



Volunteer training

RA Recommendations for Rehoming Rabbits

Rabbit Advocate volunteers have many opportunities to educate the public and provide valuable information about the best ways to care for companion rabbits. Please familiarize yourself with our recommendations so that you are prepared to answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

Give each new adopter a complete set of educational handouts and ask that they read them prior to the adoption. Why?

- The adopter can make an informed decision about adoption when she has accurate information about life with a house rabbit.
- The adopter can make advance preparations for the rabbit's housing, food, etc., thus smoothing the transition to his new home.
- If the adopter is well informed, the adoption is more likely to be successful, long term.

Only altered adult rabbits are offered for adoption. Why?

- Only adult rabbits can be accurately sexed.
- Rabbits are altered as young adults.
- Avoids impulse adoptions of "cute" baby rabbits.
- Rabbit's unique adult personality will be known.

Discuss spay/neutering of rabbits. All rabbits available for adoption are altered. If adopter wants a partner for her unaltered rabbit, that rabbit will need to be altered prior to adoption/bonding. Why?

- Spay/neutering is key to over population prevention.
- Spay/neutering improves litter box habits.
- Bonding is more successful between altered rabbits.
- Improved behaviors such as less mounting, territorial marking, and aggression.

Ask the adopters if they are prepared to make a commitment to the rabbit for his entire life. Why?

- Many people do not realize that a rabbit's lifespan is 8-12 years.
- A person's life circumstances may change. They may move, have children, retire etc., but the rabbit will still be there.

Most Rabbit Advocates will only adopt to inside homes. Why?

- Indoor rabbits are part of the family like a dog or cat.
- The family can appreciate the rabbit's unique personality.
- The family will be able to meet the social requirements of the rabbit.
- The family will be more aware of the rabbit's medical problems.
- Indoor rabbits are protected from outdoor hazards such as predators, hot, cold, or wet weather, escaping, insects, diseases.

Adults should be the rabbit's primary caretakers. Why?

- Young children may not be able to properly handle a rabbit, and may injure, or be injured by a struggling rabbit.
- Children can become frightened of a rabbit if they get scratched or bitten.
- Children go through many changes as they grow and mature and many will quickly lose interest in their rabbit. It is unrealistic to expect a child to be committed to caring for a rabbit for the animal's entire 8-12 year life span.

- Adults can be more observant of behavior or health changes.
- Adults will bear the financial responsibility for the rabbit.

We recommend only adopting to private individuals and not to classrooms, retirement homes and other institutions. Why?

- An individual is able to take responsibility for the rabbit for his lifetime; institutional employees change and cannot ensure continuity of care for 8-12 years.
- Most classrooms are high stress, noisy areas; kids may accidentally, or deliberately, injure or kill the rabbit.
- Rabbits require regular feeding, cleaning and socialization. They are not educational equipment! Teachers have many responsibilities that often prevent them from adequately caring for a living, breathing classroom “pet”. Many classroom rabbits spend lonely, terror-filled, neglected lives in filthy, tiny cages. Most classrooms are cold, isolated, dark places on the weekends and during the evenings.
- Rabbits are often sent home on vacations and weekends to different unscreened homes.

Encourage the use of a standup, wire exercise pen for housing, rather than a cage. Why?

- A pen provides easy access to the rabbit.
- A pen is a self-contained living space.
- Pens reduce the tendency toward cage aggression in some rabbits.
- A pen offers more living space and can be sized to the space available in the home.
- A pen is easier to clean.
- Family members can go in the pen with the rabbit.

Rabbits should meet potential partners prior to adoption. Why?

- Rabbits choose their partners based on their own likes/dislikes not their owner’s preferences.
- Neutered male/spayed female bondings usually provide a more successful match.
- Always use a neutral space when bonding.
- If you have never done a bonding before, ask an experienced Rabbit Advocate volunteer for assistance.

Caution adopters about the dangers of unattended outside exercise. Why?

- Rabbits are escape artists! Many rabbits become homeless after escaping from the yard.
- Rabbits are prey animals, vulnerable to predators including hawks, owls, stray cats, dogs, raccoons and coyotes and even people.
- Weather extremes can kill! Rabbits are especially vulnerable to heat stroke. If they get cold and wet, they can develop pneumonia.
- Insects and parasites can be annoying and deadly.
- Pesticides and poisonous plants may be ingested.

Demonstrate and give information on basic care of rabbits such as taking temperature, nail trimming, finding a good rabbit vet and GI stasis symptoms and treatments. Why?

- Rabbit ownership will be more successful if it begins with a pattern of good care.
- Basic knowledge may save rabbit’s life sometime in the future.

Deliver the rabbit to his/her new home. If there are unresolved issues the adoption can be postponed until issues are resolved. Why?

- A personal visit assures the quality of the home and that rabbit’s housing and food are acceptable.
- Potential problems within the home may be observed and hopefully, solved.
- The rabbit is able to meet the entire family and other pets. Compatibility questions can be addressed.

Charge an adoption fee of approximately \$25. Why?

- A fee places a value on the rabbit versus the concept of “*free*”.
- The fee helps reimburse some of your expenses.
- If the fee is donated to the Rabbit Advocates, it will help other rabbits.

We are proud of our high standards for adoption. However, the “foster parent” has the final word about where their rabbit is rehomed. Why?

- The rabbit already has a good home with foster family and should find a home equal to, or better than, what he already has.
- The foster family knows the behavior and medical history of the rabbit and is, therefore, in a position to decide what situation/home would be best for the rabbit.
- The foster family has invested a great deal of effort and emotional energy in the rabbit, and has an ongoing interest in the rabbit’s welfare.

Most of us will not hesitate to take our rabbits back if things don’t work out in the new home. Why?

- Our interest in the rabbit does not end with adoption. We continue to feel personally responsible for the rabbit during his lifetime.
- Things happen. Even the best homes sometimes fail the rabbits and us.
- Let adopters know we will take the rabbit back, no questions asked. We don’t want them to feel so guilty that they take rabbit to a shelter, give him away to an uncaring home, or worse, release the rabbit outdoors.

We want the best for each rabbit, no matter what is going on with the adopter. Why?

- We are committed to the welfare of the rabbit, above all other considerations.
- We place our rabbits in the most loving homes that we can find.

