimming:

- You may need an additional person to hold your rabbit
- You will need a small pair of animal friendly nail clippers
- Each nail contains a blood vessel which can be seen as the pink part of the nail. This area should not be cut
- The safe part of the nail to trim is the white part of the nail below the pink blood vessel. This part of the nail is the equivalent to the ends of our finger nails and can be safely trimmed without causing the rabbit any discomfort
- The front feet have a dew claw, which is a little non-weight bearing nail on the inside of each front leg. These should always be checked along with the rest of the nails
- Some rabbits can have black nails, which can make it difficult to see the blood vessel.

If you have not trimmed your rabbit's nails before it is advisable to get someone at your veterinary practice to show you how to do this.

If you accidentally clip the claw too short, you will cut through the quick which is painful, often causing the rabbit to flinch. There will also be a variable amount of bleeding. Small light specks of blood can be controlled with gentle pressure on the cut surface from a cotton bud for a minute. Larger amounts will need a little longer, or the use of a fine powder such as white pepper, or styptic pencils which can be obtained from vets, or for shaving cuts.

Looking at your rabbit's teeth from the front.

They should look like this

(L Butwell)



Side view of how the teeth should look

(L Butwell)



Overlong claws will need careful clipping

(S Smail)



Ears should look clean and not have any discharge or odour

(L Butwell)



Guinea pigs are social and should live with other guinea pigs
(All photos: E Purnell)

Guinea pig care

By Emma Purnell,
Registered Veterinary Nurse

Guinea pigs make wonderful pets – they are very cheeky, vocal and love to be involved in everything! However, they are still a 5-6 year commitment and have specific requirements to ensure they live long, healthy lives.

Diet and companionship

Guinea pigs have traditionally been kept as companions for rabbits, but this is NOT advised. Guinea pigs need to have vitamin C within their diet but their access to this can be affected when they live with rabbits. Rabbits tend to eat any offered food immediately while guinea pigs are grazers – they will tuck in, but then leave some for later. This isn't an option if a rabbit has eaten it all first! Rabbits are far stronger than guinea pigs and a piggie's fragile back can easily be broken by a single misplaced kick. The bacteria *Bordetella bronchiseptica* can be carried with no clinical signs by rabbits but will cause severe and often fatal infections in guinea pigs. Guinea pigs and rabbits communicate very differently, leading to frustrations in both species. Guinea pigs are highly social – it is strongly recommended they are always kept with a companion in pairs or small groups. Neutering is recommended in both sexes so make sure you have a good

exotics vet who is happy to do this – they can breed from just 3 weeks of age!

Diet is very important for guinea pigs and they will eat almost constantly. They mainly eat good quality hay, guinea pig pellets and fresh leafy greens daily. Giving them good quality pellets specifically for guinea pigs is important as they should provide a good source of vitamin C which is necessary for a healthy guinea pig. Buying large bags of pellets can be more cost effective but the vitamin C will degrade over time so it is often advised to buy smaller bags and keep them in a sealed container once opened. Small amounts of carrots, peppers and other vegetables high in vitamin C can be offered as treats but shouldn't make up a huge part of their diet – similarly fruits should be a treat rather than a daily food.



Guinea pigs make lots of endearing noises

Keeping them healthy

A few health problems are seen commonly in guinea pigs. These include dental problems as their teeth continuously grow and can block the tongue which stops them from eating. Skin problems include mites and sarcoptic mange, and they can have eye and digestive problems. They should never go off their food and any

guinea pig that slows down or stops eating should see a vet immediately. Eye problems can occur and are usually linked to either injuries or infections. Deficiencies in vitamin C can lead to many clinical signs including weakness, mobility issues and collapse.

