

Traveling & Moving with Rabbits

Automobile Travel

You have decided showing rabbits is what you want to do for a hobby. You have purchased your show stock or maybe even bred your own, and the first show is just around the corner. Your rabbits are in prime condition and you have purchased transport carriers. Where do you go from here? There are a few precautions one should take traveling with rabbits and cavies.

During mild temperatures, there are not as many precautions to take as in extreme heat or cold. You may add straw or grass hay to their carrier thereby giving them the opportunity to nibble a bit. A small piece of carrot or apple can also be given. Remember, if they have never had an apple or carrot, they may ignore it in the carrier. If you feed pellets in the morning, you will want some bring some along for the trip. Do not fill the containers until you are settled in at the show. Most rabbits can go all day without any food or water while at a show. Once home, they will normally eat and drink readily.

During the summer months you must guard against the sweltering temperatures. Have your automobile cooled down prior to loading your rabbits. Do not have the air conditioner blowing directly on them. That could cause heath problems later. Bring along watering containers, preferable ones the rabbits cannot tip over. This will also prevent sloshing on the animals and spoiling the animal's coats. There are small travel size water bottles with lixit type nipples that are available. If your animal does not drink from an automatic water system or watering bottles at home, chances are he will not know how to drink from a watering bottle in the carrier. Use the same basic watering methods in traveling as you do at home. You can introduce watering bottles along with the current methods you use while at home. Most animals will not drink while in motion. Once at your destination, fill the containers half full. The animal usually will not drink more than that, and again, if they toss the container, you will not have much to clean up. In case of extreme temperatures, you might consider bringing along spray bottles, a fan and towels. Moisten the towels and lay on top of the carriers. Adjust the fan so it's blowing on top of the carriers. This will work like an evaporative cooling system. Spraying the rabbits with a light mist when there is no electricity will also be beneficial to keeping them cool. Remember to moisten their ears. This is their natural cooling system (like a panting dog is cooling itself).

In winter travel, you must guard against severe drafts, as you would at home. Bring along a blanket in case of severe chilling winds and drafts. Do not cover the top of the cages. Put the blanket on the side of the draft. They are insulated against cold with their fur, but it is never good to have severe drafts. It is a good idea during winter travel, to bring feed and water even if you feed in the evenings. In the event you are trapped away from home by adverse weather conditions, you will be able to feed and water your rabbits. Don't forget to pack some extra food, water and blankets for yourself.

If you are traveling a distance to a convention, pack straw in your carriers. Also, if riding in a stiff suspension vehicle, lay down foam padding and a rubber mat under the carriers. Both of these will help maintain flesh condition on your rabbits.

Airplane Travel

While most airlines will allow rabbits, you **must** be sure to inform them when making reservations. If you do not, you may be disappointed the day of the flight. If temperatures are too hot or cold, the airlines will not let you ship rabbits. Check with them prior to making reservations. There are some advance preparations you must do prior to shipping or flying with rabbits. You must have readily available a health certificate for the rabbits. You may or may not be asked. It is far better to be prepared than to have to leave the rabbits behind. Your carrier will need a solid top secured to the wire. This can be either metal or a piece of lightweight, thin plywood. Your name and address will need to be on it. If shipping rabbits, the recipient's name and address is required. Most airlines require feed and water when shipping rabbits. Hay does suffice for feed. Pack a little extra hay along the sides of their carriers to help guard against drafts on the tarmac.

Moving with Rabbits

Moving rabbits from one location to another can be very stressful on them. If moving locally, have your cages ready at the new location. Try to keep the same rabbits next to each at each location. There will be different sights, sounds and smells and if the rabbit next to them is the same, the smell will be familiar. Moving across country can be somewhat hectic. There are a couple ways to do it. One way is to ship your animals ahead to another breeder. Make sure to ship extra feed with them. The temporary home can start switching the feed over to what is available in that area. Remember all areas do not always carry the same brand food and there is a slight difference. Once you are settled and have their cages ready you can bring them to their permanent home. The only disadvantage to this is you are moving the rabbits twice. Another way to move your rabbits is to have them travel with you. This is not as easy as it sounds but you will have one less move for them. Have their carriers ready with extra room to move around. You may have to take a divider out to do so. Secure the feeders and waterers for the trip. If you can acquire the feed you will be using in the new location, then switch them over prior to the move. If not, make sure to bring extra feed you are currently using, enough to last a week or so. This will also help make the transition easier as changes in feed can throw rabbits off eating. Be sure to have hay readily available. When a rabbit goes off feed, they will usually eat hay, which will sustain them for a while.

Being prepared for what ever may occur is the best way to travel with rabbits.