

## Rabbit housing guidelines

Rabbits are naturally active and inquisitive pets, and require a suitable environment to enjoy their natural behaviours. This includes the following:

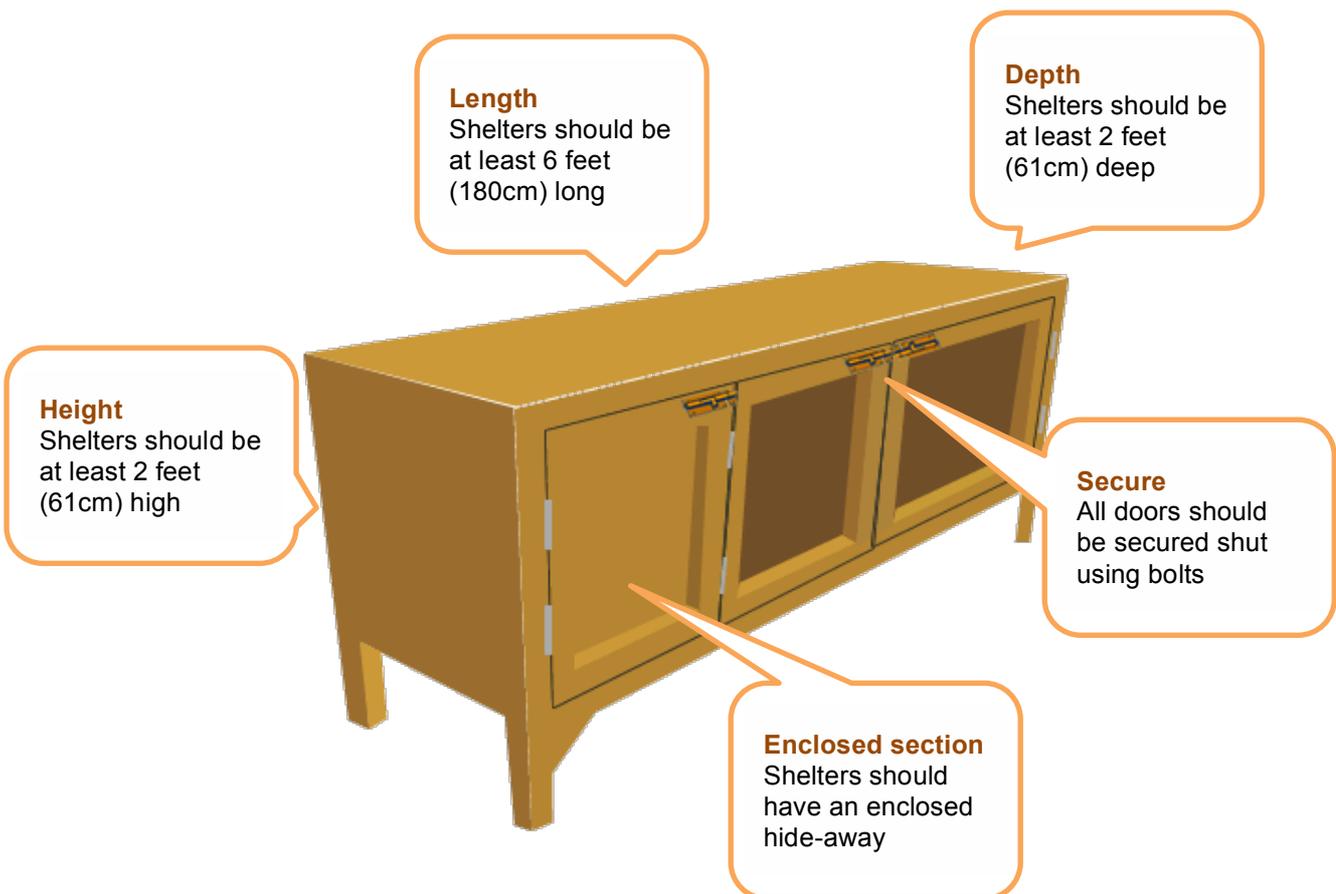
- Having a rabbit partner
- Having lots of space
- Having enrichment opportunities, e.g. toys and places to hide

For a pair of medium-sized rabbits, we ask for a set-up that offers the rabbits **at least 60 square feet (5.5 square metres) of space that they can access 24/7**.

