

New Rabbit – Now What?

 rabbit.org/a-rabbit-in-the-house-now-what/

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Set your rabbit up for success; structure his environment so he will succeed.

You probably will need a cage or a pen! The cage or pen will be your rabbit's nest; rabbits usually prefer to have a safe area they can call their own. Set the cage (nest) on the floor, in an area where you spend time, such as the living room or family room. Do not put the cage near a heater or a loud TV or stereo. Always provide shade from a sunny window. When secluded in one room, such as a bedroom, they may be cut off from the family and unsure of the area outside. The more contact you have with your rabbit, the more you will enjoy each other.

Rabbits are crepuscular, which means that they generally sleep during the day and during the night, but are ready to play at dawn and twilight. So, if you're at work during the day, they won't mind so much being in a cage. But they **MUST** be let out for at least several hours each day, both to exercise and to have social interaction with you.

The nest should include a litterbox with hay, and food and water bowls. Follow our litterbox training tips. Supply him with safe toys and a bed of lambswool from the fabric store. Line the pull out tray with newspaper. Avoid wood shavings. Use a organic litter such as CareFRESH, Yesterday's News or Cat Country in the litterbox.

Put Thumper in his nest and close the door for a few hours. Let him get used to the sounds and smells of your home while feeling safe and secure. If he nibbles his food or stretches out, he is relaxing.

Allow a small run area for the first few days. Close off bedrooms or areas where he can get lost. Block access behind refrigerators, washer/dryers and entertainment centers. He should be able to have run time whenever you can supervise him. Put one or more litterboxes in the run area and increase his freedom as he proves himself with his box. Put some hay in the litterbox to encourage him to get in.

Bunny proof! Rabbits like to chew and dig! Tuck electrical and phone cords out of the way or encase them in clear plastic tubing from the hardware store. Remove books and other desirable items from low shelves. Put houseplants up out of the way. Provide him with a cardboard box of hay to play in. Redirect him to his toys if he is "acting up." Young bunnies are especially exuberant and need to be properly directed.

Bored rabbits become naughty rabbits. If you're not around to talk to or pet your rabbit as you prepare dinner, watch TV or just read, your rabbit will become very bored. That's when rabbits generally get into trouble by digging in the carpet, chewing on forbidden objects or eating your couch. A very large hole can appear in the carpet in just a few minutes. Young rabbits are generally the ones who get into this type of mischief. So, even if your rabbit starts out this way, you might check every few months to see if she can earn more freedom as she ages. Often, the bathroom, laundry room, kitchen or a bedroom are good, safe places to confine your rabbit while you're away. These rooms are easy to rabbit-proof. If none of these rooms is practical, then you'll probably have to consider an indoor cage or pen.

Free run of the house is what we strive for and what many of us are able to achieve. This definitely requires more work on your part. You must inspect every room of your house like a four-star general, looking for wires and other dangerous objects (like plants) that could cause harm to your rabbit. If you have a computer room, you might allow your rabbit access to every room except that one. The more room your rabbit has, the more delightful you will find her as a pet and companion.

Toys: To keep your rabbit occupied and amused, offer toys such as:

- Toilet paper and paper towel rolls

- Paper cups (not plastic coated)
- Newspaper and white scrap paper (ink isn't harmful, just gives dirty feet)
- Straw baskets
- Canning jar rings
- Rolled oats box; cut off the bottom to make a tunnel for tiny rabbit. Be sure he won't get stuck!
- Soft drink can with pebble inside for noise
- Rubber balls (unless your rabbit chews on them)
- Wire ball with bell inside (sold in stores as a cat or bird toy)
- Cardboard boxes (tape shut then cut small doors)
- Old towels to push around and dig at

Have your rabbit spayed or neutered at about 4-6 months of age by a veterinarian experienced with rabbits. This will help with litterbox training and general behavior.

Do not leave your rabbit unattended outside as rabbits scare easily and can dig out of a fenced yard. Also, keep them from poisonous plants and pesticides. You can try an "H style" cat harness and a leash, but begin in a safe and familiar area.

