



Frequently Asked Rabbit Questions

Is a rabbit like a cat or a dog?

Well, like both and like neither. Like cats, rabbits are insatiably curious and impeccably clean. Like dogs, rabbits are often (though not always) very affectionate and endearingly clumsy. A major difference from both, however, is that both cats and dogs are predators, rabbits are not. This basic difference in the wild effects their behavior in one's home. Rabbits cannot be disciplined or otherwise treated the same as cats or dogs.

Aren't rabbits some kind of rodent?

No. Although once included in the same order (Rodentia) as rodents such as rats, hamsters, guinea pigs, etc., rabbits were reclassified in the mid-1900's and put into the order Lagomorpha with hares, and pikas, (a small rabbit-like mammal of the Americas). Some researchers have suggested that rabbits are more closely related to deer or even primates than they are to rodents.

Are rabbits easy to take care of?

Yes and no. Rabbits are usually most active during the morning and evening, so they adapt well to being kept in a cage during the day. However, rabbits are social animals and must be given a great deal of attention to thrive. They need to be groomed occasionally and care must be taken when feeding them, as they have easily upset digestive systems. And while they are naturally clean animals, in one's home they depend upon the owner to remove soiled litter and keep their food and water fresh. Rabbits have fragile skeletons, and require careful handling to avoid broken backs and other injuries.

What are the benefits to housing a rabbit indoors?

Rabbits are safer indoors. They enjoy companionship from humans and sometimes other animals. Rabbits can also hide illnesses. You must act quickly when they are sick. When a rabbit lives indoors, you notice their eating and behavior changes. Therefore, indoor rabbits will probably live longer. They are safe from poor weather conditions, threatening animals, and are generally happier. Indoor rabbits tend to become part of the family. The human/animal bond is optimized when you get to see bunny dances and enjoy their companionship day after day.



Can you really litter box train a rabbit?

Again, yes and no. Rabbits particularly older ones, can be trained to urinate in a litter box and to leave most of their droppings in a litter box. However, rabbits will probably always leave a few territorial droppings here and there, and they tend to lose a few when they are very excited. These droppings are dry and odorless and are easily cleaned up with a handheld vacuum or a broom and dustpan.

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I've heard rabbit's chew on everything, is this true?

Yes! Rabbits' teeth grow continuously all their lives and they have to chew things to keep their teeth worn down. Providing toys and other appropriate things to chew on can help to reduce destructive chewing on books, carpet and other items, but rabbit owners should resign themselves to a certain amount of destruction of property. To those who are captivated by rabbits' enchanting personalities, the loss of a few pairs of shoes or a couple of holes in the carpet seems a small price to pay for the pleasure of their company.

Can rabbits get along with cats and dogs?

Most rabbits can learn to get along with other family pets, although some rabbits are uneasy around ferrets. Cats in particular may form strong bonds with rabbits. However a rabbit should never be left unsupervised with any cat, dog, or other predatory pet, no matter how long and how well they have gotten along with the rabbit. Too many rabbits end up seriously injured or dead when left unsupervised for even a short while with the family cat or dog. Cats and dogs also carry certain organisms which can be dangerous to rabbits and some precautions must be taken with sanitation.

Are rabbits good pets for children?

For very young children, no. Rabbits are frightened by the excited shouting and sudden movements of young children. Rabbits may suffer broken backs if held and handled by a child too young to understand how to do so properly. Rabbits can, however, make excellent pets for children 8 years and older.

Do rabbits bite?

Yes, even good-natured rabbits sometimes, communicated with small nips. Rabbits will also scratch and bite if they are held against their will or frightened. A few rabbits (usually as a result of the owners trying to discipline the rabbit like they would a cat or dog) become aggressive and attack viciously.

How long to rabbits live?

It depends of the size of the rabbit. Very small rabbits tend to have shorter lives of 5-6 years. Average-sized rabbits (about 6-12 pounds) may live 8-12 years. Very large rabbits (over 14 pounds) may have shorter lives, about 6-10 years. Hutch rabbits tend to have half the life span of an indoor rabbit. These life spans presuppose good health and proper care of the rabbit of course.

What is the difference between rabbits and hares?

Rabbits and hares are in the same mammalian family but different genera and do not interbreed. Hares differ from rabbits in that they have larger heads, a larger volume of blood, longer ears, and legs. They both have split lips, but the rabbit has a membrane near the top of the split that covers the gums. Rabbit young are born naked with eyes closed; hare young are born fully furred and with eyes open. In general, hares are more adaptable and live on top of the ground; my rabbits burrow and have more restricted ranges. You can't tell which is which by common names—jackrabbits and snowshoe rabbits are in fact hares, and Belgian Hares are a breed of rabbit.