

The back part of a rabbit's hind foot is called the hock, and this area supports most of their weight. The hock is normally covered with a thick layer of fuzz, but sometimes this fur wears away, and the skin on the hocks break and bleed. Average rabbit owners call this condition "sore hocks."

Sore hocks can develop on any rabbit, but certain ones are more susceptible. Those would be the Rex-furred breeds (since they have short fine fur), the very large breeds (since they have more weight to bear), and excitable rabbits that stamp their feet a lot. It's also said to be more common in rabbits that are housed in cages with wire floors. Put two of these factors together (i.e. Rex fur + wire floor) and you will need to be proactive if you want to prevent them.

Unfortunately, once sore hocks have developed, they're very hard to treat. If the fur gets worn away, it will seldom grow back. Plus, since rabbits spend so much time on their feet, the skin doesn't have much of a chance to heal. So it is best to come up with a prevention plan.

That plan doesn't have to include moving your rabbits to solid-floored cages. I don't even recommend it. The reason why most rabbits are housed on wire floors is because wire floors are best for them. Cleanest. Safest. Healthiest. In fact, I read a study from the World Rabbit Council (summarized several years ago in Domestic Rabbits magazine) that said rabbits seemed to actually prefer wire floors if given the option.

Plastic resting mats (also known as EZ-Mats) are extremely popular with rabbit owners, and for good reason. They're simply hard plastic mats - made of quality, non-toxic ABS - that lay over the top of the cage floor, giving your rabbit a place to rest off the wire. They have very smooth surfaces; all the edges are carefully beveled to prevent wear on your rabbit's feet. And they are super sanitary. They have slots punched out that allow waste to fall right through into the drop pan. And if the mats ever get dirty, they're easy to wash with soap and water.

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