

PRESS RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Bunnies and Chicks for Easter: Buyer Beware

By the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
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With Easter approaching, many pet stores stock up on hot items including live chicks and rabbits which are often purchased and given to young children as presents. There is no doubt, young chicks and bunnies are impossibly cute, but the fact is they grow into adult rabbits and chickens who have housing, feeding, and handling requirements that many people do not know about.

Many folks think rabbits are low maintenance pets that only require a small cage and some lettuce. The truth is, they have dietary requirements that include a balanced diet of pellets, fresh lettuce and other vegetables, and grass hays. They also require daily exercise and space enough to perform three consecutive hops in a cage.

Young children tend to be rougher and not understand that rabbits can easily break their backs when handled. It is heartbreaking to have a child mishandle that new bunny and accidentally break its back. In addition, rabbits have long toenails that leave deep scratches, especially if handled improperly.

Chicks are another incredibly cute baby, but they ultimately grow into chickens which require care. Roosters, when they hit sexual maturity, have the potential to become aggressive. Chickens, and all wild birds, can carry the potentially deadly Salmonella and E.coli that can cause serious diarrhea and possibly death to young children.

After Easter, many shelters are overwhelmed by the number of relinquished rabbits and many are euthanized. In fact, rabbits are the third most relinquished pets to animal shelters, (which are usually equipped to handle only a few rabbits and rodents at a time). A serious misconception is that rabbits can be released into the wild to fend for themselves. The fact is they often starve to death or become easy prey for predators in the wild.

So before purchasing that cute bunny or baby chick, remember they grow up into adult rabbits and chickens with their own essential requirements for care, housing, and nutrition for many years. You must commit to properly caring for them year round. Talk to your veterinarian if you

have questions or are considering buying a bunny or chick for Easter.

If you can't provide the necessary care for your bunnies or chicks, just say no to live bunnies and chicks: stick to chocolate bunnies and peeps. They are easy to care for and don't stay around long.

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The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 340 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit www.vtvets.org or call (802) 878-6888.