Housing needs

Housing for guinea pigs is usually too small, with few hutches and cages meeting the RSPCA recommended minimum of 120cm x 60cm x 45cm¹. Guinea pigs love space, they love to be active. Happy guinea pigs will often do little hops and skips in their runs while adventuring – this is known as ‘popcorning’ and can be done at very high speed! It is advised they always have a dark ‘sleeping’ area and a larger light area, both with plenty of ventilation and with plenty of hiding places. They can be easily startled and keeping them away from loud noises, larger animals and televisions is important. Outside housing, hutches and runs should be fully enclosed and secure so they cannot escape and they should be predator proof. They cannot cope with temperature extremes – the ideal is around 17-20°C. If the temperature goes under 15°C they should ideally be brought indoors. If this is not possible they must have plenty of bedding material. Microwavable heat pads can be useful but must be removed if they begin to chew them. They must be able to move away from any heat source as they can overheat. They should be able to get away from direct sunlight. Non-toxic cool packs wrapped in towels can be provided in

summer (under supervision). Bedding can include newspaper lining, paper based litter for toileting areas and plenty of good quality, dust free hay. For indoor enclosures, fleece bedding can be used to cover flooring but will be toileted on and chewed so will need washing daily and replacing regularly. Soft wood products (such as pine sawdust) should not be used as they may be a problem with some respiratory issues. Straw should be used with caution. Although it’s good for providing warmth, it can cause eye injuries. Toileting areas must be cleaned out daily and the whole enclosure cleaned out at least once a week. Toys and other enrichment are just as essential for guinea pigs as they are for other species. Tunnels, boxes and caves are essential to provide hiding spots and the more the merrier! They are likely to chew anything placed within the enclosure so expect to buy new toys on a regular basis. There are reports of guinea pigs becoming stuck between the bars of metal toys such as hay balls if small or young, and wooden hay racks are available if this is of concern.

Happy handling

Making sure your enclosure is easily accessible is important for cleaning but will also help with picking up and handling your pet. They have a reputation for being good pets, if handled from a young age in the correct manner. They can be handled by children and rarely bite. Guinea pigs have a delicate spine and can suffer severe injuries if handled incorrectly, ideally an adult should catch and pick



Guinea pigs like to be involved and explore

them up and the child sit on the floor to handle them, reducing the risk of injury if they are accidentally dropped. One of the most appealing features is their range of vocalisations. They very rapidly pick up noises indicating feeding time and will shout as loudly as they can to ensure they are not forgotten! Learning the different sounds and understanding which relate to conversations and chatting, which mean ‘feed me now!’ (often the loudest!) and which are grumpy little mumbblings make for hours of entertainment.

Reference:

¹ <http://www.rspca-online.co.uk/faqs/guinea-pigs/guinea-pig-accommodation/>

Suitable housing is important



A Hutch is not enough...

By Claire Speight,
Registered Veterinary Nurse

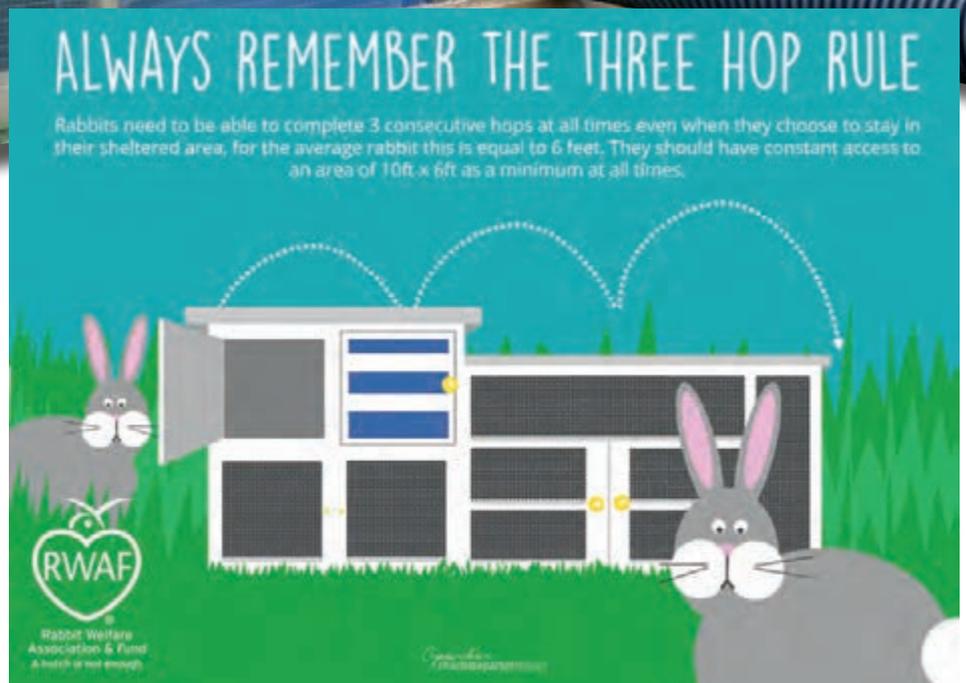
Link enclosures to allow access to grass
(C Speight)

