

## The Truth About Easter Bunnies

There is nothing cuter than a baby rabbit and Easter is a season everyone associates with rabbits. Everything, from Easter clothing to big-screen televisions, is advertised with adorable pictures of children holding and cuddling live baby rabbits. In truth, most real rabbits do not like to be picked up and carried — especially by children.

Walk past any pet store window in the spring and you will see a display of irresistibly cute baby rabbits. A child who never showed an interest in a pet rabbit sees this and suddenly starts begging for a rabbit, often promising he will care for it. Parents who have said “no” to a cat or dog often agree to a rabbit because they assume a rabbit needs less care. They couldn’t be more wrong! Even families that research before deciding on a pet rabbit may be overwhelmed by the amount of care he actually requires. Or they may decide a rabbit really **isn't** for them when he decides to tear up the carpet, gnaw on the china cabinet, shred the textbook left on the floor, or chew through the TV, phone, or computer cord.

Between the end of the school year and Christmas, thousands of rabbits are surrendered at shelters across the country. According to a survey of shelters conducted by the Rabbit Education Society, the top reasons given for surrendering a rabbit that the owner “doesn’t have time for it” or “the kids don’t want it (any more).” Children quickly lose interest in an animal who needs to be dealt with on his terms rather than theirs.

Countless domestic rabbits are “turned loose” each year by owners who believe they can survive on their own like wild rabbits. Domestic rabbits are completely dependent on humans for survival. They do not know how to hunt for food or protect themselves from predators. Their only chance of survival is to be captured by a caring human who will keep them, find them a home, or take them to the animal shelter.

Finally, many “Easter Bunnies” are relegated to outdoor hutches when they begin exhibiting the “socially unacceptable” behaviors of a sexually mature rabbit. Outdoor rabbits are often neglected. Children may forget to give them food or water — and busy parents may forget to remind them. Even if they have food and water, rabbits who were once loved often become lonely depressed when they are abandoned in an outdoor hutch. Some may literally die of a broken heart.

If your child asks for a pet rabbit for Easter, consider offering this alternative: Buy him a stuffed rabbit for the holiday and make an agreement to consider a pet rabbit in a couple of months if he is still interested. Most children lose interest in the idea of a live rabbit within a couple of months — whether you have bought one or not. If your child continues to be interested, spend the waiting period helping him learn more about rabbits as companions. At the end of the waiting period, contact a local rabbit rescue group or shelter and take your child there to select an animal. This is an excellent way to teach your child about responsible pet ownership and to let him experience the joy of giving an abandoned animal a second chance for love.

Read [King Murray’s Royal Tail: The True Story of an Easter Bunny](#)