



## Litter Box Training Your Rabbit

### Why litter box train your rabbit?

People who are unfamiliar with companion rabbits are often surprised to learn that rabbits can be easily trained to use a litter box. Altered adult rabbits are naturally fastidious creatures that choose specific places to deposit their urine and most of their droppings. Because of this tendency, most rabbits can be quickly litter box trained. Having your rabbit use a litter box makes clean up easy, and allows your bunny to come out of confinement and become a full-fledged member of the family.

### Spaying and neutering helps

Intact adult rabbits use urine as a means of marking their territory. Both male and female rabbits have a strong hormonal need to mark objects such as furniture and personal possessions. Spaying and neutering reduces this behavior and greatly increases your chance of successful litter box training. It also reduces the chance of reproductive disease and eliminates the risk of unwanted litters. Spaying and neutering is best done when your rabbit is young, before it can develop bad habits. You should see an improvement in house training within 2-3 weeks of neutering a male rabbit, and within several months of spaying a female rabbit.

### Setting up for success

Put plastic litter boxes containing 2 to 3 inches of compressed sawdust pellets (sold as “wood stove pellets” in hardware stores) in the locations that your rabbit already prefers to urinate. Make the litter boxes pleasant places to be, adding hay, veggie treats, or a favorite toy. The more time your bunny spends in the litter box, the more accustomed to using it your rabbit will become. Change the litter box when the pellets become soaked with urine and fall apart.

If your rabbit has accidents, remember that scolding and punishment don't help. Clean up urine accidents thoroughly, using an enzymatic cleaner to remove the smell. If your rabbit repeatedly shows a preference for a specific area, consider adding an extra box at that site. The best way to prevent accidents is by gradually increasing the size of your bunny's territory. Until it is trained, your rabbit should be confined to its cage or a small room. Once your rabbit is successful using its litter boxes in a small environment, you can gradually increase its freedom, providing additional litter boxes as needed. Watch your rabbit carefully when it is venturing into larger territory. If it heads to a corner without a litter box and starts to raise its tail, clap your hands, say “no”, and gently guide it to a litter box. With patience, you too can have a bona fide house rabbit to share your home with.

Some rabbits are harder to litter box train than others, and sometimes there are medical reasons why a rabbit is not using its litter box. If you have followed the above advice and are still having trouble, or if your bunny's litter box habits suddenly get worse, please call us at (831) 440-8590 to discuss the problem. Good articles on litter box training are also available online at [www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org).