



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 help

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 reduce this behavior and greatly increases your chances of successful litter box training. They also reduce the chance of reproductive disease and eliminate the risk of unwanted litters. Spaying and neutering are 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

Confine your rabbit to an exercise pen or cage until it is using its litter box reliably. Place a litter box without a grate on top (ones for cats work well) in the location that your rabbit already prefers to urinate. Fill the litter box with 2 to 3 inches of compressed sawdust pellets (sold as “wood stove pellets” in hardware stores), and then add hay, veggie treats, or a favorite toy at the end of the litter box furthest away from the urine. The goal is to make the litter box an enjoyable place for your rabbit to spend time. Rinse the litter box when the pellets become soaked and fall apart, but do not scrub it completely clean or use a lining. Your bunny will use the scent of its own urine as a reminder of where to urinate next.

If your rabbit has urine accidents outside of the litter box it is important to clean the soiled area thoroughly. Wash dirty bedding in warm water, and use an enzymatic cleaner on floors and rugs. Your rabbit will want to continue urinating anywhere that smells like urine.

Once your rabbit is using its litter box consistently, you can gradually increase the size of its territory. Watch your rabbit carefully when it is venturing into a new area; 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. If your rabbit repeatedly shows a preference for a specific area, consider adding an extra box at that site. 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.