



Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider McNamee
Columnist

Rabbits as house pets

Rabbits are intelligent social animals. And they make wonderful companions – for the right people.

According to current data from the American Pet Products Manufacturers' Association (APPMMA), rabbit ownership has increased dramatically over the past decade. There are now approximately 5.3 million companion rabbits owned by 2.2 million households in America.

Many pet parents frequently characterize themselves as a dog person or a cat person. But who, exactly, is a rabbit person?

According to Jennifer Saver, D.V.M., who specializes in rabbits, a rabbit person is someone who enjoys observing as much as handling, and who does not get overly upset at a rabbit's natural tendencies, such as chewing and digging.

Some folks also wonder if rabbits are more like a cat or a dog. Neither, of course. They're like rabbits! A rabbit may use a litterbox like a cat and get excited to see you like a dog, but really, rabbits aren't quite like either of these animals.

Rabbits have strikingly distinctive personalities and love to spend time with their humans. They require human interaction. Without it they can get bored, even to the point of becoming lonely and depressed.

An important aspect of keeping a rabbit as a pet is remembering that they are prey animals. Sudden

movements and loud noises trigger their natural response to seek protection.

Prospective pet parents of rabbits should learn about their specialized diets, health issues and dawn and dusk crepuscular schedule (rabbits usually sleep during the day and night, becoming playful at dawn). They will want to create a rabbit-friendly habitat just as they would make a nice home for another type of pet.

Although the rabbit's earliest relationship with humans was as a fur and food commodity, folks were already keeping them as pets by the 18th century. British poet William Cowper kept hares in his home to help combat his severe depression, and he wrote about his love and appreciation for these creatures as companion animals.

Rabbits need to be handled daily and they need to be let out for several hours each day for exercise. These furry creatures enjoy exploring their surroundings – just make sure that he has a safe area to play and explore.

Many people bunny-proof their homes and let their rabbit roam freely. If kept in a cage, they need a lot of room to easily move around. A rabbit's cage should be a minimum of five times the size of your rabbit. He should be able to completely stretch out in his cage and stand up on his hind legs without bumping his head on the top of the cage.

Every rabbit pet parent should know that the safest place for him to live is indoors. Domestic rabbits are different from their wild relatives; they do not tolerate extreme temperatures well, especially in the hot summer months.

Rabbits have complex digestive systems, so it's very important that they get a proper diet. Many health problems in rabbits are caused by foods that are incompatible with their digestive physiology.

One main food for a rabbit is hay. Your bunny should have access to a

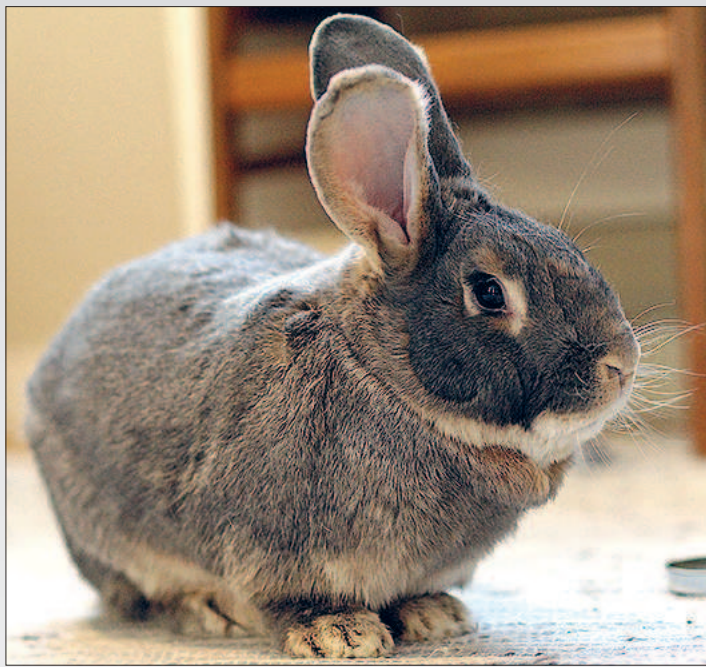


PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Captain Faramir – a Flemish giant owned by Dechen Dawkins – lives in Sisters.

constant supply of hay, which aids their digestive systems and provides fiber to help prevent health problems such as hair balls, diarrhea, and obesity.

Rabbits are also fragile animals that must be handled carefully. Never let your rabbit's body hang free, and never pick him up by his ears. When thinking about adding a rabbit to your family, please remember that rabbits are not toys and they are typically not appropriate pets for very young children.

If you're looking for a pet who is as interactive as a puppy but not as demanding, think about having a rabbit. And if you live in a small house or apartment and are looking for a cuddly pet who doesn't require a lot of space like a dog, a rabbit may be right for you.

Bunnies are also easily trained to use a litterbox. Using the principals of positive reinforcement training, rabbit pet parents can encourage their pets to learn certain behaviors by repeatedly rewarding them with special treats.

Even though rabbits are complex creatures and require a great deal of special care and supervision, these adorable sweet animals can be charming, affectionate, and very interactive!

Found dog escapes shelter

BEND (AP) — A border collie that was scheduled to have a heartfelt reunion with its owner after being missing for nine months will have to delay the appointment.

The Bulletin reports that the dog broke out of the animal shelter that had housed her after she was found last week in Deschutes County just five hours before she was set to meet with her owner, 62-year-old Susan Bonney.

Bonney lost the dog, Gracie, nine months ago while visiting her sister in March. The Temecula, California resident had given up hope on finding her dog until she received a call on December 22 that Gracie had been found. Bonney drove 900 miles to meet Gracie, only instead to be met with the news of her escape.

Bonney says Gracie is an "escape artist" and that she's confident she'll find her dog again.

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Sisters Library Annual Art Exhibit

January 11 – February 24

Reception to meet the artists

Friday, January 27, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

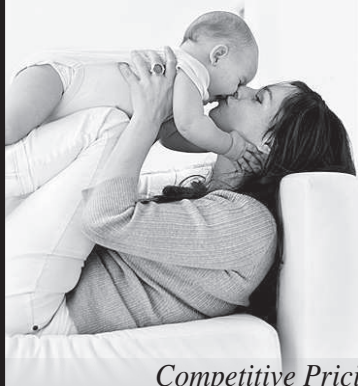
People's Choice Awards and Silent Auction

The community may vote at the library for the awards between Wednesday, January 11 & Friday, January 27.

All are invited!

For information, contact Zeta Seiple at 541-549-6157 or Paul Alan Bennett at 541-588-0156.

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