



## RABBIT BASICS: KNOW HOW TO PROVIDE PROPER CARE FOR YOUR PET RABBIT

by Renea Mohammed



Rabbits are intelligent, social animals that can live more than twelve years with good care. Statistics show that rabbits have become the third most popular pet in North America (following cats and dogs). Unfortunately, many people obtain rabbits without a good grasp of what is involved when they take on the responsibility of looking after one. The result is a lot of needless suffering and sometimes tragically shortened life spans. This article was inspired by a visit to the Vancouver Rabbit Rescue and Advocacy (VRAA)'S Annual Rabbit Festival and is based on literature and information made available at the festival. It's important information for anyone who cares enough to give their rabbits the happy, healthy lives that they deserve.

To start with, if your rabbit is female, her life-span will go up dramatically if you have her spayed. Female rabbits are very prone to uterine cancer and spaying reduces your rabbit's risk of developing it signifi-

cantly. Both male and female rabbits also make better pets if they are spayed or neutered. Having rabbits fixed reduces hormonal behaviours like chewing, digging, aggression and the practice of marking territory with urine or faeces. It also controls the rabbit population. **Sadly, there are more rabbits than good homes - so don't add to the problem by letting your rabbits breed!**

Rabbits should be spayed or neutered between the ages of three and a half to six months. Not all veterinarians are experienced with rabbits and a vet should be chosen carefully so that there are no complications stemming from the operation. The VRAA has a list of local rabbit experienced vets.

Proper housing is also important. It is a myth that rabbits need to be kept outside year round in a cage. Spayed or neutered rabbits are very clean animals that can be litter trained and are ideally kept indoors with some supervised outdoor play time. Rabbits are prone to chewing so their running space should be rabbit-proofed and free of exposed electrical cords. Cords can be arranged so they are out of the rabbit's reach. Rabbits can also be discouraged from chewing cords by covering the cords with thick split flex or other tubing available at hardware stores (the split flex tubing also works well if you have a bird that is prone to chewing).

Most rabbits can hop around the house with supervision. When alone it may be best, for

the sake of safety, to confine them to a room, large indoor cage (the bigger the better) with room for all of the items mentioned below plus space for the rabbit to move around, or better yet, an exercise pen. Cages should have a side opening door so the rabbit can be allowed to come and go. If the enclosure has a wire door that forms a ramp when open it should be covered with something solid and permanently attached so your rabbit doesn't get his or her legs caught. Large dog cages are great rabbit pens.

The rabbit room or enclosure should contain a litter box, food, tunnels and toys so that the rabbit you are caring for doesn't get bored. Toys don't have to be costly. A cardboard box with holes cut in it will keep your bunny busy. Tunnels for running through can be provided in the form of 6-8 inch PCV pipe or concrete forms. All natural wicker baskets and grass mats are good for chewing and digging. Some rabbits even like balls to push around - just make sure they aren't small enough to swallow. Rabbits don't need bedding materials like wood shavings. The cage or enclosure can be lined with towels or newspaper and a soft fleece can be provided to sleep on.

When it comes to litter, some materials are better than others. Never use clumping cat litter because it is deadly if inhaled or swallowed. Dust from clay cat litters can also cause respiratory problems in rabbits. Cedar and pine shavings are problematic because they contain toxic

# Kitty Corner

## For Glen

On August 9, 2004 we had to say goodbye to Glen – a wonderful, friendly, and gentle cat who came to us in March 2003 as the result of a cat trapping in New Westminster.



Although his initial tests for leukemia and feline AIDS were negative, recurring eye infections and upper respiratory problems prompted further tests. In June 2003 he was finally diagnosed with leukemia.

The news was even more heartbreaking because a wonderful woman who would have given him a happy, loving home had just adopted him. Unfortunately she had a younger cat and her veterinarian advised against keeping Glen.

Glen came back to the shelter, living in the big cage until we found him a foster home. However, the couple looking after him separated and moved away, and once again dear Glen was returned to us.

This time, however, RCHS volunteer Sandi Walker was able to organize a cozy home for Glen in the garage at her workplace. He had a "cat run"; he could go outside into a caged area for fresh air, and he could watch all the cats and raccoons come and go in the big yard from the windows. His new home had ramps, all kinds of beds, a radio, a fan, tons of treats, and – catnip! He had lots of company, went for walks in his

harness, and sat outside enjoying the cool evening air.

