



Litter Training Rabbits

Can bunnies really use a litterbox?

Yes! You just need to set your rabbit up for success.

Most bunnies take to using a litterbox naturally. They like to stay clean (watch your rabbit groom himself all day!) and use a consistent bathroom location. Here are some tips to helping your rabbit use a litterbox:

Make it inviting

Put a big pile of fresh hay in one end of the box. Bunny will munch at one end and do his business at the other end!

Spay and neuter, and let bunny grow up

Adult spayed or neutered rabbits are much more consistent with a litterbox than baby or unaltered bunnies. That doesn't mean you can't use a box with young or unaltered bunnies—you just might not get the best results all the time.

Start with a small area

Before letting your rabbit roam a room or several rooms in your house, help him learn his box in his own home base. Once your bunny is consistent with using the box in his cage, then let him out into a small area with multiple litterboxes to choose. He'll probably pick one he likes, and later you can remove the extras. After he masters a room, he can have more space. It is confusing to a rabbit to be given too much freedom all at once, so let him learn at his own pace in a small area first.

Let bunny teach you

Does your bunny keep using a cage corner opposite the litterbox? Try moving her box there, or give her another one in that chosen corner! It's okay to have a crowded house while bunny figures out where she wants her box to be. Same goes for the play area—if bunny picks a corner of the room, give her a litterbox in that spot, too.

What do I put in the litterbox?

Use a bunny safe litter. No clay cat litter! Rabbits are nibblers and clay litter can cause blockages in bunny's tummy if she eats it. A cat litterbox works great. Choose a size big enough for your bunny and a pile of hay; many like to lounge in the cozy box, too, so a little extra room is preferred. The box won't have to be cleaned quite as often if it is larger.

Safe bunny litters include Carefresh, Yesterday's News, WoodyPet or Feline Pine compressed wood pellets, aspen shavings (no pine or cedar shavings!), newspaper, and plain old hay. Newspaper and bulk hay are the most inexpensive choice, but they aren't as absorbent as other litters so must be changed frequently. You can also use compressed wood stove pellets as litter, often sold during heating season at feed stores.

Indiana House Rabbit Society/Heartland Rabbit Rescue

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Put down a thick layer of litter to cover the bottom of the box. On top of the litter at one end of the box, place a nice big pile of hay. You will probably need to refresh the litter each day and dump the contents every couple of days to once a week, depending on the size of the box and your bunny's output. Rabbits are *very* prolific poopers!

Many bunnies will use droppings to mark territory. This habit is significantly reduced or eliminated with spaying and neutering, but is more likely to be a problem if there are other bunnies around. Some bunnies who are perfect with their litterbox will start leaving droppings when their environment changes or they are stressed—did you move the furniture? Move bunny to a new cage, room, or house? Rearrange her cage contents? Take her to the vet? She needs to re-establish her territory until she's comfortable with the new situation!

Some rabbits leave droppings in their cage all around the litterbox (as well as in it) to signal it's their space. Respect bunny's territory by cleaning only when she is out to play rather than taking her out of the cage or cleaning around her. She might grunt or lunge at you for invading her space!

Tips to remember

When choosing a cage and litterbox, make sure the box will fit through the door of the cage! If your cage floor area is too small for a litterbox, your cage is too small for your rabbit.

A box with higher sides will keep litter, hay, and waste in better. As bunnies jump in and out of the litterbox, they can scatter droppings and litter. Rabbits also lift their tails to urinate, so if the sides of the box aren't high enough, they will pee right over the edge! This might also happen as litter absorbs and swells and fills the litterbox more; the rabbit will be up higher when on dirty litter and might go over the edge. Cat litterboxes in the larger sizes usually serve well for bunnies; litterboxes designed for rabbits are usually fine for smaller breeds but are rather small for medium and large bunnies.

White vinegar is a favorite bunny urine cleaner. Rinse or soak litterboxes with it, or use to spot treat carpet stains. Many other pet stain products also work well on rabbit urine; experiment to find what works best for you. Nature's Miracle enzyme cleaner and Woolite Pet Stain and Odor Eliminator usually do a good job.

For more litterbox help, see <http://homepage.mac.com/mattocks/morfz/rabcare.html#litter>