The idea of keeping rabbits in hutches stems from Victorian times when rabbits were kept as a food source. The aim then was simple; to fatten the rabbit up as quickly as possible, so it could be used as food sooner. The Victorians never considered ensuring that the rabbit had room to exercise and indulge in natural behaviours, such as running, digging, hopping, binkying (when rabbits leap and skip in the air with enjoyment) and chewing. In fact, as the rabbit would have been burning off calories doing these things, it would have taken longer for them to reach 'optimum weight', so would not have been encouraged.

The present time

Thankfully nowadays we don't keep pet rabbits for any other reason than they make delightful pets, who are cherished members of the family. We want to ensure that our rabbits are happy and given the correct environment so they thrive and are able to demonstrate behaviours that are normal for them.

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The Animal Welfare Act (2006) recognises all animals of being sentient beings who are capable of pain and suffering, and therefore deserve consideration and respect. In short this means that all owners must give the correct care to their pets. In particular we must provide the five welfare needs, which are:

- The need for a suitable environment
- The need for a suitable diet
- The need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns

- The need to be housed with, or apart from other animals
- The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

It is vitally important that rabbits are given suitable housing, which allows them to express normal behaviour patterns with the company of another rabbit.

Rabbits need space to run, hop, binky and dig. The Rabbit Welfare Association recommends an enclosure with a minimum space of 10ft x 6ft for 2 average sized pet rabbits. Hutches



Poor examples of hutches

should be at least 6ft x 2ft x 2ft, and should offer free access into an exercise area. Rabbits should always be able to take 3 consecutive hops. We call this the 3 Hop Rule. Hutches should be places for resting and somewhere to retreat to, and not a prison that rabbits remain locked up in for most of their lives.

Providing this space can sometimes seem challenging, but with a little

thought and forward planning it shouldn't cause too many problems and isn't difficult to achieve.

Hutches and runs

Many shop bought hutches aren't large enough to accommodate rabbits properly, although this has improved drastically within the last decade. In the past finding a 6ft hutch was extremely

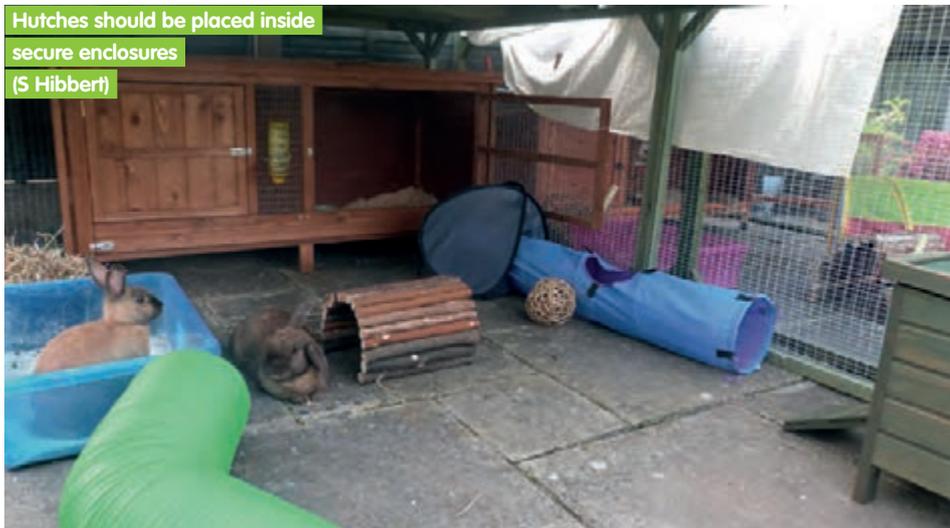
difficult, nowadays most large pet stores and online shops have at least one 6ft hutch in their range, or hutches that with a little adaption can form part of a suitable home for your rabbits. The rabbits must be able to lie completely stretched out, stand on their back legs and take 3 consecutive hops and it isn't difficult see why most hutches are far too small to allow this, even for small breeds.

