

How To Transport Newborn Rabbits

Transporting baby rabbits (before their eyes are open) can be quite stressful for them. They can get cold very quickly & then might not make it. It is extremely important to keep them warm.

Before you start moving the babies, with clean, dry, warm hands, check to make sure all the babies are alive. It is ok to handle them briefly for this exam.

If the nest & babies are in a litter box, it's best to transport the whole litter box. But some places will not let you take the litter box & you don't know until you get there. So it's best to bring your own nest box for the babies. This can be a plastic or disposable litter/nest box, or even a cardboard box.

If using your own nest box, line the bottom with soft fabric. If the fabric has been stored in a cold area, wrap it around a portable heating pad before using. (link to portable heating pad at end of newborn paper, http://curiousbunny.com/newborn_rabbits_detail.pdf). Then add bunched fabric around the sides so the babies will all stay together. Add more fabric as needed to keep them warm. Once the nest box is ready, with clean, dry, warm hands, transfer the newborns & the nesting material (usually mother's fur) all in one fell swoop. Put in as much of the nesting material as you can. After the babies are transferred, thoroughly go through all the nooks & crannies of the original nest box to make sure no babies were left behind. They can hide in extremely small areas.

A nest box often will not fit into a carrier. Plan ahead & bring a cardboard box that's large enough to hold the nest box. Before going outside with the babies, cover the carrier with a towel. Even a few moments outside in a breeze can chill the newborns. Put a portable heating pad under or next to the carrier during transport.

It's best to transport the mom in a separate carrier than the babies. This way, if she's frightened, she won't jump around & injure the babies. Line her carrier with a towel & cover it with another towel. However, if there's plenty of room for the mom to be away from the babies, she can go in their carrier.

For some cardboard carriers, if the mom pees a lot, it can soak through & soil your vehicle. To prevent this, put plastic or newspapers under the cardboard carrier.

Most of the time you have to be diligent about keeping the babies warm. However, during very hot weather, you have to make sure the babies do not get too hot, which

can be fatal. Use air conditioning in the car, but don't let it blow directly onto the babies. In this case, do not use a portable heating pad. At your discretion, push the nesting material to the side. The babies should have enough room to spread out (they will do this on their own) so they are not touching each other. Make sure they are not in the sun while you are driving.

Use a vehicle that has a heater & air conditioning (depending on the weather). You don't want to stress the mom & babies with extreme temperatures. In case you are stuck in traffic for a long time or your vehicle breaks down, bring water & a portable water bowl for the mom, to make sure she stays hydrated. Do not have water in a bowl when driving, as the water will just slosh around. If the drive is very long, stop for breaks & give the mom water & food when stopped.

What to take when transporting newborns:

- carrier for mom
- towel in carrier for mom
- towel to put over carrier for mom
- plastic/newspapers to put under cardboard carrier
- nest box (can use litter box)
- soft fabric in nest box
- carrier (or cardboard box) for nest box
- towel to put over carrier for nest box
- portable heating pad for nest box
- water, food & portable water bowl (for mom, in case get stuck in traffic)

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