



## Rabbit Adoption Policy

Thank you for considering adopting a rescue Rabbit. Every year 35,000 rabbits become homeless and as a rescue centre we want to ensure the animals in our care go to the best possible Forever Home.

This document provides important information and guidance about adopting and caring for Rabbits. The document has the following sections:

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WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE HAPPY WITH YOUR RABBITS AND ENJOY GETTING TO KNOW THEM FROM FLOPPING WITH CONTENTMENT OR BINKYING WITH EXCITEMENT.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

**PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU SCROLL DOWN TO READ THROUGH POLICY**

Charity No: 1010000

Jan 2017



## Important Information

As a rescue centre we want all the animals in our care go to the best forever homes, and to reduce the number of animals that need to be rescued. For these reasons:

- Under no circumstances should your adopted rabbits be allowed to breed
- Rabbits can live for over 10 years and need to be cleaned, fed and handled every day, it is therefore a long term commitment
- We only rehome rabbits to adults and we expect parents to take full responsibility for their ongoing care as children often lose interest in them
- We only rehome rabbits in pairs or a single rabbit can be bonded with your existing rabbit
  - Bonding of rabbits is only done at the centre, with no exceptions
  - Prior to returning your bonded rabbits you need to have fully cleaned their accommodation with animal friendly disinfectant (if it is not new)
- Ensure you and members of your family do not have allergies to rabbits or hay
- Two rabbits require the following accommodation space
  - a hutch for their shelter no less than **6ft x 2ft (1.82m x 0.60m)** with an attached run of a minimum of **6ft x 4ft (1.82m x 1.22m)**
  - with a minimum height of **2ft (61cm)**
- The accommodation will need to be fox proof - strong mesh, not chicken wire, and not easily knocked over.
- Rabbits should not be allowed to run around in the garden unattended
- Rabbits require constant access to hay and/or grass for food , this is essential to avoid their teeth overgrowing. They also need to be fed daily with fresh, vegetables and good quality dried food, as well as being provided with fresh water every day. Fruit can be given as a treat from time to time.
- They need to be checked regularly for any signs of symptoms of illness (please refer to our Health Checks section of this document). If in doubt you should contact your vet immediately.



## Before you Adopt

### Home Visit

- Our home visitor will contact you normally within 48 hours once the online form has been completed.
- Please do not think of your home visit as an 'exam' or 'test' but an opportunity for us to help you ensure you have the right environment for rabbits and answer any questions.

### Do you have time for your rabbits?

- They will need cleaning on a daily basis and given fresh food, hay/grass and water.
- They should be handled each day
- Gentle handling is very important so that you and your rabbits can have the best possible relationship without any handling your rabbit may become very shy and nervous of you.

### Allergies?

- Are you aware of any allergies in your family to rabbits or hay?
- If you have any concerns regarding this then please contact the Centre to make arrangements to spend time with the rabbits before deciding to adopt.

### Rabbits Living Together

- Rabbits are social creatures, used to living in groups in the wild and therefore, need to live in pairs as a minimum. Studies show that a single rabbit will quickly become lonely and depressed.
- Best combination is spayed female and neutered male. Two spayed females or two neutered males can happily live together if they are siblings or grow up together. However, this is not a foregone conclusion particularly with males even neutered they can fight so neutering from an early age is very important for them.
- Occasionally we will rehome a single rabbit (as a house rabbit only) that is unable to live with another rabbit although these are rare.



## Rabbits In hot and cold weather

### Warm weather

- Make sure rabbit is out of the sun, be sure that there is plenty of shady space for the rabbit to rest.
- You could consider setting up a circulating fan that will breeze past your rabbit without blowing directly on them all day.
- You can put down a damp towel for them to lay on
- Get cool pads for them to lay on (beware they don't chew them)
- Place a ceramic tile or Marble Square in the cage or in bun's favourite place.
- Mist the rabbit's ears. Rabbits dissipate heat through their ears and misting them will help keep the rabbit cool.
- Brush out excessive fur.
- Fill bottles with water and freeze them, alternately freezer ice blocks (Put them in some sort of cover to avoid ice burns)

### Cold weather

- Raise the hutch off the floor
- Put in blankets or fleeces for them to snuggle into or to line the floor with some cheap carpet samples for them to sit on (make sure the edges aren't fraying)
- Get a cardboard box, close all 4 sides and cut a hole big enough for your rabbits to get through, and fill the box with hay.
- Buy them a 'Snugglesafe Heatpad'. You warm it up in the microwave and it releases heat for up to 8 hours
- Cover their hutch over with old duvets or tarpaulin
- Insulate water bottle and put bowl on heat pads



## Housing for your Rabbits

Rabbits are very active creatures and need a lot of space and exercise.

### Living Outside

Rabbits can live outside all year providing they have the right accommodation

- They must have 24 hours access to at least a **6ft x 6ft (1.82m x 1.82m)** area (ideally larger), with a minimum height of **2ft (61cm)**, as rabbits spend a lot of time standing up on their hind legs. This area should include the hutch (ie: **6ft x 2ft / 1.82m x 0.6m hutch) with a 6ft x 4ft run (1.82m x 1.22m)**.
- We will not rehome a rabbit where there is a separate hutch and run.
- The accommodation will need to be fox proof ensuring that it has strong mesh and not chicken wire and be sturdy enough that it cannot be knocked over.
- There are many types of accommodation on the market and we can advise you of suppliers by contacting the Centre.
  - Sheds, and children's playhouses, adapted to allow light and ventilation are very often a cheaper option and will make it easier to socialise with your rabbits Shed area minimum of **4ft x 4ft / 1.22m x 1.22m)** with attached run of **5ft x 4ft / 1.53m x 1.22m)**.