Runs should be just that and allow the rabbits to run, nibble on grass and play and perform behaviours that are normal for them.

Build your own rabbit house

If you are lucky enough and have a craftsperson within your home, you may be able to draw up some plans and

Hutches should be placed inside secure enclosures (S Hibbert)



build your own rabbit accommodation. Ensure that it is made from wood treated with a pet friendly wood preservative (in case it is chewed). It should be raised off the ground to protect the rabbit from wet and damp conditions. It should have bolted locks to prevent escaping or predators getting in and an enclosed sleeping/hide away compartment. Use close-knit galvanised mesh and not chicken wire. Chicken wire isn't strong enough to withstand a predator attack. The roof will need to be protected with roof felt to ensure it is waterproof. Rabbits cannot cope with damp, wet or draughty conditions, so ensure your rabbit's home protects them from all of these.

Temperature extremes

Their home must protect them and be positioned in an area away from direct sunlight (bearing in mind that the sun moves around during the course of the day), driving rain and floods, and strong

winds and draughts. Make sure that part of the enclosure is an area that they can retreat to from the elements. Consider the set-up of your garden and direction it faces, to ensure you position the rabbits enclosure in the most suitable location.

Giant rabbit housing

No hutch is large enough to house giant rabbits. These rabbits can weigh anything up to and over 10kg when fully grown, and are 4-5ft tall when they stand on their hind legs – a comparable size to a Cocker Spaniel or Beagle dog. Before taking on giant rabbits you need to have thought extremely carefully about how you are going to house them and if you can meet their accommodation needs.

Other housing ideas

There are numerous companies on the market that offer rabbit housing solutions. With a little bit of thought, sheds and aviaries are easily turned into a suitable rabbit house. They provide a light, large and airy house, and one that keeps the owner dry when they are cleaning the rabbits out.

Puppy crates can make a good 'base' for house rabbits (R Todd)



Provide tunnels and lots to nibble on (R Lamb)



Another concept is the Runaround housing. This system links hutches, runs, sheds etc. with secure doors and tubing to allow the rabbits (or guinea pigs) to come and go as they please. The system can be added to and changed around throughout the rabbit's life. Parts can also be buried underground and ensures that the rabbits are free to come and go as they please, in a safe and secure area which allows them to explore and enjoy life. The only limitation with Runaround is your imagination!

Add entertainment

Rabbits love to play and all rabbits have preferences as to what they prefer. Some rabbits prefer tunnels, others like to throw items around or climb onto ledges or boxes for a better view. Provide your rabbit with a variety of toys, tunnels, boxes filled with hay with healthy treats buried in to encourage natural foraging behaviours. Make sure that all toys are safe and cannot be chewed or parts swallowed.

House rabbits

House rabbits may have access to the whole house or several rooms, but they should have a 'base' as a retreat to escape from the hustle and bustle that goes on within a household.

Indoor rabbit cages need to be as large as any outside hutch and offer the rabbit the same room to stretch and hop about in. Puppy crates are a good alternative and come in a variety of sizes to suit most rabbits. One end can be covered up with a blanket to give the rabbit an area to hide away. Ensure that the rabbits have several litter trays placed



Runaround set up
(B Darnell)

around the area they have access to, keep radios and TV volumes down to a minimum, and ensure all electric cables are protected in tough plastic tubing or placed out of the rabbits reach. All houseplants need to be moved out of the rabbit's way and take care when opening and closing doors.