Discipline: Never hit a rabbit. They can become very aggressive and angry if provoked. When you find your rabbit doing something that is not allowed, try any or all of the following:

- Clap your hands together to make a loud noise
- Thump your foot like a fellow rabbit
- Whistle loudly
- Shout loudly

Biting: Biting must be stopped as soon as possible. Rabbits do not usually bite because they hate you. There are many reasons within a rabbit's social structure that bring about a bite. For instance, a finger or hand in front of their face may be misinterpreted as a challenge to fight. A rabbit may also accidentally bite when he tries to tug your pant leg and accidentally gets your ankle. Whatever the reason, if you get nipped, let out a shrill cry. Rabbits do this when they are hurt. Since they usually do not intend to hurt you, they will be surprised to find that you have cried out and will usually stop the behavior within a few times.

Get down on the floor! Spend a lot of time on your rabbit's level where you are less intimidating. Rabbits are naturally curious and will come up to you eventually. Most rabbits enjoy being petted on the broad part of their head. Snuggling on the floor is usually welcome. If you are holding the rabbit and he struggles, hold him tightly or drop down to your knees and let him go. Do not drop your rabbit as they are very fragile.

Your rabbit may be a bit shy at first. Usually within two weeks rabbits begin to feel more secure in their new surroundings. Soon, you will have a rabbit dancing around your home, testing you, seeing what he can get away with!

Rabbit Food

What are the basics of a good house rabbit diet?

A rabbit's diet should be made up of good quality pellets, fresh hay (timothy or other grass hays), oat hay, water and fresh vegetables. Anything beyond that is a "treat" and should be given in limited quantities.

What makes a good pellet?

Pellets should be fresh, and should be relatively high in fiber (18% minimum fiber). Do not purchase more than 6 weeks worth of feed at a time, as it will become spoiled. Pellets should make up less of a rabbit's diet as he or she grows older, and hay should be available 24 hours a day. Alfalfa pellets are fine for younger rabbits but timothy pellets are preferred for older rabbits.

What kinds of veggies should I feed my rabbit?

When shopping for vegetables, look for a selection of different veggies—look for both dark leafy veggies and root vegetables, and try to get different colors. Stay away from beans and rhubarb. Introduce new veggies slowly. Here's a [suggested veggie list](#).

Is feeding hay important?

Hay is essential to a rabbit's good health, providing roughage which reduces the danger of hairballs and other blockages. Apple tree twigs also provide good roughage. [Find out where to buy hay here](#).

What quantities of food should I feed babies and "teenagers"?

- Birth to 3 weeks—mother's milk
- 3 to 4 weeks—mother's milk, nibbles of alfalfa and pellets
- 4 to 7 weeks—mother's milk, access to alfalfa and pellets
- 7 weeks to 7 months—unlimited pellets, unlimited hay (plus see 12 weeks below)
- 12 weeks—introduce vegetables (one at a time, quantities under 1/2 oz.)

What quantities of food should I feed young adults? (7 months to 1 year)

- introduce timothy hay, grass hay, oat hay, and other hays; decrease alfalfa
- decrease pellets to 1/2 cup per 6 lbs. body weight
- increase daily vegetables gradually; make sure your rabbit can tolerate
- fruit daily ration no more than 1 oz. to 2 oz. per 6 lbs. body weight (because of calories)

What quantities of food should I feed mature adults? (1 to 5 years)

- Unlimited timothy, grass hay, oat hay, other hays including brome, Bermuda, etc.
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup pellets per 6 lbs. body weight (depending on metabolism and/or proportionate to veggies)
- Minimum 2 cups chopped vegetables per 6 lbs. body weight; always introduce vegetables and greens slowly

to make sure your rabbit can tolerate

- fruit daily ration no more than 2 oz. (2 TBL) per 6 lbs. body weight.

