

A Rabbit's Smelly Cage Distresses Owner

How to eliminate the odor from your rabbit's living area.

By Caroline Charland

Posted: November 13, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Q: I have two rabbits that live in a cage. No matter how often I clean their cage, within a couple of hours it stinks again. The smell is unbearable. I have tried to potty train them, but nothing works. Do you have any suggestions?

A: Rabbits are very clean animals that like to live in clean conditions. It is natural for them to poop and urinate in a corner, so they do very well with a litter box in the right type of set up.

There are a few different things we can address here to make this work better for you and your rabbits.

First of all, are the rabbits spayed or neutered? If not, I would highly recommend having that done by a rabbit-knowledgeable veterinarian. Rabbits that are not altered will continually want to mark their territory by spraying urine and pooping everywhere. Plus, once altered, they have excellent litter box habits.

Second of all, most cages are too small for rabbits to live in, cages are hard to keep clean and there is normally not enough room for a large litter box. The minimum space a rabbit should live in is 4 feet wide by 4 feet long, the size of an exercise pen. Additionally, they still need to come out for daily exercise. Rabbits need lots of room to run around and play, so bigger is always better. Aside from being too small, most cages have a wire bottom, which is very bad for rabbit's feet. Rabbits often get sore hocks that can become infected and are very painful when they live on a wire bottom. Therefore, they need to be on a solid bottom.

People don't put a cat or a dog in a cage, so why put a rabbit in one? Some homes do have to keep a rabbit confined when the humans are not home, so a pen works great.

The third change would be adding the right kind of litter box. All too often, the litter boxes are too small. Your rabbits should be able to lie down in their litter box as they often like to take a nap in there. The litter box should have a rabbit safe litter in the bottom, and hay should be piled on top of it at all times. Rabbits like to poop and graze at the same time.

Change the litter box everyday, or every other day. It is a good idea to keep white vinegar in a spray bottle so when you empty the litter box you can spray it with vinegar to get it nice and clean.