

"A Gentle Way to Better Behavior and Health"

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For caregivers, shelter workers and veterinary personnel all over the world, Tellington TTouch plays an integral part in their animal care regime. Also, for non-professional rabbit caregivers and guardians, this handling technique can have beneficial effects on your rabbits' physical and emotional health and help you deal with many common health and behavioral issues.

If you prepare to do battle when it's time to trim the toenails, using this technique on your rabbit's feet can help your bunny accept the procedure without the usual struggle.

TTouch has been used effectively with bonding, litter box training, reducing symptoms of aging, and speeding recovery from illness, injury or surgery. It is a form of bodywork that uses gentle hand and finger movements to push the animal's skin in a circle.

These movements may look deceptively like massage, but they're aimed to work with the nervous system, relieving fear and tension in the body. Using the technique can help the rabbit to be in better mental, emotional and physical balance and to behave in new ways. It also provides an opportunity to deepen your relationship with your rabbit through a form of non-verbal communication.

Case Study 1: Abbey Road was an Angora X rabbit whose long, fluffy coat required regular grooming to avoid major matting. Her caretaker was experienced at rabbit handling and managed to hold her on her lap for the necessary brush-outs, but Abbey hated it and would bite at the towel and regularly try to launch herself off the lap. This worked, but was fun for no one. After her caretaker viewed a TTouch videotape and did three TTouch sessions with her, Abbey lay quietly in her caretaker's lap for a full grooming session.

Case Study 2: Cole was a young rabbit with a severe balance problem. She couldn't and had to spend her days propped up in a box, so that she wouldn't roll uncontrollably. Despite her veterinarian's best efforts, drugs hadn't helped much so far. Her veterinarian decided to try one last new medicine and also start TTouch. The veterinarian and Cole's caretakers used the method on her ears, spine and down all four legs. They noticed that Cole responded to TTouches on her "up" side by straightening her head some. After several weeks of the TTouch therapy and the new medicine, Cole began to be able to sit up on her own and hop a little. Was this the medicine? TTouch technique? Tincture of time?

Case Study 3: Ben and Zoe are two rabbits who had been resisting bonding for over two weeks. Ben (a male) became aggressive when Zoe (female) was introduced, even on neutral territory. Ben's person did the circular TTouches all over Ben's body, including his mouth. After two days, Ben became much more amenable to Zoe's presence. The same procedure on Zoe's back and hindquarters kept her calm and able to ignore Ben when he became aggressive. The TTouch method on both of them at once seemed to keep both of them calm, and they bonded within one week after the technique was used.

Case Study 4: Lollie was a young rabbit recovering from her routine spay operation. She awoke abruptly and seemed agitated and disoriented. She ran around her cage, falling over and bumping into the wall. The veterinary technician saw this and bundled Lollie up in a towel like a burrito. She was still flailing and twisting. While the technician held her, the veterinarian started TTouches on Lollie's ears, stroking them from base to tip, and doing tiny circles with a fingertip on the ear flap, moving the skin over the underlying cartilage. Lollie took a deep breath, and her eyes seemed to come into focus. She stopped flailing and lay calmly and sleepily in the towel, then proceeded to recover slowly and normally from then on.

Case Study 5: A short exposure to this technique can change your rabbit's attitude toward nail-trimming. At a recent Rabbit Awareness Day in Portland, Oregon, the TTouch method was used on rabbits brought in by the public who wanted help trimming toenails (some of them with nails growing back towards the pads). The technique was used on over 20 rabbits to calm them and get them used to having their feet handled. TTouches all over their bodies and specifically on the top and bottom of each toe before their clipping made the whole process quicker, easier and less stressful for the people and their rabbits.

Procedure

Have the rabbit on a secure nonskid surface like a towel-covered table, your lap, a mat or rug. Get yourself comfortable and relaxed near the rabbit.

1. Put your non-working hand on the rabbit to establish a connection and help contain the rabbit so he/she doesn't hop or jump away.
2. Put the thumb of your working hand on the rabbit's body. With the other four fingers slightly curved, push the skin in a clockwise circle and a quarter, using a gentle, light pressure.
3. Remember to move the rabbit's skin with your finger pads, not just slide your fingers over the hair coat. Pause, slide your

hand to a new spot and repeat.

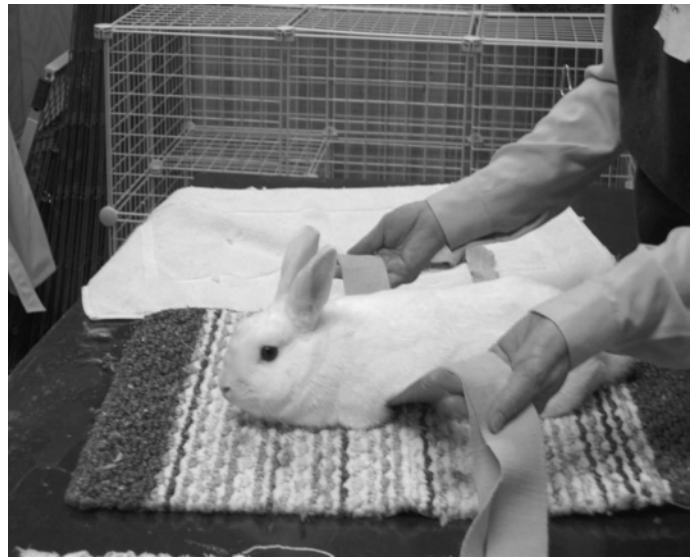
4. Vary the size of the circle depending on how much "give" there is in the skin at any given point.

5. Try circles on the body, neck, and forehead. Make one or two finger circles on the lips of rabbits who nip or chew a lot.

6. Finish your session with small circles on the ears and long strokes from base to tip of each ear. The rabbit (and caregiver) should now feel relaxed and refreshed.

This simple technique, with a short learning curve, can help with many health and behavioral issues. Though never a substitute for veterinary care, TTouch is used by many veterinarians, vet techs, shelter workers and pet caretakers to improve mental, physical, and emotional balance.

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Belly lifts with an elastic bandage: The wrap gives gentle and smooth way to do belly lifts which help relax a nervous bunny.



Photo above: Ear slides are beneficial to rabbits to help them relax and improve overall health.



Body wraps are good for rabbits too. A 2" wrap cut lengthwise is a good width. It can help settle a reactive or over rambunctious rabbit.