What quantities of food should I feed senior rabbits? (Over 6 years)

- If sufficient weight is maintained, continue adult diet
- Frail, older rabbits may need unrestricted pellets to keep weight up. Alfalfa can be given to underweight rabbits, only if calcium levels are normal. Annual blood workups are highly recommended for geriatric rabbits.

If I feed fewer pellets, how do I compensate?

When you feed a lower quantity ([or no](#)) of pellets, you must replace the nutritional value without the calories, which is done by increasing the vegetables. Also, a variety of hay must be encouraged all day long, we do this by offering fresh hay a couple of times a day.

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Sources: HRH, various articles from the HRJ, RHN

More rabbit food information:

- [The Importance of Hay](#)
- [Greens are Great!](#)
- [Rabbit Nutrition](#)
- [Overweight and Underweight Rabbits](#)
- [What to Feed Your Rabbit](#)
- [Feeding Hay to Rabbits and Rodents](#)
- [Intermittent Soft Cecotropes in Rabbits](#)
- [Small Animal Nutrition](#)
- [Pellet Free Diet](#)
- [The Perils of Bunny Obesity](#)
- [Brenda's Homemade Bunny Biscuits](#)
- [Treat Foods](#)
- [Digestibility in the Rabbit Diet](#)
- [Natural Nutrition I: The Importance of Fiber](#)
- [Hay in Your Bunny's Diet](#)
- [Problems with Vegetables](#)
- [Lowering Blood Calcium](#)
- [How to Not Explode a Bale of Hay](#)
- [Pellets' Place in the Mature Rabbit's Diet](#)
- [Natural Nutrition II: Pellets and Veggies](#)
- [Recipes for Special Needs](#)

First Few Weeks in a New Home

 rabbit.org/first-few-weeks-in-a-new-home-2/

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During these early days your new family member may not “be himself.” The two most important contributions you can make are to set up a friendly, safe environment and to let him set the pace for getting acquainted.

When you first bring home a rabbit, one of the most useful tools for helping him to feel at ease is your imagination. How do you and your household look to him? Add a little common sense, a dash of patience, and a few basics of rabbit care and behavior, and you’ve got a recipe for a lifelong friendship.

While you are observing and learning about him, bear in mind that during these early days he may not “be himself.” He may be too scared to show you how affectionate he’s going to be once he recovers from the shock of relocation. He may have too much on his mind to be anything but perfectly box-trained; in a few weeks, when he’s feeling more at home, he may need a course in Litterbox 101. She may be feeling so insecure that territorial marking is almost an obsession (if he/she’s not neutered/ spayed, do it now!). He may be too scared to let you hold or touch him; or he may be too scared to tell you he doesn’t like to be held. He may seem extraordinarily loving and affectionate, leaving you stunned and confused when this hormone-driven behavior decreases in the weeks following spay/neuter. Or he may be one of those rare mellow, confident individuals whose new family needs none of the following suggestions.

During this volatile period, the two most important contributions you can make are to set up a friendly, safe environment and to let him set the pace for getting acquainted.

Home Base

Set up a small area or roomy cage (or both). Use a laundry room, bathroom, hallway blocked off with baby gates, or part of a larger room sectioned off using furniture, boxes, or other objects he can’t scale or knock over. Choose a spot that gets some regular, not-too-noisy traffic, where he can see and hear but not be trampled by your daily routines. Start housetraining by providing at least one or two litterboxes. A fresh layer of grass hay on top will both encourage and reward him for hopping in. If you know what brand of chow he was eating, keep him on it for a while to minimize risk of digestive upset (unless it was bunny junk-food that contained corn, seeds, and other unhealthy additions). Fresh water in a bowl or bottle, or both, should be available at all times. Give him at least one cardboard box with two bunny-size doors cut, and a towel draped across one area of his cage, as hiding places. Start him on the road to good chewing habits by removing forbidden and dangerous temptations such as house plants, electric cords, and books. Provide permitted alternatives such as untreated straw, wicker, or sea-grass baskets and mats (available at import stores such as Pier 1), cardboard tubes and boxes, plastic baby-toys for tossing, fruit-tree branches, and plenty of fresh hay.