Think like a rabbit!

Have a think about how your rabbits see life! They want to be able to play,

explore, forage, have the company of another rabbit, have adequate room to run around, dig and behave like a rabbit. They should have somewhere warm and dry to live and feel safe.

Providing suitable accommodation doesn't need to be difficult or too expensive – use your imagination and see what you can come up with. Send your photos of your rabbit's accommodation into us at Binky and we will try and feature them in future issues!

WIN PET REMEDY PRODUCTS!

- Pet Remedy works by enhancing production of GABA (Gamma Amino Butyric Acid), a natural chemical produced by the brain, transmitted from nerve to nerve as a calming message when the body is stressed.
- Pet Remedy is a valerian based blend with small inclusions of vetiver, basil, and clary sage that is very gentle in its effect on the metabolism of any mammal, reptile, or bird.
- To be in with a chance of winning one of 10 Pet Remedy plug-in diffusers and a refillable mini calming spray simply have a think for a catchy caption for the photo of Ruby, sent in by Karen Anne Chudley.

To be in with a chance of winning Pet Remedy products, think of a caption for this photo of Ruby
(K A Chudley)



Email your name, address and caption/s (you can enter as many times as like) to: WIN FREE PRODUCTS - rocompetitions@rabbitwelfare.co.uk the first 10 captions selected by a panel of judges will each win a Pet Remedy plug-in diffuser and refillable mini calming spray. Entries close on the 31st August 2020 and prizes will be posted out to the winners shortly after.

How to use Pet Remedy

The plug diffuser should be located in the room in which the stressed pet spends the most time.

Starts to help within minutes and ideal for separation anxiety, fireworks, new home, bonding and any other stressful situation.

You can also use the spray on the pets bedding, or even spray a little on your fingers and gently rub around the muzzle, under the chin, and on top of the chest!

Do not to spray directly onto the pet. This avoids any association of the spray with the stressful situation.





The Binky Shop

HANDMADE TOYS FOR TINY PAWS

We are passionate about the health and welfare of small animals and offer enrichment in the form of toys packed with forage hays, dried/fresh herbs, flowers and fruits and the odd barley ring as a special treat.



BINKY TABLES

Rabbits love to have the opportunity to hop on and hide under things; our binky table offers the perfect solution to encourage these natural behaviours. The table comes complete with a variety of chewable toys to keep your rabbit hoppy for hours on end.

RABBIT DELUXE TABLE

Our *NEW* Rabbit Deluxe Table is made from kiln dried pine with a mixture of pine, hazel and willow and vine toys. Treats can also be added which is your choice



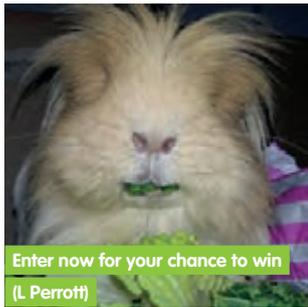
HEALTHY AND FUN TOYS

Our toys make excellent boredom breakers and in most cases are designed to be hung up, which encourages the animals to use their senses and problem solving skills and keep their muscles strong.

www.binkyshop.co.uk

The Binky Shop
Hare Lodge, Laxton, Corby, Northants NN17 3AU
Tel: 07904 915762 Email: info@thebinkyshop.co.uk

Win prizes for your furry friends!



Enter now for your chance to win
(L. Perrott)

Making sure small pets get all the nutrition they need is important to Supreme. Read on and you could win some tasty prizes for your pets!

Nutritious and delicious Science Selective foods are high in fibre with no added sugars.

As well as their daily food portion, it's important that rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas and degus eat a portion of hay that's at least the size of their own body every day, so choosing a sweet-smelling, quality hay like Selective Timothy will help to keep their teeth and tummies happy and healthy.

