

# North Paws

## Litter Training

### The benefit of litter training your rabbits:

Some may think that litter training a rabbit is for the owners convenience, it makes cleaning out easier and keeps the smell contained. However, it may surprise you to learn that litter training your bunny is good for them too:

- **Tracking their health:** you can tell a lot about a rabbits health from its dropping. Assessing their dropping will tell you about their diet, is it too rich or lacking nutrients? <https://rabbit.org/health/the-mystery-of-rabbit-poop/>
- **Giving them their own space:** when done correctly rabbits will spend time in their litter tray, they will enjoy the space and use it to eat, sleep and play inside.
- **Freedom to roam:** if your rabbit is properly trained, you can allow them more freedom. This gives them more mental stimulation and gives you peace of mind knowing they have a spot to relieve themselves.
- **Natural instincts:** wild rabbits will naturally create a toileting area, these are used to communicate with other rabbits and mark their territory. This natural instinct is shown by domestic rabbits, who will like to use particular spots in their enclosure for toileting.
- **Naturally clean animals:** rabbits like a clean environment, so having a dedicated place to toilet will make their home more pleasant thus, making a happier rabbit

### What will you need to litter train your rabbits?

#### Large litter boxes:

- **A large size:** most rabbit litter boxes on the market are too small, your rabbit needs to be able to fit inside completely and turn around, those sold for kittens/cats are much better. Rabbits like to sleep, eat, and even play in their litter box, so you'll want to give them the space to do all that.
- **At least one low edge:** a box with high edges will be difficult for your rabbit to enter, which could interfere with the litter training process. Make sure your box has at least one low edge so it's easy for them to hop in.
- **More than one:** The RSPCA advises that you have one litter box per rabbit plus one spare.

#### Litter:

- **Recycled paper-based litter:** non-clumping, non-perfumed, dust free

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- **Old newspapers:** You'll want to have a small stack of old newspaper or magazines handy to put into the bottom of the litter tray

No matter what material you choose, avoid cedar and pine shavings, these have phenols that can potentially cause liver and respiratory damage in small animals. However, some pellets made from cedar or pine are safe to use, because the phenols are removed during the manufacturing process.

## Feeding options:

- **Hay:** rabbits love to eat as they go to the toilet! So adding some hay to the litter box is a great idea. You could top the layer of litter with hay, add a handful at one side, or place a hay rack above the box. Your rabbit may do some rearranging, so pay attention to what they like and follow their lead.

## Cleaning equipment:

- **A pet safe cleaning spray:** you don't want to risk your rabbit licking up the harmful chemicals in most cleaning sprays.

## How to train your rabbit?

### 1. Find a place for your rabbits litter box:

Place your rabbits litter boxes in or around the space that they have been using for the bathroom. If free-roaming, this is often a corner of the room, or near their hay.

**Pro Tip:** If your rabbit is free to roam, place a few boxes around the areas they have access to, the more boxes the more opportunities for success.

### 2. Show your rabbit the litter box:

Place your rabbit in the litter box, then give them some healthy treats or some yummy hay this will help your rabbit associate the litter box with positive experiences.

### 3. Bring poop to the litter box:

If your rabbit goes outside the litter box, clean up the urine and bring the droppings to the litter box. This helps them understand that this is the place they should be doing their business.

## Cleaning the litter box:

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Change the litter and hay at least once a day. The cleaner your rabbit's litter box is, the more likely they'll use it.

It is also recommended to use the pet safe cleaning spray twice a week and soaking the box in a solution of 3 parts water and 1 part white vinegar every two to four weeks. Let the box soak for 15 minutes, then rinse well before drying and adding litter and hay.

## Common Rabbit Litter Training Problems and Solutions:

Though many rabbits will take to their litter box quickly, you may face a few problems along the way. Here are a few common scenarios, and what to do in each case:

### 1. Rabbit keeps going outside the litter box

Some rabbits have trouble adjusting to the litter box, especially if they're older or were spayed or neutered later in life. If your rabbit doesn't pick up idea right away, give them a smaller space to roam, they will then be more likely to do their business in the litter box. Then, when they start using the litter box regularly, you can expand the pen to give them more space, and over time, phase it out completely.

It is important to remember that even a fully trained rabbit may leave droppings here and there. Be patient with your rabbit, and remember that an occasional accident is a small price to pay for your rabbit's love and companionship.

### 2. Rabbit is sleeping in the litter box

This is perfectly normal and natural for rabbits, just be sure to keep it very clean.

### 3. Rabbit is missing the box and urinating over the edge

This is a sign that the box is too small, try a larger box and monitor what is happening

### 4. Rabbit kicks litter over the edge of the box

Try putting less litter in the box, you can get enclosed trays which your rabbit may like more. If it is a digging behaviour you need to provide them with an alternative outlet for this behaviour.

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## When to See a Veterinarian

If your rabbit isn't using the litter box and is showing any of the following signs, it's important to seek veterinary advice:

- Straining
- Lethargy
- Not eating or drinking
- Weight loss
- Blood in urine or stool
- Diarrhoea

All of the above can be signs of potential medical issues and delay could lead to a very sick or even dead rabbit so do not hesitate to call your vet with questions.