Great Expectations, and what to do about them

As with good housetraining habits, building a friendship may take time and patience. If he’s not ready to be petted yet, caress him with your voice. Talk to him, or to anyone while in his presence. Many rabbits seem to enjoy listening to their humans talk on the phone. Hang out with him in rabbit fashion, by sitting quietly on the floor. Show him that he can hop over to you, take a few get-acquainted sniffs and gentle nibbles, and then hop away again. This hands-off approach paves the way to a hands-on friendship, especially with shy or traumatized rabbits. As her fear diminishes, her curiosity increases. Place a small treat or two (a sprig of parsley or carrot-top, a sliver of apple) and a few toys on the floor next to you, to make his visit even more rewarding.

If no other humans are around, you might want to say your first few words in Rabbit. Tell your new friend how happy, content, calm, and delighted you feel in his company. You may not be able, as he is, to “comb” your long silky ears between your hands—but you can pretend to wash your face the way he does, using hands and tongue. When he responds by grooming himself, it means you’re way cool, practically an Honorary Rabbit.

When adding a rabbit to our family, we may be ready right away to give and receive generous amounts of love and affection. Maybe that’s because we’re not the ones who have just arrived in a strange place, populated by foreigners who don’t speak our language. Imagine how you would feel if the size difference between you were reversed: a giant hand reaches down and plucks you from your home. It sets you down on a planet of 2-ton, 30-foot-tall beings—a sort of giraffe/elephant hybrid. How long before you’d feel relaxed? What would be your instinctive reaction when one of these giants came lumbering over? Is that a smile on the enormous creature’s face, or a grimace? Only time (plus the occasional raisin or banana slice) will tell your new companion that she’s among friends.

Elizabeth TeSelle

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Litter Training

By nature, rabbits choose one or a few places (usually corners) to deposit their urine and most of their pills. Urine-training involves little more than putting a litterbox where the rabbit chooses to go. Pill training requires only that you give them a place they know will not be invaded by others. Here are some suggestions to help you to train your rabbit to use the litterbox.

Does age make a difference?

Older rabbits are easier to train than younger rabbits, especially babies. A rabbit's attention span and knack for learning increases as they grow up. If you have a baby, stick with it! And if you are deciding whether to adopt an older rabbit, or litter train your older rabbit, go for it!

Does spaying/neutering make a difference?

Yes! This is often the most important factor. When rabbits reach the age of 4-6 months, their hormones become active and they usually begin marking their territory. By spaying or neutering your rabbit, he will be more likely to use his litterbox (as well as be much healthier and happier).

What types of litter should I use?

It depends on what's available in your area and what your rabbit's habits are. Keep in mind the following as you choose your litter:

- most rabbits spend lots of time in their litter boxes
- rabbits will always nibble some of the litter
- rabbit urine has a very strong odor.

House Rabbit Society recommends organic litters, made from alfalfa, oat, citrus or paper. (Some brands to look for: Care Fresh (Natural only), Cat Country, Critter Country, Yesterday's News, and Papurr) For a complete listing of litter types, see the [litter boxes and liver disease article](#).

Stay away from litters made from softwoods, like pine or cedar shavings or chips, as these products are thought to cause liver damage in rabbits who use them. CatWorks litter has been linked to zinc poisoning. Swheat Scoop Litter should be avoided, because rabbits will often ingest it. Because it is comprised of wheat, it is very high in carbohydrates and can cause obesity, excessive cecal production, diarrhea, bacterial imbalance, and other health issues.

Another approach is to place a handful of hay in each box, or to simply use hay as litter. It is helpful to put several layers of newspaper under the hay, to absorb urine so that your rabbit is not standing in the urine. Most newspapers today are using soy-based ink, which is safe for your rabbit, but check with your local newspaper to make sure first. Obviously, you need to change the hay fairly frequently (daily), since your rabbit will be eating it. This method often helps to encourage good litter habits as well as to encourage hay consumption, since rabbits often eat at or near the



Macchi and Josie share their litterbox, which is filled with natural, paper-based litter, and topped with hay.

same time as they use the litter box.