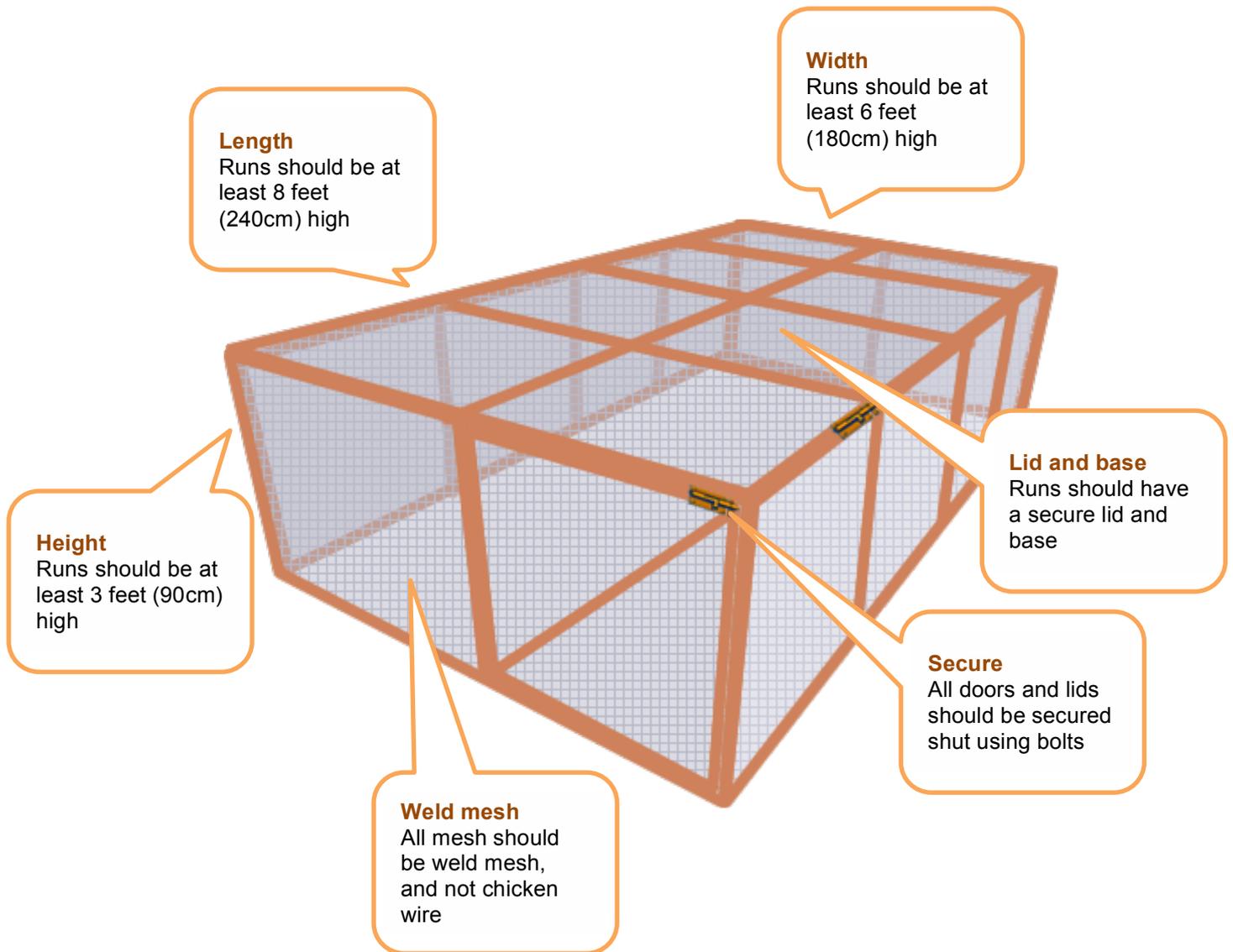
### Outdoor rabbits

Outdoor rabbits should have a sheltered area, such as a hutch, playhouse or shed, and a large, secure exercise run. The rabbits should be able to access both areas at all times.