New Selective Naturals treats are the healthy way to treat pets. Rich in natural ingredients, high in fibre with no added sugars, the four new delicious flavours include – Blackberry & Chamomile, Timothy Hay & Thyme, Pea & Mint and Dandelion & Rosehip.



Your chance to win

Simply email us and tell us the species of your pet, along with the answer to the question - How much hay should a rabbit eat daily?

Send your entries to: experts@supremepetfoods.com – entries close on the 31st July 2020. The competition prizes are for rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas and degus and five lucky winners will each win a pack of Science Selective food, a pack of delicious Selective Timothy Hay and a pack of Selective Naturals treats. Surely this is just too scrumptious to miss!

Win some great prizes from Supreme



Some of our favourite things

There are some fantastic companies that produce amazing products for rabbits and guinea pigs. These products help to promote correct housing, nutrition, entertainment, companionship and general well-being, ensuring our pets live happy and healthy lives.

In each issue of Binky we will be featuring some of these so you can treat your bunnies and piggies.



Manor Pet Housing products are fun, safe and designed to last

Manor Pet Housing

Manor Pet Housing help new and prospective rabbit owners create a more suitable environment for their pets. Rabbits will have the ability to perform natural movements such as hopping, jumping, stretching out, foraging behaviours, including digging and places to hide from things that may scare them.

They pride themselves in using bespoke craftsmanship, to create good quality pet homes that are built to last and meet the expectation of the Rabbit Welfare Association and Funds "A Hutch Is Not Enough" campaign.

The range of rabbit enrichment hides is ever expanding. They always ensure each product allows rabbits to display natural behaviours, is value for money,



Style your rabbits home to provide enrichment

lasts, is of good quality and does not look out of place in your home.

Their wide range of rabbit accommodation designs is available in standard sizes, along with providing larger sizes for giant rabbits and lower setups for older, less agile rabbits.

They also supply rabbit enclosures, including indoor rabbit exercise pens, rabbit toys, rabbit tunnels and warrens and can customised any of them on request.

The setups are designed for a wide range of budgets. Most items are compatible with each other, allowing you to build up your collection over time and create a unique design tailored to fit into your rabbit's environment.

www.manorpethousing.co.uk

Manor Pet Housing create bespoke housing



Woodlands Hay Cookies

Treat your rabbits and guinea pigs with these tasty Woodlands Hay Cookies – which are a firm favourite with the Binky office bunnies!

Hay should make up 85% of your small pets diet and these cookies with their 100% natural, long strand hay have been carefully prepared and compressed into easy to feed portions which means less mess, less space and less waste than chopped or loose hay.

Woodland Hay Cookies are a favourite with our office bunnies

The delicious hay contains over 20 different nutritious grasses and meadow plants and it's rich in fibre which is essential for your furry friend's digestive, dental and overall health and wellbeing.

Additional warm air drying and dust extraction also helps to prevent mould spores and respiratory issues for both you and your furry friend.

Available through Pets at Home, online or in store.

www.petsathome.com

Create a rabbit haven around our garden with Runaround

(T Rose)



The Runaround hay tube



The world is your oyster with Runaround products

Runaround

Runaround is essentially run by husband and wife team; Caroline and Paul although they have now expanded to three. The company originates from 2007 when they were given a rabbit to look after and wanted to make the rabbit's life as enriched as possible.

Runaround is based on the idea that rabbits and guinea pigs should have the choice of where they want to be, and should be able to take themselves there by way of tubes and doors that can connect to practically any hutch, run, shed or enclosure. There are no rules with Runaround – if you have an idea of what you want it can be put into reality.

The aims of the company are to help look after rabbits and guinea pigs in a much kinder manner and help to educate the public.

All products are made from durable, safe plastic and 3mm pregalvanised welded wire, to ensure durability. You can add to the system over the rabbits' or guinea pigs' lifetime.