Pros and cons of the various types of litter include:

- clay litter is dusty—if your bunny is a digger, the dust can make her vulnerable to pneumonia
- the deodorant crystals in some clay litters are toxic
- clumping litters will clump inside the rabbit's digestive and respiratory tracts (the latter if they manage to make enough dust to breathe) causing serious problems and often leading to death
- pine and cedar shavings emit gases that [cause liver damage](#) when breathed by the bunny
- corn cob litter isn't absorbent and doesn't control odor, and has the the risk of being eaten and casing a lethal blockage.
- oat- and alfalfa-based litters (available from Purina, Manna-Pro, and King-Soopers groceries [not sure what the geographical range of this chain is]) have excellent odor controlling qualities, but if a rabbit eats too much, they expand and cause bloating; these, too, can be added, with the bunny's waste, to compost
- newspapers are absorbent, but don't control odor
- citrus-based litters work well, offer no dangers, and can be composted, but may be hard to get and expensive in some areas of the country/world
- some people have reported success with peat moss which can also be composted
- Many people have great success with litter made from paper pulp or recycled paper products. These litters are very good at absorbing and cutting down on odors. A litter called Carefresh (use the Natural only product) is available at most pet stores, as is Yesterday's News. A similar litter in a pelleted form is called Cellu-Dri. These litters are harmless if ingested.
- Compressed sawdust pellets are inexpensive, highly absorbent litters used in many foster homes. They are made from softwood or hardwood sawdust, but they are not toxic because the phenolic compounds are removed during their manufacture. Their wood composition helps control bacterial growth and odors. Wood stove fuel pellets and Feline Pine are two examples of this product.
- Litters made from Aspen bark are safe and good at absorbing odors. One brand is called GentleTouch 1-800-545-9853.

Cleaning and disposal

Clean litterboxes often, to encourage your rabbit to use them. Use white vinegar to rinse boxes out—for tough stains, let pans soak. Accidents outside of the cage can be cleaned up with white vinegar or club soda. If the urine has already dried, you can try products like "Nature's Miracle" to remove the stain and odor. To dispose of organic litters, they can be used as mulch, or can be composted. Rabbit pills can be directly applied to plants as fertilizer.

What kinds of cages work best?

Use a cage large enough to contain a small litterbox (along with bunny's food and water bowls, toys, etc.) and still allow enough room for the rabbit to stretch out. Place the box in the corner of the cage that he goes in. With a litterbox in the cage, when the rabbit is confined to his cage when you're not home, cage time is learning time.

What if my cage is on legs or has a door that opens on top so the bunny can't get into it on his own?

If it is on legs, build a ramp or stairs, or pile boxes to make steps—anything so he can come and go on his own.

If the door is on top, put a small stool or box inside to help him get out, a board or piece of rug to help him walk to the edge of the cage, and a ramp, stairs, stool, or boxes to help him get down (and up again).

What if my cage is too small for a litter box or I don't use a cage?

If your cage is too small for a litter box, you may have a cage that is too small for your rabbit. Our Housing FAQ has lots of info on appropriate cages and enclosures.

Or you may have a dwarf rabbit and can't get a small litter box. A good substitute is a Pyrex baking dish. Even 9" x 9" is sufficient for a small 3 or 4 pound rabbit.

You may have a cage with wire on the bottom and a tray underneath that catches the urine. In this case, the tray is the litter box and the cage itself is where the bunny learns to go. You can often place the litter box in the tray, under the cage, so that you need not fill the entire bottom with litter. P> If you don't use a cage, you need to give the bunny a particular area to call its own. Just put a litter box wherever the bunny seems to prefer.

Pills vs. urine

All rabbits will drop pills around their cages to mark it as their own. This is not failure to be litter-trained. It is very important for your rabbit to identify the cage as her property so that when she leaves the cage for the bigger world of your house, she will distinguish the family's area from her own and avoid marking it. To encourage this, make the rabbit the king of his cage. Try not to force him in or out of it—coax him. Do not do things to his cage that he doesn't like, or things to him that he doesn't like while he's in the cage.