Just when things seemed to be settling down, the property owner died. Her children very kindly said that Glen could remain until the property was sold. We knew we had to find him a permanent situation.

Then along came Janet Carrol who opened her heart and her home to Glen. It was love at first sight. Glen liked to kiss and he would have licked the lips off Janet if she let him. He would wake Janet up to take him for his morning walk, or simply to snuggle.

Glen had the time of his life exploring every nook and cranny of Janet's big house. Things seemed good for a while. But the leukemia hadn't been dormant and in one short month Glen became very weak and tired. There was only one choice left for us: to give him comfort and free him of his pain.

Sadly, Doreen, Sandi and Janet – three of his many friends – had to say their final farewells. Glen left us for the Rainbow Bridge.



We will never forget his brave, enduring spirit and his gentle nature. We miss you, Glen.

*By Doreen Stocks & Chuck Walker*

### RABBIT BASICS *continued:*

oils. Spruce and aspen shavings get soggy, are messy and don't control odour. Corn cob isn't very absorbent or odour controlling and some rabbits will eat it.

On the other hand, Carefresh is a very good product as are pelleted wood products like Firemaster wood stove pellets. Woody Pet and Mountain Cat brands are also absorbent and odour controlling. Pelleted paper like Yesterday's News is also good. Shredded newspaper and or hay or straw can also be used. Hay can be sprinkled on top of any litter to encourage use.

When your rabbit leaves the house to go outside he or she needs to be protected from predators like racoons, dogs, cats, coyotes, hawks and eagles. The rabbit should be in a secure pen with top and bottom protected. Don't leave the rabbit alone because it can die of fright if a predator comes near.



As for food, rabbits have delicate digestive systems so educating yourself about appropriate food is important. VRRRA recommends good quality grass hay such as timothy, brome or orchard grass. Your rabbit can have as much as he or she likes. You should also provide pelleted rabbit food (not more than 14% protein) made with alfalfa or timothy formulas. Provide limited amounts for adults. Also provide about two cups per day of fresh vegetables, but beware that some vegetables are not good for rabbits. Safe vegetables include brussels sprouts,

## You don't have to



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recent launch of the **Humane Charity Seal of Approval**, you'll easily spot which charities are committed to providing direct care and services or using state-of-the-art, *nonanimal* research methods. So have a heart. Give your next generous donation to a charity that honours life in all shapes and sizes. For more information or to add your organization to the list,



### Cats Age Chart

Use the chart below to determine your cats age in relation to a humans.

Cats Age:	Humans Age:	Cats Age:	Humans Age:
6 months	10 years	8 years	48 years
8 months	13 years	10 years	56 years
10 months	14 years	12 years	64 years
1 year	15 years	14 years	72 years
18 months	20 years	16 years	80 years
2 years	24 years	18 years	88 years
4 years	32 years	20 years	96 years
6 years	40 years	21 years	100 years



# Dog Watch

outer cabbage leaves, green peppers, radish tops, swiss chard and bok choy. Contact VRRRA for more detailed information about vegetables. Carrots and apples can be given sparingly as treats. Water should be changed daily.



Handling is another important consideration. Always use two hands to lift your rabbit. One should be placed under the chest and the other should support the rump.

Bring the rabbit close to you and hold securely. Young children should never be allowed to pick up a rabbit, but your bunny could be placed in their lap while they are sitting down. Rabbits are very easily injured and children under 8 years old should be supervised at all times with the rabbit.

For additional information about very important and easy to miss signs of illness, the appropriateness of rabbits as pets for children, plus grooming, nail trimming, and all other aspects of rabbit care we strongly recommend that you contact the VRRRA (phone 604-612-7699). Other excellent sources of information include The House Rabbit Society ([www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org)) or, for information on diet and nutrition, [www.carrotcafe.com](http://www.carrotcafe.com).

Taking on any pet is a huge responsibility that shouldn't be made lightly. If you decide to adopt a rabbit, his or her life and well being will be in your hands. Please make sure you know what you are doing.

