



## DOWN THE RABBIT HOLES

# The Forgotten Companion

This is Karrot and Mistletoe, two much loved companions and a bonded pair. Karrot was found wandering the streets, while Mistletoe was surrendered to the pound after the novelty of Easter ran off. They each found themselves at very busy overcrowded pounds. Both those bunnies were lucky to be saved on time by a caring animal rescue group. They were taken into the rescue, de-sexed at the vet, vaccinated, and advertised to find a forever home. Help others like karrot and Mistletoe survive and leave the pound by offering them a stable caring home while being an informed adopter.

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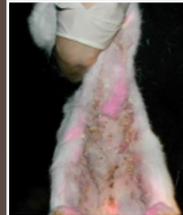
Here is how you can impact the lives of rabbits - not only those that are living with you:

### Adopt don't shop

Be part of the solution and give an animal a second chance

Whether wanting an animal as a companion or owning a pet store, you can make a difference to the life of an animal. You can adopt directly from a rescue group or pound, or advertise rescued animals in your shop.

As with "puppy mills", "rabbit mills" exist as well. Breeding conditions are often unknown. Those conditions could be unsanitary, dark cages, lack of nesting boxes, lack of exercise. Breeding creates wastage, and those animals not born to be sold, will often be killed. Does are bred constantly until they develop mastitis and then culled for the lack of productivity to the breeding business.



Rabbits live better in groups of two or three rather than solitary. They are prey animals and like to look after each other. Often breeders separate rabbits for disease control and cage them alone which causes distress to the rabbits. When housing rabbits together in a new environment, such as a pet shop, bonds can also occur between caged animals.

Rabbits tend to bond or huddle together due to insecurities, needing safety and the fear of human interference. This bond is usually tight and when sold to pet shops or to customers, the group is often separated through purchase, which causes immense distress to the rabbits being separated.

Pounds are full of rabbits, whether surrendered or found dumped. Surrendered pets to the pound are euthanised after one or two weeks from the surrender date unless they are adopted. According to the RSPCA, nearly 50% of animals other than cat and dogs are euthanised in Australia each year.



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### A hutch is a lonely place for a rabbit - be informed - Care and Feeding

Rabbits are very fragile and complex animals. A rabbit needs an adult human or a supervised older child. A rabbit can live between 8-12 yrs with proper care, feeding and supervision.

Rabbits thrive on interaction. Unfortunately, a huge proportion of rabbits live out their days in a small hutches with little or no interaction and alone. Rabbits should have at basic minimum space required to hop, stand on their hind legs, perch at high levels, and a safe haven to hide.



Exercise plays a very important part in maintaining a rabbit's physical and mental health. Rabbits in cages and small hutches are known to start abnormal repetitive behaviour such as pawing at the corners of cages, biting the wire, over grooming, over eating and playing with the water supply. This is due to boredom and lack of stimulation and loneliness. Where

possible, rabbits should be bonded, but only after desexing and with the help of a rabbit savvy rescue group.

Rabbits do not tolerate temperatures over 28C. Heat in rabbits creates stress, leading to exhaustion, illnesses and death. To cool down rabbits, an ice bottle should be placed near the rabbit, with the rabbit taken near a fan, shade or a cooler area.

Leaving your rabbit companions in a hutch outdoors will also make them susceptible to the Calici and Myxoma viruses. If living outdoors, rabbits must be in a mosquito proof area and vaccinated.

Rabbits are very fragile and are frightened easily from people and other animals.

If under stress, they will go into "gut Stasis". Once the gut stops working, the rabbit will go into starvation and will die unless a vet intervenes very quickly. Most commercial rabbit foods are harmful to the rabbits and will cause Gut Stasis.

For a complete list of foods approved by the exotics vets download:

[www.exoticsvet.com.au/rabbitfeed\\_dvella.pdf](http://www.exoticsvet.com.au/rabbitfeed_dvella.pdf)

For rabbit behaviour and care refer to: [www.exoticsvet.com.au/rabbitcare\\_dvella.pdf](http://www.exoticsvet.com.au/rabbitcare_dvella.pdf)



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Farmed rabbit photos courtesy of Freedom of Farmed rabbits.