



BHRR HOPpenings

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Heimlich Maneuver for Rabbits

Everyone knows about the Heimlich Maneuver and how it can save the life of a person who is choking, but did you know that it can also be used to save your rabbit's life, too?

It's a situation that no rabbit owner wants to face, but unfortunately it's something we must be prepared for. What can you do when your rabbit starts to choke?

Rabbits are different from other companion animals in that they cannot regurgitate, or vomit, any food they swallow. It's easier for a rabbit to start choking than you might think. Some rabbits are "manic eaters," in that they dive on to their food - pellets, vegetables, treats or hay - and wolf it down like they haven't been fed in days. It's easy for a piece of food to lodge itself in the rabbits throat.

Your rabbit may start to open its jaw widely, like it's trying to gag. He may sometimes do a strong "backing up" motion, a reflex he instinctively uses to compress his thorax. The rabbit may start to jerk his head around in a frantic attempt to breathe, and his eyes may begin to bulge in their sockets.

Time is definitely precious in such a scenario. Here is how you can do the Heimlich Maneuver on your rabbit:

STEP 1: Position the rabbit on one of your arms so that his head is pointing away from you, and his arms and legs are draping over your arm. Your other arm should be firmly holding the rabbits neck and spine. It is very critical to keep the rabbit's spine firmly supported and cushioned.

STEP 2: Stretch out your arms out as far as you can, and raise the bunny vertically as much as you can. Continue to hold the rabbit firmly, even though he may be squirming.

STEP 3: Swing the rabbit in a fluid downward motion, as quickly as you can but taking care not to move too fast and lose your grip on the bunny. Repeat this raising up and swinging down motion as many times as needed

The centrifugal force of the downward swing compresses the rabbit's internal organs and forces air out of the lungs, with the intention of dislodging the material in the rabbit's throat.

After performing this, you should take your rabbit to an experienced rabbit vet for a full examination.

STEP 1



Photos from Bunspace.com

STEP 2



STEP 3

