

Buying a Rabbit – Handy Hints

This isn't a guide to help find the perfect rabbit for you – we can't help with that – but it's a guide to the things you may see in advertisements and a few handy hints to make sure your new bunny is as well adjusted, happy and healthy as it can be from purchase to bringing home.

- Ask how old the bunny will be when you will be collecting it. They should not be less than 8 weeks, all club members are mandated to abide by this and it's best for the bunny. Six weeks is too young and if someone lets them go at this age (or younger) they are not reputable.
- Ask to see both the parents then you'll know exactly what you're getting, but some breeders won't let you see the rabbitry at all. There are usually two major reasons for this:
 - i) The risk of introducing disease; if as a visitor you are a breeder then this is understandable, but it's not relevant for a pet home that doesn't have a rabbit already and exceptions should be made. If you are a breeder then perhaps the parents can be brought to the front door in cages for viewing, or you could enter the rabbitry wearing footwear you have never worn in your rabbitry, with hands washed with soap and a proviso not to touch anything. If you are not allowed to do any of these things then I would be suspicious of this.
 - ii) The risk of you injuring yourself, i.e. tripping hazards, rabbit holes, young children being bitten or opening cages, etc. All of this is understandable to a breeder and a risk. In a rabbitry it's not unusual to have rabbit holes! Even a tiny hole can cause a sprained ankle to much worse. And even the friendliest rabbit may not like an unfamiliar person putting their fingers into a cage, the rabbit may have tiny babies and be protective. You can be cautioned to enter at your own risk but please consider the breeder and let them lead you around the rabbitry and don't touch unless invited to do so.
- When you see the baby bunnies make sure their eyes are bright and clear, their noses are clean and pink and their coat isn't matted or tufted. Make sure they are all running around happily with none sulking in a corner.
- Make sure their hutch/cage is nice and clean and not smelly and they have clean fresh water, this generally means they are well cared for.

- If you feel confident enough, check their teeth for correct alignment and make sure they have a clean bum!
- Some breeders say their baby bunnies are wormed and flea/mite treated. Worms generally aren't a problem for rabbits, certainly not baby rabbits and they wouldn't have fleas or mites unless their mother already does! If a baby bunny really needed any of this I wouldn't be buying it. Some breeders may do it as a precaution and some advertisers may do it just to sound better than others.
- Ask if the bunnies are used to drinking from a water bottle if you will be using one.
- A reputable breeder will give you a bag of food, enough to last a week, as sudden changes in diet are harmful. Use this food to fill your new bunny's dish when you get home. Then mix the remainder half and half with your food and use it until it runs out.
- If any of the above doesn't seem right when you are talking to a seller then you need to beware.
- If at all possible avoid getting a bunny from a pet shop that can't tell you where it came from or its date of birth!

Before you collect your bunny make sure you have their new home ready for them. Take a suitable transport cage or sturdy box with a lid, lined with hay, to bring them home in.



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