



# Transporting Your Rabbit to the Veterinary Practice

Rabbits can become stressed when being transported so it is important that this process is done in an appropriate and comfortable manner.

## Carriers

### Best Option:



Amazon, 2024

A solid plastic carrier which has ventilation holes in the side and a wire mesh front door is the best option. Your rabbit should be able to lie down, stand up and turn around comfortably, but without having too much room as this can cause an injury. Also very easy to clean if an 'accident' occurs.

If you have two rabbits that have bonded, it would be best to transport them together to ease distress, so ensure the carrier can house two rabbits comfortably.

### Unsuitable Options:



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#### Cardboard:

Gets wet easily and is chewable.



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#### Wire mesh:

Rabbit too exposed to elements and predators. Can get limbs caught in gaps causing injury.



Amazon, 2024

#### Wicker:

Looks pretty but a great snack. Once chewed can lead to escape.



Amazon, 2024

#### Material:

Messy if 'accidents' occur and easily chewable which can lead to escape.



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You should never transport your rabbit using only a collar/harness or lead – this provides zero protection or safety, especially in a vet waiting room.

## Getting your rabbit familiar with the carrier



The Bunny Hub, 2024

- ❖ Rabbits usually like to have a certain area that they like to sit in. This is the perfect place to put the carrier - they will wonder what this strange object is and will naturally go and investigate it.
- ❖ Leave the door open so they can get used to the sight and smell of it.
- ❖ Put a few pieces of their favourite food inside and this will encourage them to 'have a look' and hopefully hop in for a quick snack. You can also put some toys inside.
- ❖ Do not rush this process and do not try and force them to get inside the carrier. This will scare them and could result in an injury. It can have a detrimental effect and will cause your rabbit to develop a negative association with the carrier.
- ❖ Be patient and they will get there.

## Preparing to leave home

- ❖ Line the carrier with newspaper to stop your rabbit slipping around when being moved (this will also help to absorb any accidents). Also put some of their bedding inside - this will have their scent on it and will make the area feel more familiar.
- ❖ Provide some food (favourite vegetables) and water (drip bottle attached to the carrier door).
- ❖ When putting your rabbit into its carrier, hold them gently but firmly and support their hind legs.
- ❖ Never pick up a rabbit by the scruff of their neck or by their ears – this can terrify them.
- ❖ If the door is on top, keep them close to your body and lower them slowly inside.
- ❖ If the door is on the front or side, encourage the rabbit to go inside without using any force.
- ❖ You do not want them to struggle and kick out as this can lead to a spinal injury.



PDSA, 2024

## Travelling

- ❖ Ideally travel by car - place the carrier on the seat and put the seatbelt around it or secure it in the footwell. Rabbits do not do well in high heat, so ensure they are not in direct sunlight.
- ❖ If it is a warm day, open the windows a little to allow a flow of fresh air.
- ❖ If travelling by bus, try and sit in a quiet area and hold the carrier securely on your lap. Place a towel or blanket over the carrier to help muffle any loud noises and help your rabbit feel more secure. If you do this though remember that your rabbit still needs to breathe!
- ❖ If you should meet a dog out with its owner whilst walking to the practice, keep your distance. Rabbits are prey animals for dogs, and also cats.
- ❖ If the vet's waiting room is busy with lots of dogs and cats, let the Receptionist know you have arrived and either wait outside if the weather is nice or wait in the car until the vet is ready to see you.



Dreamstime, 2024

## Helping to keep your rabbit calm

- ❖ Talk to your rabbit gently while they are travelling and also while waiting to see the vet – this will comfort them.
- ❖ You can place a towel or blanket over the carrier to help muffle any loud noises and help your rabbit feel more secure. If you do this though remember that your rabbit still needs to breathe.
- ❖ Keep your bunny occupied – have a piece of their favourite food to hand to you can offer this through the door.
- ❖ When moving the carrier, do so gently with no suddenly harsh movements.