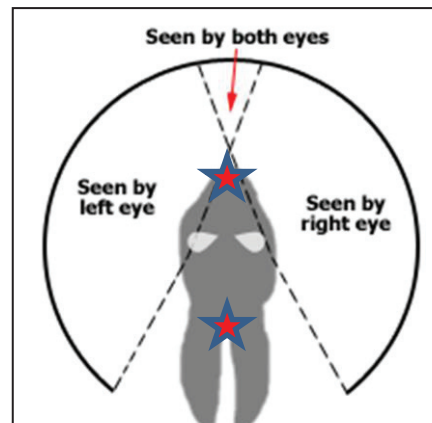


Handling techniques

Take home message (main aims) = 1. Cover eyes to reduce visual stimulation
2. Support the back to prevent injury






Rabbits eyes are in a lateral position which is ideal for prey (grazing)-species and this means they have an extensive circular field of vision, but there are blind-spots ★ at the rostral (especially under the chin) and caudal aspects of the head and if the rabbit is touched in these regions without warning it will be startled.



Adapted from; ill_rabbit_fieldofvision
<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=2+2083&aid=159>

* **Methods:**

- '**Rabbit sandwich**'; The rabbit is positioned at waist height across the handler's body

				
1. Approach	2. Lift	3. Secure into 'sandwich' position	4. Return	5. Reacclimatise

1. *Approach*; calmly and confidently, depending on the method, either 'scoop' up the rabbit from ground or table and put a hand over the eyes immediately, or pick up the rabbit with both hands around its middle and with it facing towards you (because if its instinct is to jump at least it is towards you and is more controlled).

2. *Lift*; Quickly draw it into the centre of your body in order to get it in a secure hold before moving away. Do not dangle the rabbit in mid-air or move away from the ground until it is securely held.

3. *Securing while carrying*; Firstly, support the rabbits body and it should be positioned so that its hind feet or bottom are in the hand and the head is tucked under the elbow concealing the eyes. Secondly, the other arm can then be resting over the spine and head of the rabbit. A rabbit can be maintained in this position confidently, but it must not be prolonged where possible. It is not advisable to walk between rooms in this way because the handler requires both hands and it is added stress for the rabbit. Therefore, using a clean pet carrier is advised for any transporting within a veterinary practice to reduce risk of injury or escape.

4. *Returning to carrier or kennel*; To avoid excitable, 'death-defying' leaps for freedom a rabbit should not know it is about to be placed on the floor so keep the eyes covered until its hind limbs are securely on solid ground.

5. Some rabbits take a few seconds to acclimatise themselves to where they are and will jump onto the handler's lap, the handler should remain until the rabbit moves away voluntarily.

'Bagpipes'; Holding the majority of the rabbit under one arm in an upright position with that hand supporting the chest and rabbit's pelvis and legs are secured between the handlers elbow and side, and the other hand is covering the eyes.

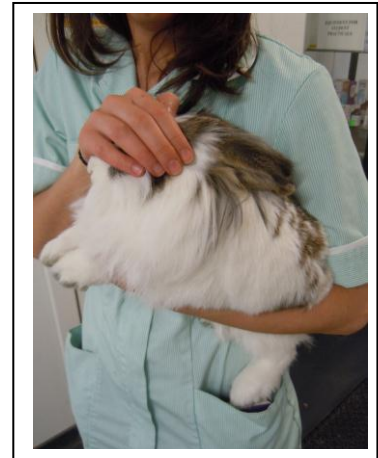


Table restraint; Someone should always have at least a hand on the rabbit's back and it should not be assumed that a rabbit will sit still on a raised surface (e.g. table) for any amount of time. They often don't have a good concept of distance and may suddenly panic by leaping off from a height! Rubber-topped tables are ideal for rabbits to avoid slipping, but stressed rabbits may also require a towel or be wrapped up.



Tonic Immobilisation; This is a physical immobilisation as a consequence of perceiving danger and is thought to be a predatory response such as seen when rabbits are caught by foxes. They can freeze and go into a trance-like state appearing dead and when external stimuli is altered they often spring up and try to escape the danger. During their 'trance' the rabbits are not relaxed or zoning-out but are in a state of heightened stress (studies have shown increased cortisol levels). This can be difficult to avoid in rabbit patients and can be used to the handler's advantage in some situations (e.g. conscious radiographs in high anaesthetic risk patients), but must obviously be treated with caution, especially in already stressed and compromised patients.



<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1267124/Hop-notism-scaring-bunnies-stiff-How-rabbit-whisperer-leaves-pets-trance.html>



'Bunny-burrito' (sit rabbit on a towel and firmly wrap it around the body so that just the head is exposed). This helps to keep the body secure and protects the back from suddenly jumping if startled. The rabbit must be kept in sternal recumbency on a table to avoid Tonic Immobilisation.

Held upright

Place one hand under the pectoral girdle (chest) and the other around the rabbit's pelvis/rump. Gently roll the rabbit back against the handler's body until the hind limbs are off the floor and the rabbit's bottom is sat in the handler's hand.

