

INDOOR RABBIT CARE

Rabbits make entertaining and rewarding pets and many people choose to house their rabbits indoors now. If you choose to keep your rabbits indoors then there are a few advantages and disadvantages which you should be aware of as an owner.

It is important to mention that indoor rabbits are still susceptible to myxomatosis, VHD 1 and 2 (rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease) and they should always be vaccinated against these diseases yearly.

Advantages

Reduced risk of escape – if your home is secure then the risk will be very minimal but always ensure places such as balconies are well secured and rabbits are not left unattended.

No risk of wild predator attack – by being indoors your rabbit will not be at risk of being attacked by predators such as foxes.

Ability to monitor for illness – as they are in your company, you can monitor your pets more closely for signs of illness. As rabbits show very subtle signs of being unwell, this can be a big advantage. If you see any signs of lethargy, lack of poo or not eating then they should be seen by your vet promptly.

Disadvantages

Ingestion of foreign objects/material and injury – due to not being in a natural environment and being persistent chewers, rabbits are at a high risk of chewing and eating things that they shouldn't. These can include carpet, wallpaper, wires and even items such as some paints containing metals that can be poisonous. To reduce this risk, always ensure you tie wires out of reach or cordon them off, give your rabbits plenty of enrichment and companionship of their own kind to prevent boredom and destructive behaviour.

Higher risk of developing sore hocks (pododermatitis) – due to being on unnatural flooring, rabbits living indoors are at a higher risk of developing sores on their hocks. To help with this ensure they have suitable padded bedding in their living quarters and minimal areas of hard flooring. It is also helpful to ensure that they remain at an optimum bodyweight with plenty of opportunities for exercise as obesity also increases the risks of these problems.



Risk of overheating – rabbits are naturally adapted to deal with cold temperatures and can suffer when our heating is higher than 24 degrees. Always try to keep your household in the ideal range of about 15-23 degrees. Most rabbits can happily live in colder temperatures providing they have an insulated burrow/hutch type area to keep warm in.

Interaction with other household pets – despite this seeming cute, rabbits interacting with other species can put them at risk of injury – especially animal such as cats and dogs. Always keep them apart to avoid this.

For more information on keeping rabbits indoors visit the Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund (RWF) - <https://rabbitwelfare.co.uk/rabbit-housing/indoor-rabbit-housing/>

