

## **Congratulations on your new rabbit!!**

Here are some helpful hints on caring for your bunny.

### **VACCINATIONS**

- There are currently two commercial rabbit vaccines used in the UK. These protect against Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD)
- Myxomatosis – This is common in wild rabbits and can be spread to pet rabbits through some insects, for example, fleas. Myxomatosis causes swelling of the eyelids and other parts of the body. The majority of infected rabbits die.
- Vaccination can be given from six weeks of age and a booster should be given every 12 months. If your pet rabbit is exposed to wild rabbits it is recommended that a booster is given every 6 months.
- Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) is caused by a virus that can be spread by contact, for example on clothes and feet. Some rabbits may survive if they are mildly infected, but usually it is a fatal disease. VHD causes problems with the rabbits lungs.
- Vaccination can be given to rabbits over 12 weeks of age, followed by yearly boosters.

### **CLEAN OUT THE CAGE**

- A rabbits living quarters must be clean to avoid the rabbit becoming dirty. If faeces become stuck around the rabbits bottom it will encourage flies to lay their eggs there. This causes maggots which then eat their way through the tissue which can be fatal. It occurs very quickly, in a couple of hours in some cases!

### **DIET**

- Rabbits are herbivores and need a high fibre diet. It is best to feed them a complete diet of pellets as rabbits will feed selectively if given the choice. They require fresh food daily and fresh water. It is important that they have hay available at all times.

### **TEETH**

- A rabbits teeth constantly grow, the chewing action enables them to wear down. If a rabbit is unable to eat there could be need for a dental to trim his teeth as not eating can cause great problems for a rabbit. It is important to seek veterinary attention as soon as you notice your rabbit is having difficulty eating.

### **HUSBANDRY**

- As a rabbit is a prey animal it is necessary to give him or her lots of hiding places within your rabbits enclosure. They need to be given a variety of things to keep them entertained for example tunnels to run through, branches to chew, or hide their food so they have to actively find it.
- Rabbits can be trained to use a litter tray. This will help you to keep your rabbit clean and help to prevent flystrike.
- The average rabbit can live for 8 to 12 years, this is breed dependant; the way they are looked after also goes a long way to determining life span.