### House Rabbits

We are happy to rehome rabbits to live inside where they can live quite happily in the right accommodation.

The following size requirements are based on pairs only living together for groups the accommodation size would need to be increased.

- Initially you need a dog crate or pen (minimum **5ft x 2ft / 1.52m x 0.6m)** so that rabbits have a quiet place to go. **THIS SHOULD BE OPEN AT ALL TIMES.**
- As they settle in you should allow them 24 hours access to a room which needs to be a minimum of **36 sq.ft. (6ft x 4ft / 1.82m x 1.22m)** access 24 hours a day.
- Rabbits are easily litter trained (large newspaper lined cat litter tray with hay in it).
- Wires must be covered (with trunking or under carpets) as rabbits may chew them.
- Houseplants must be placed out of reach.



## Giant Rabbits

- A giant rabbit needs 24 hour access to a minimum area of **24 square ft / 2.23 square metres** living quarters with a **36 square ft / 2.97 square metre** run attached to the living quarters. A minimum height of **4ft** is also required.
- They can live as house rabbits but will need an area of their own equivalent to **48 square ft / 4.46 metres** of space or a bedroom area minimum of **36 square ft / 2.97 square metres and free range**.

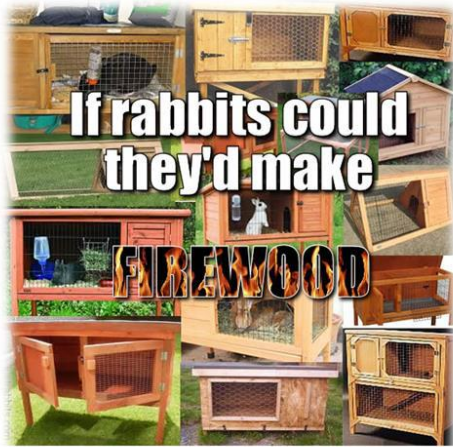
## SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

Awaiting information / photos



# Cat & Rabbit Rescue Centre

Not suitable



A Hutch is NOT Enough  
JUST rabbits

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## Why do we insist on the type of rabbit accommodation that we do?

The RWF (Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund) have released the following press release:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/11/rabbit-hutches-shops-size-cruelty>

Here is another useful video clip that talks about keeping your rabbits happy with the right accommodation both indoor and outdoor:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvlb-prX4I>

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## Bonding

Whether you only have one rabbit that has always lived alone or perhaps your rabbit has lost their friend, then please consider adopting and we can carry out the bonding for you here at the Centre.

- We insist that all bonding is carried out at the Centre and there are no exceptions to this.
- Whilst your rabbits are being bonded you will need to ensure, if the accommodation is not new, that it is completely disinfected with animal friendly disinfectant, this is to neutralize all the scent of your existing rabbit. This is extremely important as any existing scent can upset the bond.
- Once they are bonded and ready to go home we will give you easy instructions to follow in the coming days.

## Diet

- A rabbit's diet should consist of 80% hay and / or grass to ensure that the rabbit's teeth are kept ground down and in tip top condition. Too little hay will lead to dental disease.
- No more than one large handful of pellets (we recommend Supa Rabbit Excel) per rabbit.
  - Feeding too many pellets will lead to insufficient hay being eaten which is bad for the rabbit's health.
- Veg should be given once a day, spring greens should form the basis. In addition to broccoli, kale, carrots, herbs and small quantities of fruit as a treat can also be given.
- Fresh water must be made available at all times.
- Heavy water bowls are preferable to water bottles, in which the ball can get stuck.





## Health Checks, Inoculations and Nail Clipping

- Your rabbit will need an annual VHD & Myxomatosis inoculation (average cost £30 – £40). Plus VHD K C+V.
- Most vets will give your rabbit a check-up at the same time as an inoculation, checking their teeth, claws and ears to ensure that they are healthy.
- It is advisable that you check your rabbits' claws and keep these trimmed on a regular basis.

## Health Checks

- Rabbits are prey animals and are programmed to try to hide the fact they might be ill.
- If you see any changes in your rabbits such as lethargy, no appetite or a lack of appetite, loss of balance, then you must consult your vet as soon as possible.
- If a rabbit stops eating (and goes into 'stasis'), you must consult with a vet as they can die in a matter of a few hours as their digestive systems are programmed to be constantly eating.
- Finally, it is essential that during the Spring and the Summer, that you apply a flystrike treatment (available from some pet shops as well as the vet) and check your rabbits' bottoms on a regular basis. Flystrike is often fatal and on untreated rabbits, rarely caught in time.

## Toys

- Rabbits absolutely love toys and must have access to these 24 hours a day in order to stop them becoming bored.
- Ideas for toys are:
  - Willow balls and hard plastic balls for nudging
  - Cardboard boxes with holes cut into them
  - Toilet roll tubes
  - Wicker baskets, seagrass mats, yoghurt pots or plastic cups to pick up and throw
  - A phone book to tear up
  - Tunnels to play in