

HELP FOR BABY RABBITS

It is very common to uncover a nest of cottontail rabbits that may appear to be abandoned. Mother rabbits do not abandon their babies under normal circumstances. She only feeds her babies once or twice during a 24-hour period, usually between dusk and dawn.

You may never see her return to the nest. If the babies' eyes are still closed, they are under 10 days old. If they look plump, are nestled snugly next to each other and do not appear to be in any immediate danger, leave them alone!

Check to see if the mother is coming back to the nest by looking at the babies' bellies, first thing in the morning. They should be round, full, and fat.

Keep your dogs and cats away from the nesting area. Cottontails are ready to leave the nest at 3-4 weeks of age.

If the nest has been disturbed, even by a lawnmower, put all the babies and bedding back in place. The mother won't mind at all.

If you find a small rabbit hopping around that appears to be too young to be on its own, remember: if it is as big as a tennis ball and can run away from you it does not need your help.

If you determine that the babies are injured or in need of assistance:

- Place them in a small box with the bedding from their nest, if possible, or soft rags. Baby cottontails are incredibly fragile and do not take handling by humans well. **THEY WILL DIE OF STRESS IF HANDLED IMPROPERLY.**
- Keep baby rabbits in a box in a warm, quiet place away from children, household noise, domestic pets and bright lights.
- If you have a heating pad, turn it on LOW and place it under **HALF** of the box.
- **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FEED ANY TYPE OF FORMULA TO A BABY RABBIT.** You may kill the animal.
- If the rabbit's eyes have not opened yet, please get it to a licensed rehabilitator as soon as possible. Do not try to hydrate it. There are things in re-hydrating solutions (like Pedialyte & Gatorade) that destroy the fatty acids that bunnies need to properly digest their food.
- If the bunny's eyes have opened, you may put clover and/or dandelion greens (which have not been sprayed with weed killer) in the box. You may spritz a bit of water on the greens.

These instructions are good for the 24-hour period that it might take for you to get the baby rabbit to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.