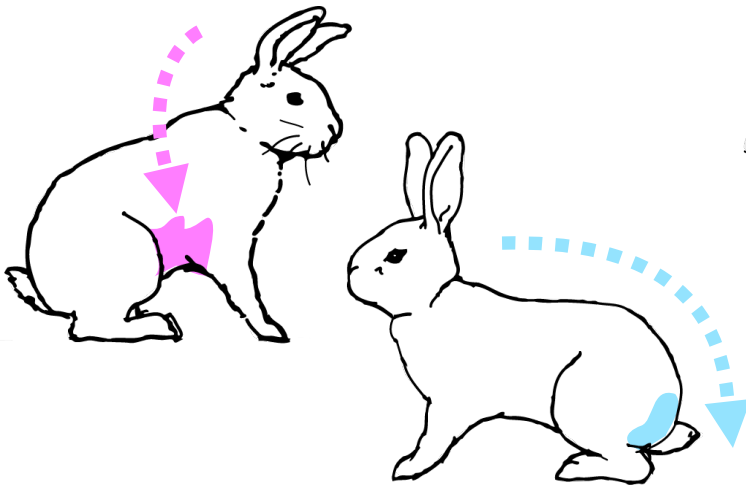
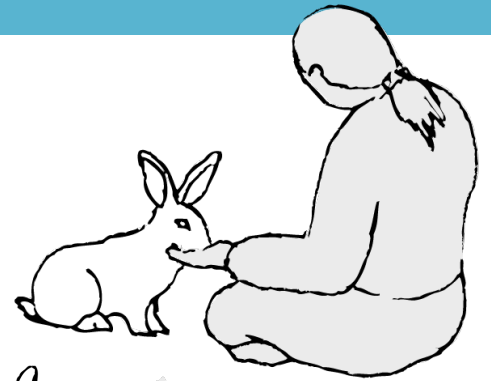


Behaviour: How to Pick Up Your Bunny

By Tamsin Stone

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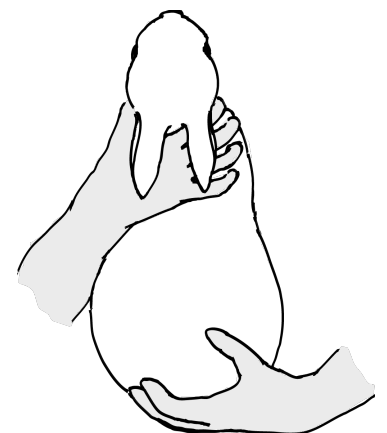
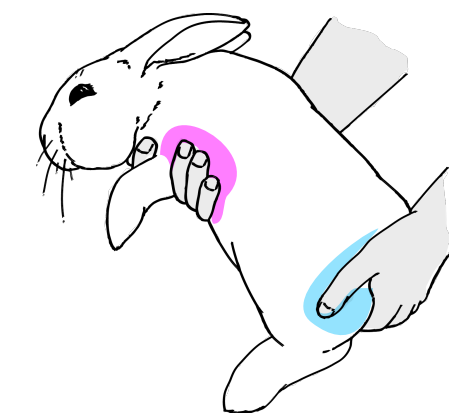
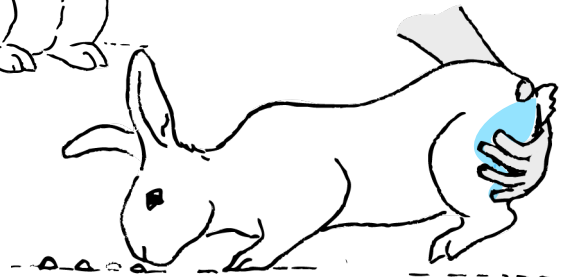
1 Being picked up isn't a natural experience for a rabbit. If your rabbit runs away, kicks or wriggles when you try to pick him up then he is probably scared. You need to work slowly on building his confidence and teaching him, through positive experiences, that it's not something to be worried about. Avoid picking your rabbit up for now (use a pet carrier he can hop into if you need to move him). Spend time making friends, providing treats and teaching your bunny that interacting with you is fun not scary.



2 Once your rabbit is happy to interact with you, it's time to start introducing him to being touched in the areas that you will need to hold to pick him up. Don't worry if your rabbit moves away at first, try again later. Don't pick him up yet, this is just practice.

- ▶ Stroke down his back from shoulders to tail as normal, but continue on to end up cupping his bottom in your hand, as you would to pick him up.
- ▶ Stroke along his side and curl your fingers around under his chest.

3 Once your rabbit is comfortable with being touched (it may take weeks or months to reach this stage), add a little upwards lift, at the end of your stroke so you gently lift his chest or bottom slightly. Use food as a distraction. Try resting your hand on his chest, then raising the treat upwards so your rabbit naturally lifts his front feet to reach up (supporting his movement not making it). Make sure not all of your interactions are about picking up.



4 Finally, to lift your rabbit a short distance, use one hand under his chest and one hand to support his bottom. Hold your rabbit with his head slightly higher than his bottom and with his bottom slightly tucked in.

5_a To carry your rabbit, hold him sideways across your body. Wrap your arm across his body and support his chest with your hand. Use your other hand to support his bottom.

5_b Smaller rabbits may prefer to sit with all four feet on your chest. Use one hand to support his bottom, holding him against your body to stop him kicking out, with your other hand across his shoulders.