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RABBITS AS COMPANION ANIMALS

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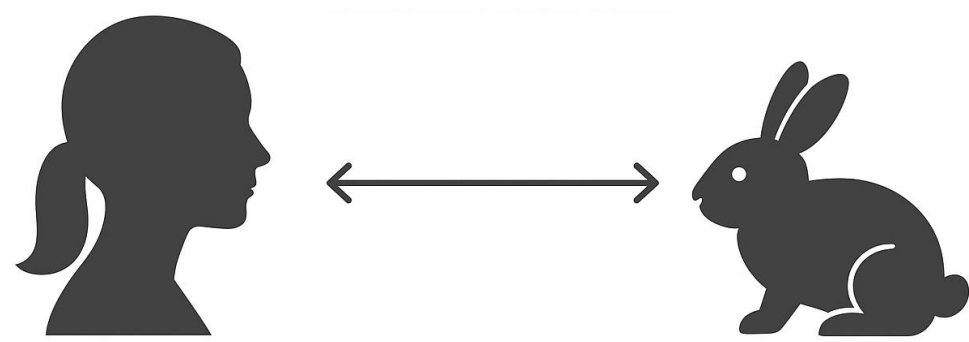
Abstract: In recent decades, pets have become an essential part of everyday life, contributing significantly to people's emotional and physical well-being. Among them, the domestic rabbit has gained popularity due to its affectionate and sociable nature. The present paper aims to explore from a scientific perspective the impact of pet rabbits on the health and well-being of their owners, as well as their morphological and behavioral characteristics. The main breeds of rabbits raised as pets are analyzed: Angora, Tan, Lion's Head and Mini Lop, highlighting their physical and temperamental peculiarities. The analysis of rabbit behavior is an essential element of this research, providing valuable information about their eating habits, play activities and communication methods. The paper emphasizes the importance of understanding the emotional and social needs of rabbits, as well as the role of human-animal interaction in the development of a harmonious relationship. The paper highlights the physical and psychological benefits of owning a pet rabbit and emphasizes the need for further research to fully harness the potential of these animals in improving the quality of human life.

Keywords: domestic rabbit, pets, human-animal relationship

Introduction

In recent decades, pets have become an important presence in our lives, providing us with companionship, affection, and joy. In this context, the rabbit has gained popularity as a loyal and affectionate pet (Skovlund et. al. 2023).

SOCIAL INTERACTION



AFFECTION

PLAYFULNESS

Figure 1. The rabbit behavior

The Angora breed is characterized by long, soft, and silky fur, which requires careful and regular grooming to maintain optimal condition. **The Loh Tan breed** is valued for its distinctive appearance and sociable, friendly temperament. **The Lionhead breed** is characterized by long, soft fur covering the head and ears, resembling a lion's mane, and is appreciated for its unique appearance. **The Mini Lop breed** is recognized for its small size, attractive appearance, and affectionate, playful temperament (Varga, 2014, Huang et.al. 2024).

Table 1

Morphological, Behavioral, and Care Characteristics of Representative Domestic Rabbit Breeds (O'Neill, 2024)

Breed	Morphological Characteristics	Temperament	Care Requirements
Angora	Long, soft, silky fur	Calm, gentle, sociable	Requires regular grooming to prevent matting and maintain fur quality
Loh Tan	Medium-sized, distinctive coloration	Friendly, sociable, adaptable	Moderate grooming; requires social interaction and a balanced diet
Lionhead	Long fur on head and ears resembling a lion's mane	Playful, curious, affectionate	Regular grooming; needs socialization and environmental enrichment
Mini Lop	Small size, compact body	Affectionate, playful, active	Moderate grooming; requires daily interaction and mental stimulation

Rabbit behavior provides valuable insights into these animals, enabling the provision of an environment that allows them to express their natural needs and behaviors. Both in the wild and in captivity, rabbits are social animals capable of forming social groups or establishing close relationships with conspecifics (McBride, 2015).

Table 2

Behavioral Categories of Rabbits and Their Functional Significance
Mullan and Main, 2007

Behavioral	Description	Significance
Social Interaction	Includes grooming, nuzzling, mutual resting, and play with conspecifics	Reinforces social bonds, reduces stress, and promotes group cohesion
Exploratory	Investigating environment, sniffing, hopping, digging	Supports cognitive development and environmental adaptation
Feeding	Grazing, selective eating, cecotrophy (consumption of soft feces)	Ensures nutrient absorption and maintains digestive health
Communication	Thumping, scent marking, vocalizations, body postures	Facilitates intra-species signaling, territory marking, and warnings
Reproductive	Courtship, mounting, nesting behavior	Ensures successful mating and reproduction
Resting	Sleeping, retreating to shelters, crouching	Provides protection from predators and reduces stress
Activity	Running, jumping, object manipulation, playful chasing	Stimulates physical and mental health, strengthens social bonds

Conclusions

Rabbits have gained an increasingly significant role in human life due to their emotional value and their social behaviors, which foster interaction and closeness with humans. The analysis of companion rabbit breeds has revealed a significant diversity in both morphological and temperamental characteristics. Therefore, the rabbit proves to be a suitable companion animal for individuals who value relationships grounded in affection, patience, and mutual attachment.