#### The shelter



## The exercise area



## Security: doors and lids

All doors, lids, etc. should be secured shut. Foxes and other predators can be very wily, and have been known to open doors that are poorly secured.

The best way to secure doors and run lids is to use a heavy-duty bolt, or to use eye hooks or hasps and carabiner clips or padlocks.



## Security: preventing digging

Runs should be secured underneath to prevent the rabbits from digging out, or predators from digging in.

There are several ways of doing this:



### Mesh

If you would like your rabbits to have access to grass, you will need to mesh under the run with strong weld mesh. Take care to ensure the wire is buried enough so that it does not risk cutting into the rabbits' feet.



### Paving



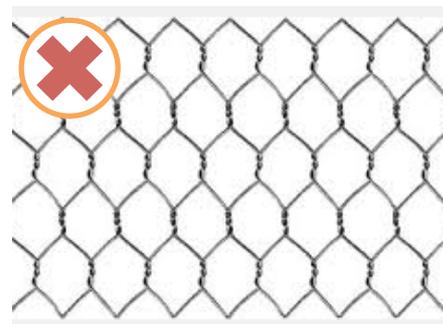
### Decking

## Security: materials

Shelters and runs should be of sturdy construction to provide shelter from the elements, and safety from predators and escape.

Shelters should be leak-free.

Where mesh is used, strong weld mesh should be used rather than chicken wire. Chicken wire is not predator-proof.



We do not usually accept metal-framed runs, and prefer sturdy, wooden-framed varieties.

## Security: 'free-ranging'

**We do not rehome to homes where rabbits are allowed unsupervised 'free-range' exercise time in the garden, and we will not rehome to homes where free-range time (supervised or unsupervised) is the only form of exercise out of the hutch or shelter.**

Sadly, we have heard far too many stories of free-ranging rabbits being taken, injured, or killed by foxes, birds and cats. Even if you have never seen a fox in your garden, there is always a first time.

We do understand that it is a great pleasure to allow rabbits occasional time out of their set-up, and therefore are happy with supervised free-ranging, but you must be with your rabbits at all times.

## Connecting shelters and runs

We ask that hutches (or playhouses, sheds etc.) are permanently attached to the run. Rabbits are most active at dawn and dusk. Having a separate hutch and run means they may only have access to the run when the owner is able to move them, and they are confined to the hutch during their most active times.

There are various ways to attach a shelter and run:



### Integrated housing

You can buy hutches over runs, or large dog kennels with an integrated run.



### Pipe systems

Connector kits are available from 'Runaround' and 'The Welfare Hutch Company' – search online.



### Home-made solutions

If you are handy, you could try building your own connection kit.

## Indoor rabbits

Our guidelines for indoor rabbits are the same as outdoor rabbits in terms of the size of the space we ask for.

Indoors, security from predators is not such a worry, so rabbits can live happily free-ranging indoors unless there are other pets, such as cats and dogs in the home, where we would expect measures to be taken to keep the species apart at all times.

There are additional things to think about in the home, such as rabbits' love of chewing, so wires etc. should be safely kept away from bunny teeth.

## Examples of great bunny housing

Please see this Pinterest board, set up by our rabbit fosterer, for some photos of great rabbit housing to inspire you:

Outdoor housing: <https://uk.pinterest.com/TheWarren/rabbit-housing-outdoor/>

Indoor housing: <https://uk.pinterest.com/TheWarren/rabbit-housing-indoor/>

## Where to buy good rabbit housing

The Rabbit Welfare Association and Fund (RWAFF) keeps a list of retailers who sell suitable sized housing. See their webpage at <http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk/walloffame.htm>.

If you have not purchased your rabbit housing yet, we would strongly advise you to have a chat to us before spending any money, so we can ensure that the housing you intent to purchase would pass our criteria.