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# HE'S NOT A CHILD'S TOY.

# HE'S A REAL, LIVE, 10-YEAR COMMITMENT.

It's that time of year again. Pet store windows are filled with adorable baby bunnies. Your kids are begging you to buy one. It's so hard to resist. After all, you think, wouldn't this be the perfect, low-maintenance "starter pet" for a young child?

Think again! Every year, many thousands of rabbits are abandoned to shelters or released outdoors (a sure death sentence for a domestic rabbit), often because of misunderstandings on the part of the parents who bought them for their kids.

Rabbits are prey animals by nature. They are physically delicate and fragile, and require specialized veterinary care. Children are naturally energetic, exuberant, and loving. But "loving" to a small child usually means holding, cuddling, carrying an animal around in whatever grip their small hands can manage — precisely the kinds of things that make most rabbits feel insecure and frightened. Rabbits handled in this way will often start to scratch or bite, simply out of fear. Many rabbits are accidentally dropped by small children, resulting in broken legs and backs. Those rabbits who survive the first few months quickly reach maturity and are no longer tiny and "cute." Kids often lose interest, and the rabbit, who has no voice to remind you he's hungry or thirsty or needs his cage cleaned, is gradually neglected.

Parents, please help! If you're thinking about adding a rabbit to your family, think about this: pet rabbits have a life span of 7-10 years. Don't buy on impulse. Wait until after the holiday. Make an informed decision by learning about rabbit care first. Consider adopting a rabbit from your local shelter or rescue group. For the rabbit's health and well-being (as well as for your child's) make sure an adult will be the primary caretaker and will always supervise any children in the household who are interacting with the rabbit. Domestic rabbits are inquisitive, intelligent, and very social by nature. A rabbit is a delightful companion animal as long as you remember: he's not a child's toy. He's a real, live, 10-year commitment!

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RABBIT CARE AND ADOPTIONS  
IN YOUR AREA, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HUMANE SOCIETY OR  
VISIT THE HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY AT [WWW.RABBIT.ORG](http://WWW.RABBIT.ORG)**

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