

## CARE OF PET RABBITS

Rabbits belong to the ORDER of animals called **LAGOMORPHS**. The Lagomorphs include Hares, Pikas, Cottontail Rabbits and the Domestic Rabbit. Both Lagomorphs and rodents have open rooted teeth; hence their teeth will grow continuously (under normal conditions, there is no need for dental care). They differ from rodents in that rabbits also possess two small incisors, peg teeth, directly behind the upper larger incisors. Chewing on hay helps keep the teeth in shape. During the shedding season, you might need to brush your rabbit to remove the excess hair being shed daily.

**CAGING:** Rabbits have delicate feet, so designing or buying a cage with proper flooring is of extreme importance. Wire cages should be made of smooth galvanized wire with a mesh size of 1" by ½". The dimensions depend on the number of rabbits per cage and the type of rabbit you have. Dwarf breeds should be housed in an area at least 24" by 24" by 18" high. Larger breeds may need as large an area as 36" by 36" by 24" high. There should be an area in the cage where your rabbit can get off the wire floor. This may be a flat board or plexiglass, or a small box for hiding. Remember, rabbits like to chew, so anything you put in the cage must be non-toxic and without sharp edges. Litter training is possible. Use of a small Pyrex dish or plastic litter pans with hay or bedding inside the cage in a corner. Bedding material, if used, should be aspen bedding - not cedar. Out door hutches can be used if an area is supplied so that your pet is protected from the wind, rain, and direct sun. Rabbits should be brought in when temperatures drop below 40 degrees and above 90 degrees.

**DIET:** Rabbits are herbivores with a very complex system for digestion. Diets high in fiber are essential for proper digestion and motility in juvenile and adult rabbits. Pelleted diets with a fiber content greater than 14% are necessary for proper nutrition. **Rabbit pellets should be offered at 1/4 cup per 2.5 pounds of body weight 3-5 days a week.** Grass hays such as **OXBOW Timothy, Orchard or Brome** should be available always. Fresh vegetables can be offered daily in small amounts to rabbits over 6 months of age. Suggested vegetable treats are carrot and carrot tops, kale, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, red leaf lettuce, bok choy and romaine lettuce. Sweet potato and squash can also be offered 1-2 times per week. **PAPAYA tablets** are useful in preventing hairball blockages of the intestinal system.

**Common Medical Problems:** Overgrown teeth, Obesity, Nasal/Ocular discharge, Hairballs, Ear mites, Cloudy/Bloody urine and Diarrhea. **ALL REQUIRE VETERINARY ATTENTION!**

**All male rabbits should be neutered and female rabbits spayed after 6 months of age.** Spaying is highly recommended because of the potential of certain types of cancers of the reproductive system in intact female rabbits.