The trick to getting the rabbit to keep his pills in the cage is to give him ownership of his cage—respect the cage as HIS:

- Don't reach into the cage to take him out; open the door and let him come out if and when HE wants to come;
- Don't catch him and put him back in the cage or it will be his prison, not his home. Herd him back gently, and let him choose to go in to get away from you (I walk behind my buns, clap my hands, and say "bedtime." They know that I'll not stop harassing them with this until they go into their cage, so they run in except when they feel they haven't gotten their fair share of time outside the cage.)
- It's a bit like a child going home and closing the door, because someone is calling her names. They may make the playground an unpleasant place for her, but they can't bother her in her own home.
- If the rabbit has been snuggling with you, it's okay to [carry him](#) to the door of the cage and let him go in—just don't put him directly into the cage, and never chase and trap him and put him in the cage.
- Don't reach into the cage to get food dishes—anchor them near the door of the cage so they can be filled with a minimum of trespassing into the cage, or wait until the rabbit is out to fill them.
- Don't clean the cage while the rabbit is in it—wait until he comes out. He'll come over and supervise you, even help you move things around that you've set down outside the cage, but as long as he isn't in the cage, he won't see your cleaning as an invasion of his territory. (Smart rabbits—I wouldn't object if someone were

Even if your goal is to let your rabbit have full run of the house, you must start small. Start with a cage and a small running space, and when your rabbit is sufficiently well trained in that space, gradually give her more space. But do so gradually! If you overwhelm her with too much freedom before she's ready, she will forget where her box is and will lose her good habits.

So what's the actual method?

Start with a box in the cage, and one or more boxes in the rabbit's running space. If she urinates in a corner of the cage not containing the box, move the box to that corner until she gets it right. Don't be concerned if your bunny curls up in his litterbox—this is natural. Once she's using the box in the cage, open her door and allow her into her running space. Watch her go in and out on her own. If she heads to a corner where there's no box, or lifts up her tail in the characteristic fashion, cry "no" in a single, sharp burst of sound. Gently herd her back to her cage and her litterbox, or into one of the boxes in her room. Be careful, however. You don't want to make the cage or the litterbox seem like punishment. A handful of hay in the box makes it a more welcoming place. After she first uses the box, praise her and give her her favorite treat. Once she uses the box in her room a couple of times, you're well on your way, as her habits will be on their way to forming. As she gets better trained in her first room, you can increase her space. Don't hurry this process. And if the area becomes very big, or includes a second floor, be sure to include more litterboxes, so as not to confuse her. Remember, as she becomes more confident and uses fewer boxes, you can start to remove some of her early, "training" boxes. Get your rabbit into a daily routine and try not to vary it. Rabbits are very habitual and once a routine is established, they usually prefer to stick with it.

How many litterboxes?

The more, the merrier, especially if your rabbit is a bit of a slow learner, or is especially obstinate about where she wants her box(es) to go. As her habits improve, you can decrease the number of litterboxes.

Kicking litter out of the box

Some rabbits love to kick their litter out of the box. You can get a covered litterbox (with a hood) to help solve this problem. You can also try experimenting with different litters.

Urinating over the edge of the litterbox

A second problem is that rabbits often back up so far in the litterbox that the urine goes over the edge. Again, a covered litterbox can solve this problem. Another solution would be to get a dishpan or other type of tub with much higher sides. Still another solution would be to get a "urine guard" to place around the back of the cage, to keep the litter from spraying outside of the cage.

What to do if your rabbit insists on using another spot?

Compromise. If your rabbit continually urinates in a spot where there is no litterbox, put his box where he will use it, even if it means rearranging his cage or moving a table in the living room. It is much easier to oblige him than to try to work against a determined bunny!

What are the most common litter training mistakes?

