



Deborah Cowan, DVM

Doctor Deborah Cowan graduated from NCSU-CVM in 1993. She has been working with Exotic animals since 1982 when she attended North Carolina A&T University for her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Lab Animal Science. She was part of the group that started the Wildlife Rehabilitation League in 1978. In addition, Doctor Cowan has done a month long internship at Texas A&M, Galveston campus in Fish Medicine.



Dr. Cowan works with small animals such as: hamsters, gerbils, ferrets, rabbits, guinea pigs, hedgehogs, and sugar gliders. Her practice also works with reptiles, amphibians, fish, and birds. She offers wellness check-ups and any health issues that you may notice. If you have recently adopted an exotic pet and you aren't sure how to properly take care of it, she will give you some helpful tips and information.

If you find an injured wildlife animal, you can call or bring it by the hospital. They will provide an initial exam and medical care before contacting a wildlife rehabilitation provider to work with the animal so it may be released back into the wild.



Spring is a Wonderful Season, But, Be Informed About Potential Pets

Wow, April is around the corner and Easter is coming up soon. One of the largest issues that face children and parents is the availability of the CUTE chicks and bunnies at some of the local feed and seed retailers. This is one of the largest headaches for the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and for the communicable disease department.

Often we see parents allowing their little ones to kiss, hug, squeeze, and play with both bunnies and chicks. What parents are totally clueless about, is the fact that diseases are easily transmitted to their precious ones by allowing this type of handling.

Coccidia runs rampant along with salmonella in most of those cute, stressed out, mostly sick chicks that have been dumped into boxes, shipped across states and thrown into those pens inside the stores with other stressed out chicks.

They are shedding coccidian and salmonella like nobody's business and these kids are picking it up. Why, you ask, are more children not falling ill and possibly dying? The reason: parents think it's from the food they ate, the excess candy, the excitement and very often do not link the disease to the visit to the stores at all.

I have always wondered why we can't step up and just prevent the perversity of this type of animal abuse to occur, but we unfortunately, think it's about as cute as puppies in the pet store or a local flea market.

Chicks

Chicks can make good pets, but they need to be kept outdoors in a well protected environment. They can be very social and can be taught to interact with humans. If you get a hen, you can have eggs, without having to have a rooster. Because it is very difficult to house-train a chicken, or most birds for that matter, having them indoors can lead to some severe issues. There are some great chicken houses that you can build and it will still allow you to have fun with your chickens without having a disease issue.

Don't forget, if your chickens, fowls or birds get sick, we do see them and treat them. Do not wait until they are in such poor health that there is nothing we can do. Remember that birds will pretend that they are eating, to keep the rest of the flock from attacking them. If you are not seeing poop, they are not eating.

Bunnies

The bunnies, they simply get stressed to the max, if they are semi-lucky they survive to live in a miserable hutch the rest of their lives, with very little human contact, stimulation or joy. Oh Boy! If I seem a little out of sorts, well, I think parents need to stop and consider that these animals will live at least 7-10 years if properly cared for. The parents (children do not pay the bills for food, vet care, nor do they truly understand husbandry) are the ones that need to understand that they must take care of the animals, they must interact with them, they must handle them. The long and short of it is that these poor bunnies, typically, do not have a very good life.

Bunnies can and do make excellent pets when properly cared for, handled, and trained. They can be litter trained. They can and do play and interact with humans, they can be very relaxing and they can be kenneled when you are not home. The downside is that they shed, their urine can stain, and more people are allergic to bunnies than to dogs and cats.

We do recommend that they be spayed or neutered, this makes a much better pet. Because females tend to develop ovarian cancer at about age 5-6, this also prevents that heartbreak, so we recommend spaying at about age 12 weeks. Male bunnies can become very aggressive when unneutered and we find that neutering at about the age of 12 weeks, works very well.

Please remember that we see bunnies. Once per year, they should have a physical exam to ensure that all is well. As they get older, bloodwork is a very good idea.

Although bunnies and chickens (not roosters) can make good pets, it is best to be aware of the source from which you purchase your Easter pets. Get them from someone you trust—a local farmer, or order them from your mill or a trusted feed and seed store.

Animal Hospital of Walnut Cove

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