

A hutch is not enough- The story of Peter Rabbit



When Peter first arrived at my house he was very timid. He had spent his first 3 years in a 3ft hutch that was never cleaned out. It was my first experience of having a rabbit as a pet and this might sound silly but I was quite nervous. I always put gardening gloves on before I handled him, as the only experience I had with rabbits was that of a friend who had a rabbit and it **COULD GIVE A NASTY BITE.**

I knew that it would be at least 6months before he came out of his terrified state and 12 months before he started to show his true character. Maybe even then he may not make it.

As a child I never wanted any pet that was caged it just didn't seem natural to me and I loved to see rabbits running free! Therefore I had a bit of a problem. So I went on the Internet and I bought a metal pet playpen.

It was below freezing that year so Peter spent almost three months living in my kitchen in his playpen. Poor little Peter he was so vulnerable he used to sit in his litter tray in the corner of his playpen with his head down. He never attempted to get out, but gradually I began to see small changes in his behaviour. During the day I would open the door of his playpen and let him run up and down the hall. At first he didn't want to come out but slowly his confidence started to come back and he would venture out and after a little while he would be doing bunny hops as he ran up and down the hall. It was so magical I can't begin describe it.

When the weather became warmer and spring was on the way he went back in his hutch. I decided to put the playpen outside. It didn't have a run attached but I used to take him in and out when suitable. Later on I met this wonderful



person called Caroline who makes really strong pens and runs, under the name of 'Runaround'. She supplied me with a pipe, which is attached to his hutch leading into a mesh tunnel, which leads into a large pen. It is all made of galvanised steel and is virtually indestructible and completely secure from predators.

It took Peter five weeks to be brave enough to venture down the pipe, I tried to tempt him with food but he just didn't want to know!!! So I used to carry him into the pen in the morning and take him back to his hutch in the evening. Several times he would go halfway down the pipe and then reverse back into his hutch in a panic. Then one day five weeks and two days later he was brave enough to go down. After that there was no stopping him.



Well to conclude, since having Peter my whole life has changed. Good things have been happening in the last 18 months. I have met one or two really wonderful people and they are now very good friends. My partner died 8 years ago and although I have had a Tibetan Spaniel for seven of those years, he never really did what Peter has done for my life. I wish I could explain it but I can't. It is only now after almost 2years that Peter has come through. He has learnt how to graze; until about a month ago he only ate grass if I pulled it up for him and mixed it with some dandelions, now the first thing he does when I let him out into the garden is start munching! I don't pet him a lot because I want him to be a free spirit, not something that I control.

