

PICKING UP A RABBIT

Rabbits do not like to be picked up. They are prey animals and this is natural and instinctive behavior. Rabbits can resist being lifted and carried in a number of ways. Reacting instinctively to a predator-like grasp, they may run away, hide, or struggle. When caught, they may kick, or launch into space. A normally-affectionate rabbit may express indignation by wriggling, stamping, or nipping you. All are attempts by the rabbit to retain solid ground and avoid being eaten.

APPROACHING A RABBIT

1. **Talk calmly** to the rabbit before you pick him up.
2. **Approach him slowly** and pet him, leaving your left hand on his head to discourage escape. Rabbits do not see well up close. A human hand or foot in front of a rabbit's face can be very startling.

Note: In an ex-pen a rabbit will often hop into his/her litterbox when approached. This is a good place to pick up the rabbit.

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The principles of lifting and handling your rabbit safely allow for several methods. The method you use will depend on the size and temperament of your rabbit.

Note: Do not lift a rabbit by the scruff behind his neck.

Method One: Small/medium sized rabbits

Position the rabbit with his nose pointed toward you. Place your left hand on the head and front shoulder and your right hand on his right hind quarter. Lift rabbit and rotate clockwise to your chest.

The rabbit is facing left held parallel to your body. Your left hand is placed on his head. Your right hand holds the right side of his body with his front foot held between your fingers.

(Note: Don't use this method for unfamiliar or frightened (whimpering, growling, lunging, eyes wide open—whites showing) rabbits. They should be picked up using Method Two.)

Method Two: Medium/large sized rabbits

Position the rabbit with his nose pointed to the left and parallel to your body. Kneel, and keeping your left hand on his head, bend your torso close to him. Place your right arm along his right side, and put your right hand under his chest gripping his front leg between your fingers. If he accepts this, take your left hand from his head and use it to support front leg and chest as you lift him. Scoop him

to your chest and hold him firmly the same way as in Method One.

The key to this method is to position the rabbit close to you before lifting. That way you will shorten the suspended-in-air stage.

Method Three: for Frightened Rabbits (whimpering, growling, lunging, eyes wide open—whites showing)

Start with Method Two. After picking the rabbit up be sure to have his head pointed out several inches from your chest so he cannot turn to nip you. Keep your left hand securely holding the top of his head.

Method Four: Burrito Method

Have a towel ready and nearby so you can immediately wrap bunny “burrito style” once you have picked him up. Rabbits do not like their legs to dangle in mid-air and feel much more secure with their rear legs wrapped in a towel, their body hugged close to your chest.

WHEN A RABBIT YOU ARE CARRYING STRUGGLES

If a rabbit you are lifting or carrying begins to struggle, you must overrule your impulse to let go. Hold on and hug the rabbit to you. One method to use with a friendly rabbit is to **let them bury their head in your armpit so they feel more secure.**

SETTING A RABBIT DOWN

When you are ready to return your rabbit to his area, he may want to hurry up the process and nose dive towards the ground or back of the cage.

Prevent injury by squatting before you release him, turning him around, and setting him down facing you. **Do not release a rabbit from a height of more than 12 inches.**