

## Common Misconceptions about Rabbits

People who have had no experience with companion rabbits often have misconceptions about what kind of pets rabbits make:

- **Rabbits need fresh air and are better off living outdoors.** In truth, rabbits are happiest and healthiest living indoors as part of a loving family. The outside world contains many dangers for rabbits — predators, parasites, and poisons, to name a few. In



addition to food, water, and shelter, rabbits need daily interaction with human companions. This interaction is much more likely to happen if your rabbit shares your primary living space.

- **Rabbits are low cost/low maintenance pets.** Rabbits require money, time, and energy. If you purchase a rabbit, cage, food, and bedding from a pet store, you may get out fairly cheaply. However, the cage may be too small for the rabbit, the bedding may be dangerous, and the pellets represent only a small part of a healthy rabbit diet. Rabbits need fresh produce daily — regardless of the season and the price of produce! Rabbits also need a daily commitment of time and attention from their humans. They are very sociable animals and bond deeply with their primary caretaker. Daily interaction is also the only way humans can become attuned to what is normal for their rabbit, allowing them to be aware of subtle changes in behavior that are the early signs of illness.



- **Rabbits are good “starter pets” for children.** For most people, the term “starter pet” implies they are both low cost and low maintenance. I’m not sure there is an animal that fits this description! In general, rabbits are not good pets for small children. They want to interact with humans on their own terms — quietly, on the floor. Loud voices and quick, sudden movements — in other words, normal childhood behaviors — are frightening to a rabbit. Depending on his personality, a rabbit who is approached this way may respond by covering in a corner or lunging at the child.



- **Rabbits are quiet animals.** It is true that rabbits don’t bark like a dog or meow like a cat. However that doesn’t mean they are quiet. Remember Thumper from Bambi? Rabbits do, indeed, thump, when they are upset, and the first time you hear this you will be amazed at how loud it can be. Some rabbits enjoy playing with noisy toys — the closer your rabbit’s area is to your bedroom, the more likely he will enjoy playing with noisy toys, especially at 3:30 a.m.!



- **Rabbits are stupid.** Rabbits are actually very bright creatures. However, their intelligence is subtle. Most rabbits do not learn to do tricks like dogs or obey their caretaker’s commands — not because they are too stupid but because they choose not to!
- **Rabbits are all alike.** Like snowflakes, no two rabbits are alike. Each has a unique personality that may, or may not, conform to his human’s expectations. Rabbits can be intelligent, sensitive, playful, affectionate, “bratty”, stubborn, and incredibly courageous.