

Litter Training Rabbits

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In the wild, rabbits normally have a place on the edge of their warren (series of burrows) where they eliminate. It is called a 'scrape'. We can use the rabbit's instinctive behavior to eliminate in the same spot as a way to litter train a pet rabbit.

What type of litter box should I choose for my rabbit?

The litter box should be large enough for the rabbit to move around in easily. In addition, rabbits often rest or sleep in their litter boxes. Either rectangular or triangular boxes can be used as long as they are large enough. Some rabbits have a tendency to urinate over the edge, so using a box with higher sides will help alleviate that problem.

What type of litter should I use?

Rabbits will often attempt to eat the litter, so litters made from alfalfa, paper products, hay, peat moss or aspen bark are the best. Non-clumping, unscented cat litters can also be used. AVOID clumping litters, clay litters with deodorant crystals, corn cob litter, and pine or cedar shavings. Some rabbits develop a preference for the type of substrate (litter), so you may need to experiment to determine which one your rabbit likes the best.



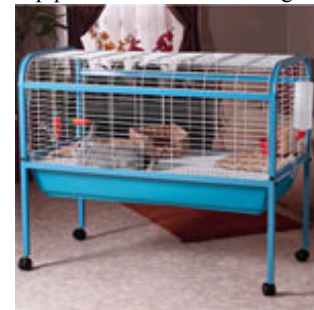
Where should I put the litter box(es) and how do I go about training?

Start out by confining your rabbit to the cage or small run area where you want her to eliminate. The cage should be large enough to accommodate the correct size of litter box. Notice where the rabbit normally urinates and defecates, and place the litter box there. Once the rabbit consistently uses the litter box, you can enlarge the area in which your rabbit can roam. Watch your rabbit carefully during these times, however, to make sure she is returning to the litter box to eliminate. Praise her and give her a treat for doing so. If you catch her backing into a corner away from the litter box and lifting her tail to urinate, say "no" sharply and gently herd her towards her litter box. Be careful not to make her think the litter box is a punishment. Clean up any urine "accidents" and use an enzyme-based cleaner specifically for pet urine. Every time she does not use the litter box, she has strengthened that undesired habit, so be on constant vigilance to help prevent her from making that mistake. Always reward her for doing well, and do not punish her if she does slip.

Once the rabbit is litter trained and eventually has the freedom to move to large areas within the house, provide several litter boxes.

What if my rabbit doesn't use the litter box?

If your rabbit does not use the litter box, the box may be too small, or the rabbit may not like the substrate you chose. Experiment with several other types of litter and/or boxes. Be sure to place the litter box where the rabbit is normally eliminating.



Stress (e.g., new members in the household, change of routine) may cause a rabbit to not use the litter box. Try to control the cause of the stress if possible. It may be necessary to confine your rabbit to a smaller area and begin the process of litter training again.

If your rabbit is urinating small amounts frequently outside of the litter box, it could be a sign of a urinary infection or other medical problem. Have your rabbit examined by your veterinarian.

What should I do if my rabbit sleeps in the litter box?

Rabbits will commonly rest in their litter box. This is normal.

What should I do if my rabbit moves the box?

Rabbits will commonly move the litter box. It is generally best to allow a rabbit to do so. If you prefer that the rabbit not move the box, it can be held in place with clamps or ties.

Why doesn't my rabbit bury his droppings?

Unlike cats, rabbits generally do not cover their urine or droppings.

How often should I clean the litter box?

Clean the litter box and add new litter as necessary on a daily basis. This is especially important if the substrate is hay or another type of litter that the rabbit may eat. On a weekly basis, wash the litter box with soap and water.

Which rabbits have the best success rate?

Litter training works best with older rabbits (over 6 months of age), and those that are spayed/neutered.