Products now available include: The Hay Hutch, Dig Tunnels, Top Box, Den Hide, Connection Kit, Hay tubes, doors that attach to any hutch/run and they are always expanding their range.

www.runaround.co.uk

The Binky Shop

The Binky Shop is a friendly small business located on the East Northamptonshire/Lincolnshire Borders within the UK. At the Binky shop they are passionate about small animals, having quite a few bunny buns and other small furrries of their own.

They offer enrichment for small animals in the form of toys packed with forage hays, dried and fresh herbs, dried flowers and fruits and the odd barley ring as a special treat.

All the ingredients have been thoroughly researched and are suitable for the species indicated for each toy. The toys make excellent boredom breakers and in most cases are designed to be hung up which encourages the animals to use their senses and problem solving skills.

Products include, the Binky table: An assortment of different sized tables for small, medium and large rabbits. The tables offer climbing, chewing and hiding activities.

Activity toy: A 15" long vertically hung toy, comprising of log slices, loofah, a jingle ball, pine cone and wood piece. Great for small animals who love to chew.

Boredom Ball: This toy consists of a tennis ball sized waffle ball stuffed with dried ingredients, timothy hay and fresh parsley and mint, topped with a dried apple slice and a chunky wood slice with barley rings added to the bottom of the ball. When hung, this toy encourages problem solving by knocking the ball to release the treats and the wood addition helps to keep the teeth trim.

www.thebinkyshop.co.uk

The Range is a mixture of toys offering chewing and foraging activities



The Binky tables come in a variety of sizes and colours



Your Bunny Buddies and Piggy Pals

We'd love you to contribute to Binky, and how better than with photos of your own rabbits or guinea pigs? We know there are some gorgeous bunnies and piggies out there, and we'd all love to see them. Please share your favourite photos with us, and we'll choose the best shots for our regular buddies and pals feature.

We may also use your photo on one of our covers or to accompany a feature, so keep an eye out in future issues!

Rules for Photo Submissions

It's vital that your camera is set up properly before you take your photos, as it isn't possible to increase the resolution afterwards. We need you to set up your camera to the highest image quality. Any photos you submit should be about 1 - 1.5Mb (or more) if it's a jpeg or jpg file, and around 2.5 - 3Mb (or more) if it's a tiff (please compress tiff files before sending).

Unfortunately some readers send us photos that we are unable to use, because they're not high enough resolution for printing in the magazine, or the rabbit's or owner's name aren't supplied.

Please email your photos to: rwafphotos@gmail.com – ensure you state both your name and your pets name/s too.

If you have difficulties, please contact info@rabbitwelfare.co.uk

or the helpline on **0844 324 6090**, and we'll do what we can to help.

You can also send print photos or photo CDs to:

Binky Photos, RWF, Enigma House, Culmhead Business Park, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 7DY.

We're looking forward to seeing lots more lovely bunnies and guinea pigs!



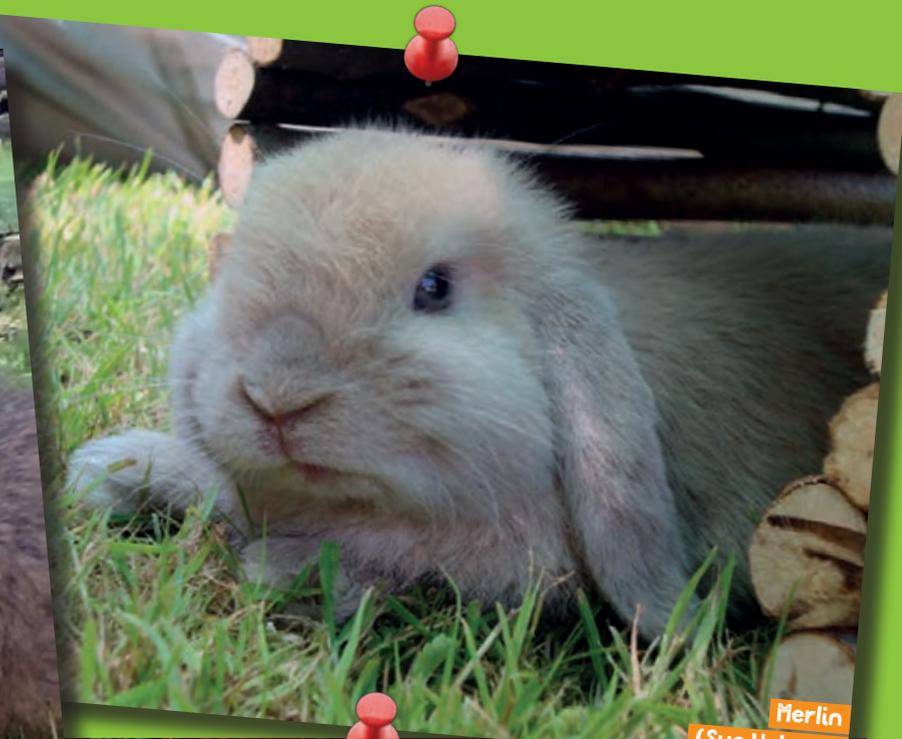
Horatio and Hercules
(Hilary Lockett)



