

Bringing Home Bunny

Good preparation and what you do during your new rabbit's first 30 days with you can help it quickly adjust to your new home.

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When you bring your rabbit home, place it into the exercise pen inside its carrier, open the door and let the rabbit come out when it is ready. The rabbit may stay in there for a little while, but will eventually venture out. It will go around the pen, exploring and rubbing its chin on things. This is its way of saying, "These are all mine and I have been here." The rabbit may go into its hidey-house to feel safe for a bit, or hop into the litter box and start munching on hay.

Once your rabbit comes out of the carrier, remove the carrier from the pen. Sit outside the pen talking in a calm, quiet voice. In the next day or two, sit in the pen with your rabbit. Sit quietly and let it come up to you of its own accord. Offering veggies is a sure way to get your rabbit to come over to you and let you sneak in some head strokes. Rabbits are all different: some need hardly any adjustment time to a new home, others need weeks or even months.

Allow your rabbit to settle in its pen for about five days before letting it out for playtime in the rest of the room or house. This helps it get used to its new home so it feels safe and secure and knows it has a place of its own.

Another reason to keep your rabbit in a pen for the first five days is to get it using the litter box. Rabbits are naturally clean animals. They usually poop and urinate in the same spot, which is why litter-box training is so easy.

Free Roam For Rabbits

Once you believe your rabbit has settled into its new home, open up the pen to let it into the rest of the room. Most rabbits come out to explore and often find a spot to lie down and nap. Once a rabbit gets used to coming out, it will start running around and having fun. Some rabbits may not come out at all because they feel more comfortable in their pen; they just need a little more time to know that it is safe.

Keep free-roam time to about 15 minutes for the first few times, then extend the time a bit each time your rabbit comes out. This helps keep your rabbit using its litter box in the pen. You can also add more litter boxes outside the pen.

Some rabbits can be very shy and need special care and time to help them feel safe in their new home. Sit quietly in the pen with a shy rabbit to help it learn to trust you. Offer veggies out of your hand. After a few times of doing this, stroke your rabbit gently on the back or ears, speaking with a calm voice.

Be careful not to make any sudden movements or loud noises; this could scare a rabbit so much it may run so fast that it could injure itself.

Set a routine for your rabbit: a time for pellets, a time for veggies, a time for playtime out of the pen and a time for bedtime. Most rabbits tend to lie around during the afternoon and are active in the morning and evening. Once it learns the routine, your rabbit will be waiting for you to be there to feed it or let it out. If you are late, it may tell you about it by thumping, rattling the sides of its pen or banging its dishes together. If your bunny stays in the pen when you are away, give it lots of time out of the pen when you are home.