

I Found a Bunny Nest



It's a fairly common situation this time of year. Somehow or another, you found a nest of baby bunnies in the yard. Maybe you were mowing the yard, gardening, or your dog actually did the sleuthing. In any case, what do you do?

First and foremost, **don't disturb the bunny nest**. If it was disturbed through your activities or by your dog, then repair the nest as well as you can. Any injured bunnies should be removed from the nest, but the uninjured bunnies should be left in the nest. We realize that the nest might be inconvenient, but **it is against Illinois state law to knowingly disturb or relocate the nest** - so leave it alone!

Second, **place any injured bunnies in a box** with plenty of bedding. If they are eyes-open, then it helps reduce their stress by also providing a small box for hiding. Lining the box with shredded paper towel works well. We use boutique-style kleenex boxes placed on their side with all plastic around the opening removed. Place the box inside in a quiet, warm area away from pets, children and human noises. Resist the temptation to check on them. We (humans) are stressful to wildlife, so checking on them can actually reduce the bunnies chance of survival.

Third, **provide supplemental heat for any eyes-closed bunnies**. The best way for the public to provide heat is to place a heating pad SET ON LOW TEMPERATURE under half of the box.

Fourth, **DO NOT FEED THEM OR GIVE THEM WATER**. The leading cause of death of orphaned wildlife admitted to Flint Creek Wildlife is because well-intentioned members of the public fed the animals before they brought the animals to us. As a member of the public, you cannot possibly have the know-how, equipment or proper food to properly care for injured and orphaned wildlife. Additionally, it is against the law to care for wildlife without possessing permits from the state and/or federal government (state for mammals, federal for birds).

Fifth, promptly **get the bunnies to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator**. Our website contains a [list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators in Illinois](#). If you are from another state, contact your Department of Natural Resources for a list of licensed rehabilitators in your state.

Sixth, take steps to **protect the nest** from your dog/lawn service/etc. Using chicken wire, construct a fence around the nest. The fence should have two arches (8" high by 6" wide) cut in the bottom for Mom Bunny's access and should be large enough diameter that the dog cannot reach the nest even if he reaches through the arch with his paw. Stake the fence into the ground around the nest. If the original disturbance was aerial (Crows, Blue Jays, etc.), then you can also add a chicken wire top so that it becomes a cylindrical cage.

Last, **leave the nest alone**. The more often you check, the more likely the nest will be found by predators.

Additional notes:

- Mom bunnies only feed their babies twice per day. Just because you don't see Mom at the nest does not mean that the nest is abandoned. You will likely never see Mom Bunny regardless of the excellent care she provides.
- Bunnies do not have good survival rates in captivity. It is always best to leave bunnies with their mom to give them the best chance of survival.
- Mom bunnies will still care for their babies after a nest disturbance.
- The trick of placing string or twigs over the nest to see if Mom Bunny came to feed the babies doesn't work well. It's really best to assume that Mom is taking care of the babies. It can be hard, but it's best to just stay away.
- If you find a dead adult rabbit, don't assume it is the Mom Bunny. If you are able, check to see if the dead adult is a nursing female. This provides important information in assessing the best course of action.
- Don't relocate the nest. First, nest relocation illegal. Second, why would you think the Mom Bunny will find the new location? If I moved your house to another street, how would YOU know where to look?