

Enrichment



It's very important to provide our rabbits with things to do via enrichment. None of us would have survived lockdown in an empty house with nothing but a bed, toilet and kitchen. Providing items to hop in, over, on, under

and through all help to keep our buns physically active, and help provide a stimulating environment. Adding toys which can be thrown around and items like chewable willow toys all help to keep minds and bodies active.

Hiding treats in stacking cups, or adding dried forage to hay baskets are all great ideas.

Other Important Things



Fox Proofing - Runs must have a solid base, such as paving slabs or concrete to prevent foxes digging in and rabbits digging out. 16g weldmesh is the best choice, never use chicken mesh.

Weatherproofing- Covering runs and adding rain covers keeps their exercise space usable all year round regardless of the weather. Wet runs cause sores on feet and bums which will need veterinary treatment.



Free Roaming - Rabbits MUST be fully supervised if allowed to roam freely in the garden. Foxes aren't just active at night and even cats can pose a threat to rabbits. We've sadly heard many horror stories of rabbits losing their lives when left unattended in the garden.



Our Guide to



Outdoor Rabbits

How much space do rabbits really need?



The rabbit hutch is a Victorian invention, designed to store a live rabbit until fat enough for the pot. We wouldn't keep our pet rabbits in a kitchen cupboard, so we shouldn't keep them shut in hutches either. Rabbits need to have plenty of space to hop, jump, run and binky. Keeping them confined to small spaces can lead to muscular and skeletal problems and to boredom and depression.



Rabbits are most active at dawn and dusk and must have constant access to a large exercise area, which needs to be high enough for a rabbit to stand on their hind legs and binky.

The minimum size for optimal welfare is 60ft square and is most commonly visualised as 6ft x 10ft with a height of 3ft.

Creating a Suitable Home for your Rabbits

It can be hard to find suitable accommodation in pet shops and online stores, but with a bit of imagination it's easy to create the perfect spacious home for your rabbits. By far the easiest option is a 6ft x 10ft dog kennel which will provide the perfect home. You could opt for a 6ft x 4ft shed with a 6ft x 6ft walk in run or maybe a 4ft x 4ft children's play house with a 4ft x 15ft run. If you are good at DIY you could even build your own enclosure like the one pictured here.

Whichever option you choose, it's important to provide at least 60ft square and remember that adding levels does not contribute to the overall square footage. Rabbits need a continuous floor space of 60ft square to lead happy, healthy and fulfilled lives as our pets.



What to Include

Litter Trays and Hay Feeders

Did you know that rabbits like to have a snack while they are on the loo? It's true! Placing litter trays under hay feeders helps to encourage rabbits to use litter trays, making it easier for us to keep enclosures clean. As fresh clean hay should always be available using hay feeders is vital. Our favourite hay rack hacks are wire hanging baskets, letter box cages and plastic bag holders. These can be attached to sides of runs and snuggle areas. You should provide at least two different stations within the enclosure.



Snuggle Space

It is important to provide a snuggle space within the enclosure for cold nights and to provide a feeling of safety. Removing the mesh door from hutches is a great way to provide a suitable space.



Bedding

It will be a surprise to many to learn that shavings aren't the most suitable bedding to use for rabbits. It is very dusty and the oils released from the wood can cause respiratory problems. We use shredded cardboard bedding at the rescue and top this with uneaten hay from hay racks. You can use paper based pellets or just line areas with newspaper topped with hay or straw.



Bottles vs Bowls - research has shown that rabbits will drink more from bowls compared to bottles. We therefore recommend a heavy ceramic bowl to provide access to fresh water.