

Read the Article 'Not Just For Easter' on page 11 of First News.

Answer the following questions.

- 1) Which type of rabbit can grow as large as a cat?
- 2) Find 2 words that Dr Jayne Tyson uses to describe rabbits.
- 3) Why are the RSPCA rescuing so many rabbits?
- 4) According to the article, are rabbits easy pets to look after? Explain your answer.
- 5) How can you tell if your rabbit is happy?
- 6) Why did the author chose the headline 'Not Just For Easter'? Can you think of an alternative headline?

NOT JUST FOR EASTER



THE classic image of the Easter bunny means that rabbits are most popular at this time of year and many people may be tempted to buy one as a pet. However, it's important to consider that they are very complex animals. The RSPCA is advising all potential rabbit-owning families to do their research before buying a pet.

WHAT DO RABBITS NEED TO KEEP THEM FIT AND HEALTHY?



Rabbits need a hutch or shelter large enough that they can stand up, turn around and stretch out fully, with an attached run so they permanently have access to a large exercise area. Some rabbits, like the French lop, can grow to the size of a cat, so they need even more space. All rabbits need to eat a bundle of hay that's as big as they are every day. Owners should avoid commercial muesli-style food, which is bad for rabbits' teeth and tummies. Bunnies are incredibly sociable animals and also need to be kept in pairs; preferably a neutered female and neutered male. They can form very strong bonds with each other and their welfare can severely suffer if they are housed alone. Single bunnies are often miserable and depressed.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP RABBITS?

The RSPCA received more than 5,000 reports about rabbits in need last year and 300 reports about abandoned bunnies. We believe one of the reasons why we rescue so many rabbits is because, sadly, some people don't do their research before getting a pet. At this time of year, many rabbits are bought on impulse. The charity asks anyone interested in owning a pet rabbit to really do your research. Then if you still think you can care for a pair of rabbits, please consider rescue bunnies instead!

WHAT DOES THE EXPERT SAY?

Dr Jane Tyson, RSPCA rabbit welfare expert, said: "Sadly, when rabbits are bought on impulse, an owner may not realise how complex they are to care for and what a commitment caring for rabbits can be. "We would like to see an end to rabbits being kept alone in a small hutch at the bottom of the garden. As sociable and energetic creatures, this restricts their natural behaviours and has a negative impact on their welfare. Instead, we would like to see more people re-homing rabbits in pairs and providing them with plenty of space to exercise and do their binkies!"



WHY RABBITS ARE NOT A GOOD 'STARTER' PET FOR KIDS

No matter how big or small, all pets should be the main responsibility of mum and dad, with a little help from the rest of the family. Rabbits are sometimes seen as a good 'starter pet' for children but they actually have very complex needs. A lot of rabbits prefer to interact with each other rather than humans and, as they are a prey species, some don't like being picked up or cuddled. Plus they need lots of space so they can exercise, which can take up a lot of room!

WHAT IS A BINKY?

When rabbits are excited and happy they will do a movement known as a binky, which sees them jumping and twisting their bodies before landing. If your rabbits do this then you know they are very happy!



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CARING FOR RABBITS, VISIT WWW.RSPCA.ORG.UK/RABBITS