1. Letting the bunny out of the cage and not watching her with undivided attention; You can't watch TV or read the paper or knit or talk on the phone and expect to keep your mind on what the bunny is doing every second—if she urinates without being "caught" and herded to the litter box, she'll be that much slower in learning what she's supposed to do.
2. Getting in a hurry. Bunnies take time. Perhaps that's one of their special gifts to us in this hectic world. They

require that we take time out to sit and watch and do nothing else. Besides getting a well-trained bunny for your efforts, you also get a short period of time each day to watch one of the most charming little creatures on earth explore, skip for joy, and in general entertain you with her bunny-ness.

What should I do if my rabbit starts dribbling all over her cage instead of using the litter box?

Dribbles usually indicate a bladder infection. Get your bunny to a rabbit-veterinarian who will probably put her on an antibiotic. If the dribbling stops, you know that that was the problem. (Watch out for antibiotics given by veterinarians not familiar with rabbits as companion animals!)

If the “dribbles” are more than dribbles, or if the antibiotic doesn’t stop the problem, consider any factors that may be making your bunny feel insecure (new pet, house guests, change in location of cage, etc.), any of which can cause a bunny to mark her cage more enthusiastically (similar to someone having a dispute with a neighbor about the location of a fence setting up a flag at the property boundary marker).

Why does my rabbit urinate or leave pills right beside the litterbox?

The three most common things that are related to poor litter habits (especially if the bun had been using the litterbox in the past) are:

1. **Urinary Tract infections; sludge in the bladder; bladder stones; kidney disease.** This should be treated by a qualified doctor. A common example is Oreo, a 8.5 year Dutch who had 75% kidney failure and began urinating on the floor next to the litterbox when her problems first began. Hershey (her mate) did the same thing when he had a severe UTI last year. After the UTI was cleared up, he began to use the litterbox again.
1. **Behavior related.** Once the possibility of physiological causes is eliminated, the behavioral reasons seem to go something like this: Miz Bun eliminates next to her litterbox because of some stress, eg, a break in her routine such as less or more running time than usual, visitors at home, kids home from college or summer camp, any intensely emotional event whether good or bad. It could even be a single incident such as being frightened by a sudden noise (car backfiring, etc) while she’s in her box, which she then associates with being in the box. Whatever the reason, she’s feeling insecure and tries to rebuild her confidence by “underlining her signature” (signature being her droppings in the box; underlining, the puddles/piles beside it). Unless it’s an ongoing stress that can be removed, figuring out the cause is not particularly relevant. The important factor is not what happened the first time but the habit that often grows from it. She pees beside the box today because she did it yesterday. Many people do not take action for the first few incidents, especially with a rabbit who’s always been good about using the litterbox. They figure it’s a fluke that will disappear as suddenly as it started. this gives the habit time to take firm root. By day 3, the habit is fairly entrenched, and correction of the perceived cause will not solve the problem. What WILL solve it? The usual: confinement, praise, rewards, vigilant observation and supervision during free-run time. But there’s a catch-22 to this method. It generally requires a change in Miz Bun’s routine, which is a common cause for the behavior in the first place. I know of no easy way around this knot. The hard way is to confine, praise, etc with minimal change to her usual routine. Sometimes I add a box to the rabbit’s area. The novelty makes the box attractive (as do treats placed in it). She hops in to investigate, and voila! she eliminates IN A BOX. This is good behavior, worthy of lavish rewards. It’s often easier to get her to go in a new box than to go in the one she’s been eliminating next to. It’s important for people to understand that this process can take time. A rabbit who’s been perfectly box-trained for three years and has peed next to the box for three days may need three weeks of intensive training to get back to her old, good behavior. Why is it that bad habits take longer to undo than to initiate while the reverse is true of good habits?

1. **Territory related.** Winston, a religious litterbox user began urinating on the floor next to the litterbox near the gate...when Buttercup arrived on the opposite side of the gate. After Winston got used to Buttercup, and had “his” territory sufficiently marked, he stopped using the floor and resumed using the litterbox.

[Kurdish translation!](#)

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