

Found A Stray Rabbit?

Finding a rabbit outdoors can be alarming, but your actions in the first few hours matter a lot. Domestic rabbits do not survive well on their own, and most rabbits found outside are lost, dumped, or escaped pets.

This guide will help you do the right thing for the rabbit, without unintentionally putting them at risk or overwhelming rescues.

Before You Attempt to Rescue the Stray Rabbit

1. **Make sure the rabbit is not a wild rabbit/hare:** Wild rabbits/hares are an agouti colour or pure black and are small with pointy faces and up ears. You should only intervene with a wild hare/rabbit if they are injured.
2. **Check with rescues first:** Many rescues have limited space. Confirm placement for the rabbit before attempting to catch/trap them.
3. **Temporary care may be required:** You may be asked to care for the rabbit until a rescue can take them in. This could be anywhere from 1 day up to several weeks.
4. **Don't assume the rescue can immediately take the rabbit:** While you may think you're helping, taking a rabbit without guidance can unintentionally create more stress for rescues, who have structured systems for prioritising spaces.

Rescuing the Stray Rabbit

1. **Make Sure the Rabbit Is Safe**
 - If the rabbit is in immediate danger (near traffic, dogs, construction, or predators):
 - Secure the rabbit first if it is safe for you to do so.
 - Use a box, pet carrier, or laundry basket with air holes.
 - Keep them indoors, quiet, and away from cats and dogs.

- If the rabbit is in a secure enclosed area (e.g. a fenced garden) and not in immediate danger, monitor closely while you prepare next steps.

2. Understand This Is NOT a Wild Animal

- In South Africa, rabbits found in residential areas are almost always domestic pets:
 - They rely on humans for food and protection
 - They cannot escape predators effectively
 - They are vulnerable to heat, cold, stress, and parasites
- Even if the rabbit looks "okay," they are not equipped to survive outdoors.

3. Contact a Rabbit Rescue / Animal Shelter Before Rescuing

- Before you tell anyone "I'll catch the rabbit" or attempt to surrender them:
 - Contact a rabbit rescue or animal shelter immediately to ask if they have space
 - Be honest about where the rabbit was found and their condition
 - Rescues often operate at full capacity, taking a rabbit without confirmed rescue placement can make the situation harder, not easier.
- If a rescue cannot take the rabbit immediately, ask:
 - If they can help with guidance or networking
 - If temporary fostering is an option

4. Check For An Owner

- Ask nearby neighbours
- Post in local community groups (Facebook, WhatsApp, neighbourhood pages)
- Share a photo without giving identifying details (to avoid false claims)
- Contact nearby veterinary clinics to report a found rabbit

5. Provide Basic, Short-term Care (If needed)

- Safe food:
 - Fresh grass or hay (if available with no pesticides!)
 - Leafy greens (like coriander, parsley, rocket)
 - Clean water in a bowl
- Do NOT:
 - Feed bread, cereal, pellets you're unsure about, or human food
 - Bathe the rabbit

- Let them roam freely outdoors
- Keep handling minimal, stress can be dangerous for rabbits.

What NOT To Do

- Do not release the rabbit into a park, field, or open land
- Do not assume a rescue will automatically take the rabbit
- Do not pass the rabbit from person to person
- Do not keep the rabbit unless you are prepared for proper long-term care and vet/sterilisation costs!

If You're Feeling Overwhelmed

That's okay. Finding a rabbit can be stressful. The most responsible thing you can do is:

- Keep the rabbit safe
- Contact a rabbit rescue for guidance
- Avoid rushed decisions

You're not expected to solve everything instantly. The most responsible thing you can do is slow down, keep the rabbit safe, and work with a rescue, not around one. Doing less, but doing it correctly, saves lives.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us! We're more than happy to help!

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