



### TRANSPORTATION ADVICE FOR RABBIT OWNERS

Transportation is potentially stressful for rabbits and it may take them some time to recover after travelling. In addition, a novel environment such as a veterinary practice is a potentially frightening place for rabbits.

*Please follow these guidelines when transporting your rabbits to make their journey as stress-free as possible:*

#### Travelling with rabbits

Before travelling, always consider whether the planned journey is necessary and in the rabbits' best interests. If it is not, reconsider undertaking the journey, as transportation is potentially stressful for rabbits.



Try to ensure that anywhere you need to transport your rabbits to (such as a veterinary practice) is located close to your home, to ensure your rabbits do not have to travel long distances.



Make sure your rabbits are fit to travel and if in any doubt, contact your vet. If you own a rabbit that is pregnant, seek advice from a vet before transporting her.

Rabbits do not tolerate heat well, so ensure your vehicle is kept cool and well ventilated, and avoid travelling during the hottest parts of the day.

Remember that rabbits are prey animals and are easily frightened, so ensure they have access to safe hiding places at all times.



Check your rabbits regularly, and give them frequent breaks, during journeys.

Provide constant access to fresh clean water. Portable, non-spill watering aides can be purchased. Always provide your rabbits with water in the way they are familiar with (e.g. bottle or bowl) and check their water supply regularly.

Please make sure there is hay available for your rabbits to eat in the carrier; hay should make up the majority of your rabbits' diet. It is important to ensure that your rabbit is continuing to eat normally after he/she has been on a journey. If your rabbits' eating or drinking habits changes or the number of droppings gets less or stops, talk to your vet straight away as he/she could be seriously ill.





**Never starve your rabbits before taking them to the vets.** Unlike cats and dogs going to the vets for an operation, rabbits do not need to be starved before going to the vets, as their digestive system needs to be kept moving at all times.

#### The travel carrier

Transport your rabbits in a sturdy, non-collapsible, well ventilated and secure carrier that your rabbits cannot chew easily or escape from (cardboard boxes are not appropriate as they are easily chewed and can become damp and unsafe if rabbits urinate or if it rains).



Ensure your carrier is of a suitable size and shape to allow all the rabbits being transported to enter easily, lie comfortably in any direction and turn around unhindered. However, the carrier should be small enough to provide feelings of security.

Choose a carrier of a design that opens from the top and the front to allow the rabbits to be removed easily.



Line the carrier with newspaper to absorb urine and a towel or vet bed to provide a non-slip surface. *Only provide a towel or vet bed if you are sure your rabbits will not chew them.*

Partially cover the carrier to help your rabbits feel more secure, especially when travelling at night to prevent your rabbits being frightened by the glare of car head lights. If the carrier is partially covered, ensure there is adequate ventilation.

Familiarise your rabbit with the carrier beforehand by leaving it open in their home enclosure, with the front door open to encourage them to investigate.



Rabbits should never be pushed into the carrier, but enticed in with a healthy snack or some greens.



Strap the carrier into your vehicle with a seat belt or secure it in a foot well (behind a seat), so your rabbits are safe and are not jolted. The carrier side should face the direction of travel so the rabbits are not thrown face on, should the vehicle have to brake suddenly.

Never place the carrier in direct sunlight or in the boot of a saloon car.





#### Rabbits that live together and are friends should travel together



This provides the reassurance of safety in numbers and also ensures that the same scents are transferred to both rabbits while out and about, which avoids the potential problems associated with reintroducing rabbits after a period apart. If you do experience problems when reintroducing your rabbits at any time, speak to your vet for advice. Your vet can then refer you to a qualified behaviour expert if necessary.

Place familiar items in the carrier with your rabbits, such as their favourite toys and some used bedding material (like hay), to provide familiar smells and reassurance. If a rabbit really must travel on his/her own, it is even more important to provide familiar-smelling items in their carrier.

#### OTHER USEFUL LINKS:

- [Rabbits' welfare needs](http://www.rspca.org.uk/rabbits) : [www.rspca.org.uk/rabbits](http://www.rspca.org.uk/rabbits)
- [Rabbits' environmental needs](http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/environment) : [www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/environment](http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/environment)
- [Rabbits' Health and welfare](http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/health) : [www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/health](http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/rabbits/health)
- [Animal Welfare Act](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/changingthelaw/whatwechanged/animalwelfareact) : [www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/changingthelaw/whatwechanged/animalwelfareact](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/changingthelaw/whatwechanged/animalwelfareact)
- [Find a vet](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findavet) : [www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findavet](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findavet)
- [Find a clinical animal behaviourist](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findabehaviourist) : [www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findabehaviourist](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/whatwedo/vetcare/findabehaviourist)

*This pet care sheet has been produced by the RSPCA Companion Animals Department (V3 CAD/RR 29.09.11). This leaflet is provided for general information only and is not intended to be relied upon as specific advice. Whilst we try to ensure that the information is correct, we cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information, nor for any reliance on or use of the leaflet.*