



Rabbits! What, Where, and How

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<https://youtube.com/watch?v=BovzFTpGB4M>

<https://nerdfighteria.info/v/BovzFTpGB4M>

Rabbits! We all know and love the little - or sometimes ridiculously huge - fluffheads. The thing is, there's so much that people don't know about them. So let's fix that!

(Intro)

So what exactly is a rabbit? Taxonomy to the rescue! Alright, we know these first three, let's start with the order Lagomorpha. The first misconception is that rabbits are rodents because of their large front teeth and that's close but instead of having two ever-growing incisors on top and bottom like rodents, they actually have four on the top. So the order Rodentia is not right, Lagomorpha is in.

Let's move onto the family Leporidae. Leporidae distinguishes pikas from our hares and our rabbits because leporids have long ears and short fluffy tails. Pikas are the opposite. Now, there's also a difference between hares and rabbits. Who knew, right? Hares are in the genus 'lepus' and they usually have precocial young as opposed to altricial young. Hares are also usually larger and they've never been domesticated.

And now we've arrived at the domestication of rabbits. About 1400 years ago, wild European rabbits from the Iberian peninsula were bred by monks in southern France for an acceptable food source during Lent. So, what changed to allow the rabbits to become domesticated? Well, here's a video of an evolutionary biologist discussing the domestication of rabbits. And our very own Cheeks is in it too!

This is Cheeks and he is a Netherland Dwarf rabbit. His specific breed originated partially from the European stock but what breeders did was they actually selected the very smallest of the domesticated European rabbits and they bred them with the very, very small wild rabbits from the Netherlands. And that's how he got the dwarf genetics that we see today. Because of this breeding back to wild rabbits, dwarf breeds exhibited less domestic behaviors for a while. But that stereotype is no longer accurate. Many dwarves are just as calm as Cheeks.

So now we know the what and where of rabbits, let's talk about how we take care of them in captivity. Rabbits are really social and they live about 7-10 years and the ideal situation is to have a pair - a male and female, both spays and neuters, is perfect. Rabbits are made to move - they hop, they pop, they have a perfect set of diggers to burrow - give them the biggest space that you can. Now, if you live in the right temperature zone, house them outdoors - huge spaces! But remember that they also are diggers. They will burrow under if you allow them to. So take precautions to make sure that they don't dig out and under and expose themselves to predators.

If you need to house them indoors, again, give them the largest space that you can and get them out hopping about as much as possible. Many rabbits enjoy being free range of the house but I suggest you supervise them because they will take advantage of exposed wires and other things that are inappropriate to chew on. Rabbits love exploring with their teeth.

Rabbits can learn to be litter trained and it's a natural behavior for them to poop in one spot but be aware that you're going to have occasional droppings and little urine spots. It just comes with the territory of having a rabbit as a companion. Speaking of urine, rabbit pee is pretty darn potent. Cheeks is actually in the top three of our stinkiest animals at Animal Wonders. He's in good company with Kemosabe the porcupine and Cas the Arctic Fox.

Frequent litter box changes and vinegar while you're cleaning is going to be your best bet at reducing the odour. It's still going to stink a little bit. Never, ever use cedar shavings. Even though cedar

smells good to us, the oils in it actually cause inflammation in their respiratory system. So the safest wood shaving to use is aspen or you can use a recycled paper product like Carefresh.

Always have clean water available. Rabbits tend to knock over water bowls and that's going to create a wet floor, which can lead to a dirty and possibly sick rabbit. So stick a water bottle.

Now let's talk diet. Rabbits are pretty much strict herbivores. Most importantly, provide grass at all times. You're looking for a Timothy hay, meadow or orchard works fine. You could use alfalfa as an occasional treat for adults or for young kids. Did you know baby rabbits are called kittens?

Provide high quality fresh pellets daily - I want to emphasize that - high quality, fresh, daily. Rabbits have pretty sensitive gastrointestinal tracts so you need to provide fresh vegetables and leafy greens but you need to do it in moderation. The best ones that you can provide are: carrot, broccoli stem, squash, collard greens, romaine. All of those things are going to keep your rabbit healthy and happy. You can also give fruit as an occasional treat. Keep it small, though, because sugar can be pretty bad for them. So, I put a link in the doobly-doo for more specific diet recommendations, if you're interested.

And don't forget to give your friends toys and things to play with. They're very active and inquisitive so give them toys to play with, they like exploring things with their mouths. Give them chewable toys! I give Cheeks cardboard boxes that he likes to chew on, he hides in it, he hops on it. He also gets sticks and pine cones and bells and blocks and ropes and balls - lots of fun things to play with.

Remember that each rabbit is an individual and their personality is theirs alone. It's your privilege and responsibility to get to know what your rabbit enjoys.

On a personal note, Cheeks is one of those rare rabbits that doesn't enjoy other rabbit company. He also vehemently hates any canine and he'll stomp really loudly if they get too close. Now, I told you to provide the biggest space possible for your rabbit and I have Cheeks here in a smaller enclosure and that's for several reasons. He used to be housed with Chili Pepper, a Patagonian cavy, and Ash, our chinchilla, in a 150 square foot dirt-floored enclosure - it was like a palace, it was glorious - until USDA said there's a regulation against housing rabbits with any other species. So, the enclosure he's in now is his "official enclosure" but he gets plenty of out and about running around time, interaction, he does get to visit his friends too.

If you're the proud owner of a non-social rabbit, I still recommend trying to give them some kind of animal companionship. A guinea pig is great or even a cat. Many animals enjoy the company of another being, even if it's not the same species. Rabbits can be comfortable and enjoyable companions. But remember they do take time and money to care for properly to make sure they're healthy and happy. You're looking at a cost anywhere between \$7000 and \$20 000 to keep a pair for their entire lifetime and several hours every day to tend to their needs.

Now, remember, you brought them into your life to care for their needs and enjoy their company so enjoy it!

Thanks for watching, guys, learning all about rabbits. Cheeks says thank you too! Huge thank you to all of our supporters - that makes this content possible. You guys are improving the lives of animals just by knowing and sharing this information and allowing us to share more. If you guys have any questions, go ahead and put them in the comments section below. You can find me on Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook throughout the week. See you next week.



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(Outro)

New news! I'm Jessi and you're watching Animal Wonders,
Montana.