

Advantages of Pen Living and Other Great Rabbit Ideas

A happy, healthy rabbit whose needs are met by their humans makes for a more agreeable pet.

In a perfect world, there would be no need for containment. Rabbits could have the run of the house and go where they please. However, we also have to ensure that they are kept safe from hazards. It doesn't have to be store bought or expensive. We like our adopters to think outside the cage. Use your imagination and be creative. The following are suggestions for housing that will keep both you and your rabbit happy

On the subject of a good habitat, we recommend:

1. That the rabbit can take at least 3 strides
2. That the rabbit can stand up on its hind legs
3. That the rabbit can lay down in a stretched out position on a solid surface (no grating/wire bottom) and still have room for food / water bowls, litter box, a hiding box & toys.



Adventurous bunnies, Bebe and Buddy, have a Cottontail Cottage "entrance" to their x-pen home. They live with a dog that they love, but sometimes they just need to get away to their own, private space. They climb up the cottage, through the window, and down the ramp into their safe haven. This pen is situated behind the sofa in the family room.

A rabbit that is unable to move about comfortably can suffer from:

- Poor muscle tone, which increases risk of injury and arthritis
- Gastric stasis from lack of exercise (this is like constipation but can turn deadly)
- Cage aggression
- Obesity

A puppy pen is great because ...

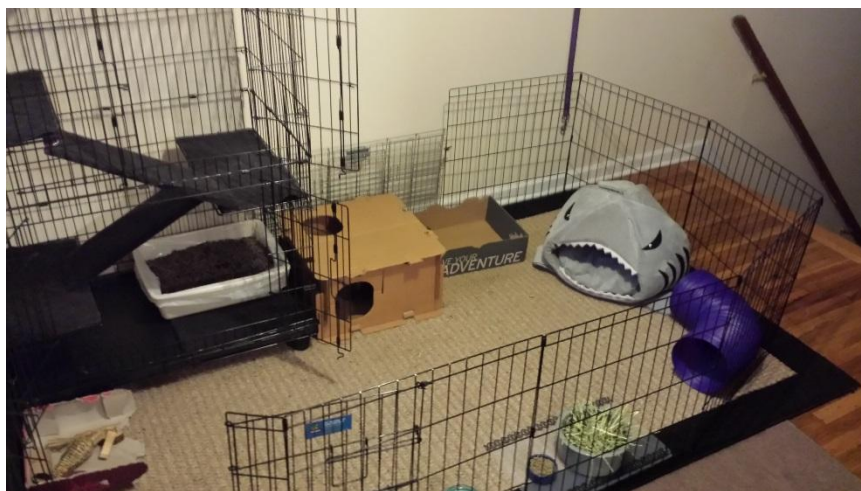
- It is economical, portable and easy to clean
- It can be configured into a few shapes
- Each 8 panel pen provides 16 sq. feet of space
- It can be opened up to create a barricade to keep the rabbit out of areas that could be hazardous during out of cage time. It is smart to use one to protect furniture from being chewed too.

In this photo, the typical 30" high x-pen has been configured for a long space, behind a sofa. Again, the owner has built a platform for the pen to keep any mess contained inside. Each of these pens shown on this page have doors that swing open, allowing bunny to come out for play time. The platforms are easy to build; plywood cut to size, a sheet of linoleum remnant cut to size and stapled to the plywood, and a frame stapled on top of both to provide a lip that keeps everything inside and anchors the pen. An easy project that won't take more than an hour or two at most.



Housing your rabbit in an exercise pen (an x-pen) can be a big improvement over a cage. With a cage your rabbit's space is limited and he can become frustrated at being in a smaller space when you cannot supervise. An exercise pen gives the rabbit more space while still keeping him safely contained during those times when you are not at home or need to keep your rabbit enclosed. Even for "jumpers" x-pens can be a good choice with special-made wire tops by pen manufacturers. X pens also come in various heights up to 48 inches for the Olympic jumper bunny.

If your particular escape artist rabbit requires a "cage" then make it as big as it can possibly be!



Cages with x-pens

A vertical cage such as a Critter Nation Cage or a customized Midwest Cat play pen (left) with an X pen around adds to the exercise a rabbit will have and creates a stimulating environment and gives both horizontal and vertical space.

Dog Crate with Pen Attached

One can also use a large 48 inch length dog crates with an x pen added(see below) which is tall enough to accommodate a cardboard box for hiding and jumping up and you can easily install shelves for the rabbit to have a second story. Simply drill holes through untreated wood and secure to side of cage with zip ties.



Oxbow Combination Cage

We have recently come to find out that Oxbow now makes a combination cage (right) and pen sold exclusively through Petsmart. It includes a cage on wheels, for ease of movement, with a pen that attaches. This is great for someone who wants ready-made, store bought option with minimal required assembly.





C&C Cages

Cubes and Coroplast Condos are so named because they are made of grids which hold endless options for sizing and configurations. Coroplast, a lightweight and waterproof cardboard like material is used to protect flooring underneath the rabbit's home. C&C configurations are held together with plastic connectors and / or zip ties. When using zip ties, ensure the cut end of the zip tie is turned to the outside of the cage so it can't cause injury. These can be custom designed to fit your space. The only limitation is your imagination.

Remember ... a rabbit should have 4 hours or more outside of the cage each day!

No wire bottoms | Water bowls highly recommended

Sources for cages or materials used are:

[Most pet supply stores \(Petco\)](#)

[San Diego House Rabbit Society, Bunny Supply Store](#)

[Dr. Fosters and Smith \(Critter Nation Cage\)](#)

[Chewy.com: http://www.chewy.com/dog/midwest-black-e-coat-exercise-pen/dp/45379](http://www.chewy.com/dog/midwest-black-e-coat-exercise-pen/dp/45379)

<http://www.amazon.com/Midwest-Homes-Pets-inches-Playpen/dp/B00011M76Q> (cat play pen)

Materials for platform

- Plywood, linoleum remnants, 2"x2" wood trim, indoor-outdoor carpet
- Purchase at Home Depot, Lowe's, Orchard Supply, Dixieline, etc.

Other links to x-pen housing ideas:

- http://www.ohare.org/vol5_3.htm#pens see 2nd article under features)
- <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/4-4/pen-living.html>
- <http://www.mybunny.org/info/x-pen.htm>

Below are more photos showing a variety of "x-pen" setups for a rabbit.



Honey's pen is situated in the family room, next to the sofa. Honey is a "jumper," so the family has purchased a 36" high pen. She has a big box of hay, her stuffed toys, and her ball. She is quite comfortable and gets a lot of attention in this location. They have placed a piece of indoor/outdoor carpeting under Honey's pen to protect the floor.

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Here, the homeowner has had a custom pen built to size for this little niche in the family room. The wire is PVC coated and easy to keep clean. Again, her husband has constructed a platform to anchor the pen and protect the floor. Baxter & Scooter have a large litterbox full of hay, and a plastic tote, turned upside down with a "door" cut into it, makes a fun place to hide or perch on top.



Here, the homeowner has used a standard "lawn pen". Its dimensions are 42" square, and the wire is green, PVC-coated. It contains all the comforts of home, a soft towel, cardboard playhouse, and a hay rack that bunnies access from the second floor of their playhouse. Pergo floors are not easily damaged (as long as bunny is good about using his box), so nothing extra has to be placed under the pen.