



Rabbits and Easter Don't Mix

Exploding the Myths

Myth: **A pet rabbit would make an appropriate Easter present.**

Truth: Animal shelters report a sharp rise in abandoned pet rabbits, just after Easter.

If you want to buy a pet rabbit, do some research first. For instance, did you know that rabbits can be litter trained, and can live inside like cats or dogs? Rabbits should be desexed by a competent rabbit vet, otherwise that cuddly baby bunny you take home will soon turn into a rebellious teenager. Spaying will also eliminate the serious risk of uterine cancer.

Before you buy a bunny, make sure a pet rabbit will fit into your lifestyle or that you are flexible enough to accommodate a rabbit's needs, and that you have the time, money, patience and commitment to care for your rabbit, forever. Remember, a house rabbit can live for 8 years or more.

Myth: **Rabbits make good pets for toddlers and small children.**

Truth: Rabbits and small children are not a good match. The natural exuberance, rambunctiousness and decibel-level of even gentlest toddler are too stressful for pet rabbits. Rabbits are a better choice for older children, or for adults. But like any other pet, children will not learn responsibility by caring for a rabbit; Rather, a pet rabbit should only be given to a responsible child, where the parent accepts ultimate responsibility for the rabbit's health and wellbeing.

Myth: **Pet rabbits are cuddly and passive, like a toy.**

Truth: Rabbits hate to be picked up - they are ground dwelling animals, and they associate being picked up with an attack by a predator. Rabbits have strong personalities, and while some rabbits like to be patted and cuddled, others refuse. Always alert to danger, a pet rabbit behaves very differently to a dog or a cat - rabbits are prey animals, not predators.

Myth: **Rabbits are low maintenance pets.**

Truth: Rabbits can require as much or more work as a dog or cat. Diet is particularly critical to a rabbit's health and wellbeing. GI stasis, a serious rabbit illness, can be prevented with proper feeding. Did you know that carrots are too high in sugar for rabbits to eat often, and are a treat only? For good health, rabbits need good quality grass hay and fresh green vegetables.

If you think you would enjoy sharing your life with a rabbit, please visit your local animal shelter or rabbit rescue group. As rabbits have increased in popularity, they are suffering the same fate as our other companion animals - abandonment. You can also check your local veterinary clinic and "Pets" classifieds of your newspaper. Please don't support backyard breeders by buying from them. It is a sad fact that no matter where you live, you are within 10 miles of a rabbit who needs a home. The effort to find that special bunny means you are saving a life.

So if your child is pleading for a bunny for Easter, do a rabbit a favour and buy her a toy rabbit that she can snuggle to her heart's content. Let's make Easter a joyful time for our long-eared friends.

Need more information?

- Visit the Australian Companion Rabbit Society website at <http://acrs.cjb.net>,
- phone 0416-362-226 to arrange to have one of our volunteers contact you,
- or write to ACRS, P.O. Box 29, Brighton-Le-Sands, NSW 2206.