## be cruel to be kind

contact the Council on Humane Giving at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, 202-686-2210, ext. 329, [humaneseal@pop.net](mailto:humaneseal@pop.net)

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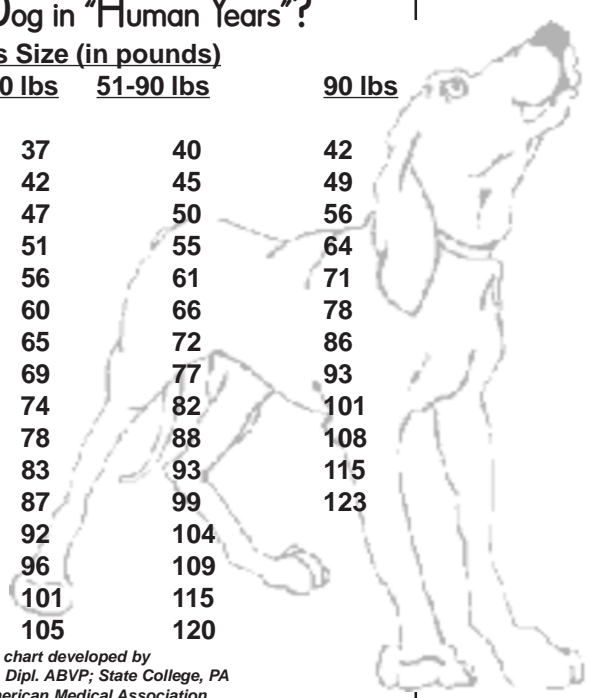


5100 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20016  
[WWW.HUMANESEAL.ORG](http://WWW.HUMANESEAL.ORG)

### How Old Is My Dog in "Human Years"?

Dog's Age	Dog's Size (in pounds)			
	0 - 20 lbs	21-50 lbs	51-90 lbs	90 lbs
5	36	37	40	42
6	40	42	45	49
7	44	47	50	56
8	48	51	55	64
9	52	56	61	71
10	56	60	66	78
11	60	65	72	86
12	64	69	77	93
13	68	74	82	101
14	72	78	88	108
15	76	83	93	115
16	80	87	99	123
17	84	92	104	
18	88	96	109	
19	92	101	115	
20	96	105	120	

Based on a chart developed by  
Fred L. Metzger, DVM, Dipl. ABVP; State College, PA  
courtesy of the American Medical Association




## Thank You



We the animals who have been rescued from the streets, now and in the past, would like to thank all of the **Anonymous Donors** who so generously gave us money, food and supplies throughout the year. Some of us

have found new and loving homes. As for the rest of us we now have full bellies, warm dry beds, safety and love.

Thank you, you have helped to make a world of difference in our lives. 

*We cannot forcibly change the wrongfulness of this world, but we would like to think that on occasion we are able to manifest its good will and lighten the heavy burden carried by animals living on the streets.*



## Please...Don't Litter!



They look cute now, but there are not enough good homes for all the kittens and puppies born each year.

Please contact us about our low cost spay/neuter program for low income families.

PLEASE...help us to help them.



# THE TAIL END



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Mailing Address:  
 Box 0102,  
 641 Columbia Street  
 New Westminister  
 B.C. V3M 1A8  
 604 524-6447  
 www.rchs.bc.ca

## Royal City Humane Society

**Yes!** I would like to make a donation to the RCHS to help animals in need.

One-Time Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$25       \$35       \$50

\$75       \$100       \$200

Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please accept my annual membership fee of \$10.00

Cheque Enclosed

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*Please complete the information below*

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The Royal City Humane Society is a registered, no-kill animal charity based in New Westminister, BC. As the only charity animal shelter in New Westminister, RCHS campaigns against pet overpopulation and cares for stray, injured and abandoned animals by testing them for disease, sterilizing and tattooing and finding them new homes. RCHS is 100% volunteer run. Funding is obtained through various fund raising activities, memberships and donations, and all funds are spent on the welfare of the animals.



Registered Charity # 89683-2532-RR0001

Theresa Laviolette-Editor



## Pet Photos with Santa



Bosley's  
 December 4th  
 Noon to 4pm  
 329 North Road  
 Coquitlam

Royal City  
 Animal Hospital  
 December 5th  
 11am to 3pm  
 434 East Columbia  
 New Westminister

Van Pet  
 December 11th  
 Noon to 4pm  
 Royal Square Mall  
 8th & McBride  
 New Westminister

Alpine Animal  
 Hospital  
 December 12th  
 11am to 3pm  
 6th St. & 4th Ave.  
 New Westminister

Minimum Donation \$5<sup>00</sup> per Photo

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Sandi Walker-Layout and Design