



PROPER RABBIT HANDLING

Rabbits are prey animals and see us and other animals as predators. Therefore, being held can be very stressful for them. Also, a rabbit's skeletal system is very fragile, and can get damaged if not properly handled, even just a few times. Rabbits, despite being desensitized to handling or being handled frequently, may never be completely comfortable with it. The process of desensitizing them, avoiding creating negative associations with being handled, and creating positive associations with the use of treats is very important.

The following techniques should be used when picking up and handling a rabbit. For more detailed instructions, refer to any number of rabbit care websites, as many of them have videos showing exactly how to pick up and/or handle a rabbit.

1. Go slow. Get down to his/her level so as not to be leaning or towering over the rabbit which can make them even more nervous. You can also calm them by petting them for a minute or two before picking them up.
2. When you are fairly certain that the rabbit is relaxed enough for pick up, scoop him/her up by gently placing one hand under their torso and pulling them close to your body.
3. With the other hand, support the rabbit's hindquarters. This will make them feel more secure in your arms.
4. Should the rabbit start to tense up or struggle when being picked up, hold him/her firmly, but be prepared to put him/her down. They may decide it's safer/better to jump from your arms, but this can cause serious injury.
5. When putting your rabbit down, slowly squat down while holding them close. Let them down gently.



The "Scoop"



Bring in close



The "Hug"

Rabbit Handling by Children:

1. Children should be educated in the proper way to pick up and handle/hold a rabbit. Children under the age of 12 should be supervised, at least for the first few months, when they are handling a rabbit.
2. Young/small children have a tendency to want to hold a rabbit with both hands or arms under/behind the rabbit's front legs but let the rest of their body dangle. Rabbits need their hind end and feet supported just as much as their front end/feet.
3. Rabbits should NEVER be picked up or handled by the ears and should only be scruffed in an emergency, for instance if the rabbit or human are in danger.