

Proper Handling

Rabbits are fragile creatures with delicate bone structures. Improper handling can easily cause injury. It is critical that all members of your household learn to handle your rabbit properly and that small children be carefully supervised around him.

The best way to interact with your rabbit is on his “turf” — the floor. Begin by spending time sitting on the floor of your rabbit’s area. Read a book, write letters, or talk quietly on the phone. Let your rabbit come up to you for attention. When he does, pet him gently and talk to him soothingly.

There will be times when you need to pick your rabbit up (to trim his nails, take him to the vet, or give medicine). It is wise to get him used to being picked up occasionally by his primary caretaker. However, keep in mind that most rabbits do not like to be picked up and carried. Remember, rabbits are prey animals and being grabbed or lifted off the ground is a frightening experience for them. Instinctively, they may associate these actions with being captured by a predator such as a hawk or owl. When you do need to pick your rabbit up, always take time to explain to him what you need to do and why.

A good way to get your rabbit used to being picked up is to start gradually from your sessions on the floor. Begin by placing a hand under his front arms and slowly lifting his front feet while petting him. Once he is comfortable with this, try lifting him into your lap. To do this, place one hand (usually your right hand if you are right handed) under his front arms, use the other hand to support his hindquarters, and quickly and confidently scoop him toward you. Hold him securely next to your body, petting him and talking soothingly to him. If he begins to struggle, place him carefully back on the ground. If he has let you hold him for a while, consider rewarding him with his favorite treat food.

Once you are able to hold your bunny for a while in a seated position, slowly stand up while holding him firmly. If he begins to struggle, quickly get yourself and the bunny back to ground level and carefully put him down. A rabbit can easily injure himself by struggling in your arms or jumping out of them while you’re standing.

Never let anyone pick a rabbit up by his ears or by the scruff of his neck.

