



# Thinking of adopting a rabbit?

Before making a decision, ask yourself these questions:

## Can you make a long-term commitment?

Rabbits typically live for 6-10 years. During this time you will likely experience many changes in your life—moving to a new house or apartment, changing jobs, getting married, having children, getting other pets, and traveling. Before you adopt, think about how you will handle caring for your rabbit and providing a loving home in the face of changes in your life.

## Can you provide a suitable living environment?

While rabbits can spend a good part of their time in large cages, there are things you need to consider before adopting, regardless of how big or small your residence is. Where will you put the cage? Where is their exercise area? How can you rabbit-proof exercise areas? It is also important to determine how you will keep your rabbit indoors. Rabbits live longer, healthier lives when they are kept indoors, away from the elements and predators. Keeping your rabbit safely inside may mean altering current human behaviours, like leaving patio doors open, with only a screen door protecting the opening.

## Can you afford the costs of rabbit ownership?

As you can see in the table below, the basic costs of caring for a rabbit can exceed \$550 a year, with initial up front costs of over \$400. In addition, the costs of veterinary care for illnesses and accidents can cost anywhere from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars.

| Initial Costs:               |       | Typical Yearly Costs:  |   |                    |
|------------------------------|-------|------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Adoption fee (Metro Shelter) | \$30  | Fresh Veggies          | Lettuce, Carrots, Herbs, etc @ \$20 per month       | \$120              |
| Food and water dishes        | \$10  | Pelleted food          | 1 bag (3.6kg) high quality dry food @ \$5 per month | \$60               |
| Large Cage for housing       | \$140 | Hay                    | 1 medium package @ \$6/quarter                      | \$24               |
| Brush and comb               | \$15  | Veterinary care        | Yearly visit - exam                                 | \$85               |
| Litter, litter pan and scoop | \$20  | Bedding                | 1 large bag chippings @ 20                          | \$20               |
| Rabbit proofing supplies     | \$40  | Supplies               | 1 container litter per month @ \$10                 | \$120              |
| Traveling crate              | \$35  | Rabbit care while away | Vacation 2 weeks @ \$10 per day                     | \$140              |
| Toys and miscellaneous       | \$20  |                        |   |                    |
| <b>Total</b>                 |       |                        |   | <b>\$569</b>       |
|                              |       |                        |   | <b>Total \$310</b> |

## Do you have time to spend with a rabbit?

Rabbits are very social and curious animals. When kept singly, they seek human attention often landing on your lap for nose rubs. In groups they still include interaction with humans, but it is less important.

## How will you handle potential behaviour issues?

Rabbits are wonderfully complex and often mysterious creatures. It is important for you learn about normal rabbit behaviours before adopting, as well as their personalities. Learn how to deal with litter box training, bonding, and rabbit social order. Chewing of cables is common as cables resemble roots that rabbits instinctively remove from burrows. The Nova Scotia SPCA can provide you with information on rabbit behaviour and you can also find a lot of information on websites such as the House Rabbit Society ([www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org)) and the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund ([www.houserabbit.co.uk](http://www.houserabbit.co.uk)).

## Is everyone in your household supportive of welcoming a rabbit into the home?

When you adopt a rabbit, everyone in your household becomes a part of the rabbit's life and he or she becomes a part of theirs. If you have children, they need to demonstrate respect for animals and be able to learn and understand how to appropriately interact with rabbits. If anyone in your home objects to having a rabbit or is known to be allergic to rabbits, you should not consider adopting at this time. If you already have other pets, have you considered how to integrate your new rabbit with your existing furry friends, and what you will do if they do not get along?

If you decide that you are ready to adopt, visit your local SPCA shelter, fill out an application form, meet the rabbits and kits available for adoption, and consult with shelter staff to select an appropriate rabbit for you. Take your time—having a pet will change your life, and you need to be confident in your choice.

If you have realized this is not a good time in your life to adopt a rabbit, consider volunteering with the SPCA or other rescue groups in your community, or ask the SPCA about fostering. You'll get to spend time with rabbits while contributing to a great cause.