Marley and Dolly
(Sophia Woodings)



Berol and Ruby
(Nikola Capell-Turner)



Merlin
(Sue Holmes)



Jess and Truman
(Jill Roberts)



Teddy and Pingu
(Eloise Owen)



Poppy
(Amy Kellaway)



Jacqueline and Checkers
(Emma Purnell)



Marshmallow
(R Holder)



Ash and Dotty
(Nicola Sands)



Martha
(Bryony Darnell)



Boss and Spike
(Rodney True)



Oreo
(Sharon Jordan)



Gloria and Winston
(Angela Hallam)



Cookie and Cupcake
(Karen Howe)



Autumn
(Lauren Aitwood)



Arthur Rabbit
(Carly Samson)

How to get it touch with Binky

(D Staggs)



Contact us

Contacting Binky magazine:

- To contact Binky by post please write to:
Binky magazine, Enigma House, Culmhead Business Park, Taunton, Somerset TA3 7DY.
Please include an SAE if you would like a reply.
- To contact Binky by e-mail, please send e-mails to:
info@rabbitwelfare.co.uk

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Please send editorial and photographs for possible inclusion in Binky to: **The Editor, Binky magazine, c/o Enigma House, Culmhead Business Park, Taunton, Somerset TA3 7DY**

(Photos can be e-mailed to rwafphotos@gmail.com. Please do not e-mail photos to the Editorial e-mail address.)

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If you have enjoyed reading Binky, you may like to join the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund and receive our quarterly magazine *Rabbiting On* which is packed full of interesting and informative features?

Cut out or photocopy the form below and send it to: **RWAF, Enigma House, Culmhead Business Park, Taunton, Somerset TA3 7DY** or for instant membership simply phone the RWF Helpline: 0844 324 6090. Or you can join or renew online at shop.rabbitwelfare.co.uk in the 'Memberships' category.

As a member of the RWF you will receive 4 copies of *Rabbiting On* each year along with the RWF Members Handbook, *On The Hop* (a complete guide to rabbit care), an RWF car sticker, and a sticker for your rabbit's carrying case. You will also receive details of how to find your nearest rabbit friendly vet, access to the RWF's team of expert advisors, an information pack on rabbit resources local to you including Hopper Groups in your area and loads of other benefits.

Surname:

Initial/First name:

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I would like to apply for membership of the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund and agree to be bound by the Rules and Conditions of the association.

I understand that my membership details will be held on computer.

Signed: Date:

Annual subscription: (please tick one):

Individual £24.00 Family £30.00

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I would like to make a donation to the Rabbit Welfare Fund charity (Please tick one box) £3 £5 £8 £10

Other sum: (Please indicate amount)

I would like to make a donation to become an official **'A Hutch is Not Enough'** supporter.

..... (Please indicate amount)

I enclose a cheque made payable to the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund (or fill in your credit/debit card details below):

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