

AT EASTER TIME, LET'S TALK ABOUT RABBITS...

The rabbit is a popular domestic animal with families, especially at Easter time when we see cute miniature rabbits in mall petting zoos and pet shops. We thought you would benefit from some information on the care they will require... before you fall victim to their charms!

The lifespan of an average rabbit is about 6 years. On the other hand, given proper care and annual visits to the veterinarian, your rabbit may live much longer. Its diet should be made up of 75% rabbit feed and 25% green vegetables such as spinach, broccoli and parsley. Rabbits also love dandelion leaves (however make sure that the areas where you pick those leaves are pesticide-free). A good quality timothy hay must be readily available to ensure your rabbit eats enough fibre, is able to chew and thus wear down its teeth (rabbits have very special teeth which grow continuously during their lifetime). Water must be available at all times and changed daily. Something else is special to rabbits: they cannot vomit. To avoid hairballs accumulating in their stomachs (called EGAGROPILES), it is recommended to feed them a laxative paste 2 or 3 times a week.

Keep in mind that with a little patience, your rabbit can be trained to urinate or defecate in a litter box, just like a cat. Rabbits are coprophagic (they eat their feces). Ingested feces are soft and covered with a mucus secretion. This night time activity is necessary for their proper absorption of vitamin B, proteins and water. It is therefore important not to put a rabbit in a completely fenced-in cage where it will have access to its feces. There must be a solid space (plexiglass or towel) which will have the added advantage of preventing sores caused by its back feet hitting the fencing.

If a rabbit is a suitable animal for you, purchase one from a recognized breeder or from a dependable supplier. A domestic baby rabbit may easily look like a miniature rabbit, except when he has a surprise for you! Instead of weighing 2 pounds as an adult, he could weigh 10 pounds!

We will be happy to meet with you and your rabbit or any other domestic animal or to answer your questions. Feel free to call the LaSalle Veterinary Clinic at 514-364-1233.