

Welcome

The newsletter for the month of August is "All About Rabbits". We see quite a few rabbits at our practice. Most of our clients do an excellent job of properly taking care of their bunnies, but if you are thinking of getting a rabbit as a new pet and have no prior experience in caring for a rabbit, this newsletter will be very helpful for you! Rabbits are sensitive creatures and need consistency and attention. They have specific emotional needs as well as physical needs. A well cared for rabbit can live to be 10 - 12 years old, although the average lifespan is generally 7 - 10 years. There are many different breeds of domestic rabbits, but the most popular breeds are those less than 5 pounds. Did you know that rabbits have been domesticated since Grecian times?

Housing your pet rabbit

Until fairly recently rabbits were kept mainly outdoors in hutches, and some still are, but there are a great number being kept indoors, either in a cage, or even in their own room! If keeping your rabbit in a cage, it is best to use a metal cage, (stainless steel, not galvanized steel), and it should be at least big enough to allow your rabbit to stand up on its hind legs without its ears touching and to be able to stretch out in both directions. The floor should be at least a 14 - gauge wire and have an area of the floor solid. The substrate should be something simple such as plain newspaper, Yesterdays News (a litter that is made from paper compressed into pellets) or wheat grass products. Never use wood shavings with aromatic oils such as cedar or pine, as these oils can cause liver issues. Rabbits can be litter boxed trained. They are creatures of habit and like to use a corner area to urinate. You can place a high backed litter box in the corner of the cage where your rabbit prefers to urinate. Never use kitty litter as it can cause impactions in the digestive tract. Use Yesterday News or wheat grass substrate. You should allow your rabbit time to roam around the house, supervised of course. You will however need

to bunny proof your house. They love to dig and chew on electrical chords, rugs and even dry wall. So make sure to keep chords up where your bunny can't get to them, and watch around other items as well. You will need to provide your bunny with toys to keep him happy and active. Large cardboard tubes and boxes are favorites.



Providing your rabbit with a well balanced diet

Rabbits need a nutritionally balanced diet that is high in fiber, and low in protein and fat. Hay is the most important of your rabbit's diet. Timothy hay is the preferred choice, but any grass hay will work. Avoid alfalfa hay and legume hays, they have higher calcium content and can cause bladder stones. Grass hay should be free fed and can also be put in the litter box. Fresh greens every day are also required. Look for dark leafy greens such as cilantro, spinach, turnip greens, romaine lettuce, kale, parsley and dandelion tops. Feed approx. 1 packed cup per day per 4 pounds of body weight. Pellets can be a vital part of the diet as well. Offer ¼ cup per 5 pounds of body weight daily, they are not to be free fed. If your bunny eats lots of greens and hay, they don't even need pellets. Make sure they are plain pellets, not the kind with fruity tidbits or nuts and seeds in them. Treats should be limited to no more than 1 - 2 tablespoons per day, and should be fresh vegetables or fruits, such as carrots, strawberries or yellow peppers. And always have plenty of fresh water available. If you live in an area where you have well water, give your rabbit bottled water, as the minerals in well water can cause

urinary issues.



Spaying and neutering your pet rabbit

Spaying or neutering is recommended between 6 – 9 months of age. Rabbits can have a litter every 30 days and can become pregnant within minutes after giving birth. Not only does spaying/neutering eliminate accidental breeding if you have more than one rabbit, but it also helps to prevent some medical issues, such as uterine cancer in females. It also can help to eliminate behavioral and aggression problems.

Common rabbit veterinary problems

Rabbits need veterinarians knowledgeable in rabbit medicine. Make sure the veterinarian you choose is experienced in treating rabbits. The most common rabbit veterinary problems are ear mites, ear infections, urinary tract infections, abscesses and tooth problems, uterine cancer in unsprayed females, upper respiratory infections, gastrointestinal issues, and balance or gait issues. An experienced veterinarian should be contacted if you see any of these problems. If your rabbit develops anorexia or watery diarrhea, these should be considered emergencies. We also recommend yearly checkups for your rabbit to make sure they are kept in optimal health.

Hope you have found this information helpful. If you are thinking of getting a pet rabbit, hopefully now you can see what kind of care they require. They are definitely not a pet to be left in a cage only; they require lots of love, special diet and interaction to be happy and healthy. If you are interested in adopting a rabbit, please check such websites as House Rabbit Society of Chicago, or petfinder.com, this will show you a list of shelters in your area that have rabbits in need of a good home. One

thing to keep in mind if you have small children: rabbits can often be frightened by small children's handling, and many times rabbits are often dropped by children resulting in broken legs and backs. An adult should always be the primary caretaker, and should always supervise a small child's interaction with a rabbit. And finally, don't forget to bring your new rabbit to us for a check up for a clean bill of health. Any questions can be addressed to a member of our staff at (630) 365-9599, or you can contact us via email at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.



We would like to start a new feature in our newsletter, Ask Dr. C. Please email us your question to the above email address and Dr. Cechner will address your question!

Special dates to remember in August

- 2nd week of August – National Assistance Dog Week
- 3rd Saturday – National Homeless Animals Day
- 26th – National Dog Day
- 29th – Henry Bergh's birthday (ASPCA founder)
- 30th – National Holistic Pet Day

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more information, visit our website at www.elburnanimalhospital.com, or give us a call at (630) 365-9599. If you would like to opt out of receiving our newsletter, please send an email to us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.

August Special - \$20.00 off a new bunny exam - good through September 30, 2011.

COMING ATTRACTIONS!!

Upcoming Event: Annual Open House
It's time once again for our annual open house. This year it will be held on Saturday September 24. We will have games and prizes for all our friends—both the human and the animal variety! Join us for a day to celebrate our clients, our patients, and have some fun. We are also going to have a booth at the Chicago Pet Show at Kane County Fairgrounds on Oct. 29th and 30th, come visit us there!

Do you have an idea for a newsletter? A question you'd like answered about caring for your pet? Email us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net and let us know! We are always interested in what you have to say, and what you want to know.