



Humane Handling and Restraint of Commercial Meat Rabbits

Proper handling is important to ensure safety of both the handler and the rabbit. A rabbit's hind end is very powerful and if not supported properly a rabbit can kick out and permanently injure its back. Always support a rabbit's hind end and hold the rabbit close to one's body when carrying. Never lift a rabbit by its ears.



LIFTING

1. Move the rabbit to an area of the cage where it is easiest to pick up. Use your hands to coax the rabbit or gently slide it.
2. With one hand, gently grasp the loose skin at the back the neck or shoulder blades or support animal with a hand under the chest.
3. Use the other hand to support the rabbit's weight and hind end before lifting.
4. Hold the rabbit close to your body.



Alternatively, young rabbits, can be picked up with one hand by grasping the rabbit firmly over the loin area. This technique should not be used for carrying the rabbit over long distances.



Containers should not have sharp edges that may injure rabbits.



Holding and Carrying

Rabbits feel most secure when held close to the handler's body, decreasing their tendency to scratch or struggle. There are many different ways to hold a rabbit correctly. Fearful rabbits can be calmed by placing their head under an arm, covering their eyes. Alternatively, place the rabbit in a tall box or tote made of rigid materials to carry.



Placing in cage

Rabbits may get excited when approaching their cage. Use caution when lowering a rabbit back into the cage to reduce the chance of injury.



Damage from improper handling

Improper handling can lead to injury and pain. Handling a large, mature rabbit by the scruff of the neck alone can cause pain and distress to the rabbit and lead to carcass downgrading at processing.



Shipping containers

Transportation containers should be in good repair.



Large holes in the container may allow rabbits to stick their limbs and head outside of the crate, creating a risk for injury.

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