



10 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Bringing Home a Rabbit

1. **Do you want a long-term relationship with a pet?** Rabbits can live 10 years or even longer and develop a deep bond with their primary caretaker. If you are planning to move, get married, or have a child, consider whether there will be a place for your rabbit in your new home or family.
2. **Are you willing to make some adjustments to your decor to accommodate the needs of your new family member?** If you have a companion rabbit, your house will probably not look like Martha Stewart lives there. Your rabbit may need a litter-box, as well as his favorite toys, in your family room. You need to be able to adjust to the idea of hay, rabbit hair, and the occasional stray “poop” anywhere at any time. It’s a small price to pay for your rabbit’s love and companionship!
3. **Does your entire family agree that they want a rabbit as part of their family?** Companion rabbits require a commitment from the entire family. It is natural for rabbits to want to chew and dig. Make sure your roommate or significant other accepts that occasionally this will mean damage to carpet, woodwork, or furniture. Stress to your children that anything left on the floor in the rabbit’s area is “fair game” for him to chew on — and remind them that if they do leave something on the floor and it gets chewed, it is their fault, not the rabbit’s.

4. **Are you — or another adult in your family — willing to accept responsibility as the rabbit's primary caretaker?** The primary caretaker needs to be deeply aware of your rabbit's normal behavior and habits in order to recognize subtle changes that may be early signs of illness. More than most other pets, rabbits need both food and water available at all times — there is almost no margin for error. Your child can help care for the rabbit, but you need to make sure it gets done **every** day.
5. **Can you find time every day to spend with your companion?** Rabbits who are caged most of the time need 2–3 hours of exercise time each day. Rabbits are sociable creatures who enjoy daily interaction with their families. Small children should always have adult supervision when interacting with the family rabbit.
6. **Is your home relatively quiet — or is there at least a quiet area for your rabbit to call his?** Lots of noise and activity can be stressful to a rabbit, and stress can lead to illness.
7. **Are you and your family members willing to learn to interact with your rabbit on his terms?** Most rabbits do not like to be picked up, held, or chased after. They like humans who are willing to spend quiet time on the floor with them and who allow the rabbit to approach the human for attention.
8. **If there are other animals in your home, can you ensure that your rabbit will be protected from them?** Some cats and dogs can learn to coexist peacefully — even bond, with the family rabbit. Introduce your dog or cat to your rabbit carefully and be ready to step in to protect your rabbit at the first sign of aggression. Supervise interactions carefully for an extended period. Remember that both cats and dogs can be predatory.
9. **Does anyone in your home have allergies?** Many people who are allergic to dogs and/or cats are not allergic to rabbits. Even if no one has animal allergies, someone may be allergic to hay — the most important element of your rabbit's diet. Before bringing a rabbit into your home, see if the family member with allergies can spend some time with rabbits — perhaps helping at a shelter or foster home — to help determine whether allergies will be a problem.
10. **Do you have the time, commitment, and financial resources to care for a sick rabbit?** Many rabbits live a long and healthy life with little or no need for veterinary care. Then there are the ones who find their way to my home. As with any living creature, there are no guarantees. An ill rabbit needs to be seen **quickly** by a qualified rabbit veterinarian — seemingly minor problems can become life-threatening emergencies within 24 hours. It is not unusual for a rabbit's vet visit to run \$100 or more. Finally, it is important for rabbit caretakers to carefully follow the treatment plan outlined by their veterinarian.