



Rabbit Hopping Basics.

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Rabbit hopping started in Sweden in about the 1980's. And has grown in all countries ever since. It came to Australia in 2013.

The world record for rabbit high jump is 1 mtrs

The world record for rabbit long jump is 3 mtrs

How to teach Your Rabbit to hop

It's best to start with a young rabbit around 8-9 weeks of age. But any age rabbit can have a go.

The very first thing you have to teach your rabbit is to walk in a hopping H style harness with the D at the back of the harness (not in the middle) and a long leash.

Cat/dog collars are not a safe restraint for rabbits as they might be choked with them. The same goes for the rabbit harnesses with the D in the middle of the harness. It might take time for your rabbit to get use to the harness, but don't be in too much of a hurry.

Having The H style harness on the rabbit with out the lead attached is advisable in the beginning. It's very important that nothing happens that might frighten the rabbit when it's in the harness. Let it have a good experience when the harness is on.

They will gradually look forward to coming out for a walk in the harness and lead. If you have more then one rabbit, it's best to have one harness for each rabbit. Some rabbits will bite the harness if it smells of another rabbit. When the rabbit is use to the harness introduce them being on a lead. Never pull your rabbit like a dog you must walk behind your rabbit directing it with your hand the way you want it to go. Tickling in its side or light tapping on its bottom is best way to encourage your rabbit to move forward. Never use your feet, stick or lead to whip your rabbit to move forward.

When the rabbit has gotten use to the harness and the lead you can start to teach them that you are the one who decides where you want them to go. And your rabbit is good at walking in the harness without bolting or cringing on the ground you can start letting it hop over small jumps.

As the rabbit is young and little (or beginner) you must not let it jump too much and not too high. Just about 5 minutes sessions at 0-10 cm high is best. (0 is when the bar is lying on the ground). Start them off with jumping 0cm, 5cm then 10cm. The reason for starting young rabbits (any beginner rabbit) on low jumps is so the rabbit doesn't get a fright if one of the bars falls off. You don't want your rabbit to have a bad first experience. By the time your rabbit is 4 mths of age it should be able to jump 20cm.

If the young/ beginner rabbit doesn't want to jump for the first time you may lift it over the jump one or two times to show the rabbit what you want it to do. Next time it may jump on its own because it knows what you want it to do now. Teach your rabbit from the beginning just to hop in the one direction over the jumps. It's much easier to teach them to go forward on a course in a competition and not getting disqualified by going the wrong way on the course. If your rabbit gets tired you must let it rest and then try later the next day.

All breeds and mixed breeds of rabbits can learn to hop. But do not hop with a very big and heavy rabbit over 5 kgs. It's not good for the rabbit to have that much weight coming down on those front legs. Don't over train your rabbit. By training twice to three times a week at 5-10 mins a session it will quickly get use to hopping and become a clever hopping rabbit. If you have got a rabbit who despite your best attempts will not hop you must let it be a pet rabbit. If you force it, it might be aggressive and maybe you or someone you know will get hurt.

It is hard to say if it's best to hop with a male or female rabbit. When not focused males tend to want to sniff and pee. Females might be a bit lazy when they are in heat but other wise they are willing hoppers.

If it's very hot and very cold its best not hop your rabbit. In the beginning when teaching your rabbit to hop its best to train in mid to late Afternoon or early morning. The reason is rabbits are most active at this time and you will get a better result from your rabbit in its willingness to learn something new.

Also if you take a few weeks of hopping your rabbit please start at a low level high when you bring them back into training so there fitness can built up again.

Rabbit hopping is fun for children and grown ups alike. If you have a little fenced area in your garden your rabbit can have free fun running around in there too. It will give them more exercise and will help to keep them fit for hopping. But nothing is the same as doing a hopping 5 min training session with your bunny 2-3 times a week.

Out and about with your rabbit.

Now that you are out and about with your rabbit I would like to take this opportunity to give you some helpful tips.

- 1) Make sure you have an open from the top cage/carrier so your bunny is secure
- 2) Have plenty of water and food/grass/hay for your travels
- 3) Have an H style hopping harness with you at all times as you never know when you will need it.
- 4) In summer have a frozen water bottle in the carry cage to keep your bunny cool in the hottest part of the day. Bunnies don't sweat and can over heat easy.
- 5) In winter keep your bunnies carry cage out of a draft while travelling in your car with them

Most important is HAVE FUN!

Happy Travels and See you on the Run.

