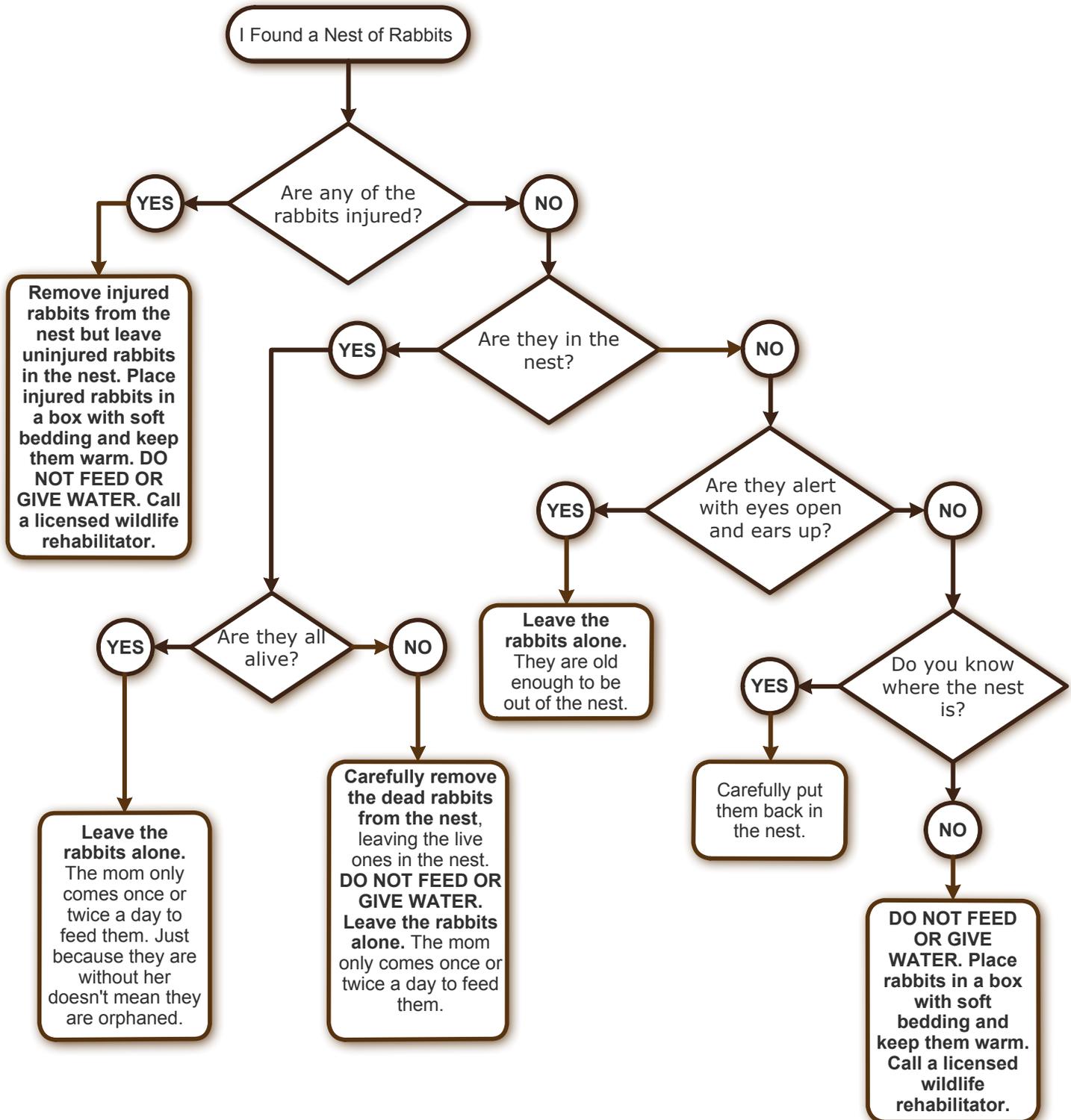


## I Found a Nest of Infant Rabbits





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## I Found a Nest of Rabbits

It's a fairly common situation this time of year. Somehow or another, you found a nest of rabbits 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 rabbit nest**. If it was disturbed through your activities or by your dog, then repair the nest as well as you can. Any injured rabbits should be removed from the nest, but the uninjured rabbits should be left in the nest. **Moving the nest will cause the mother rabbit to no longer be able to find it** - so leave it alone!

Second, **place any injured rabbits 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 rabbits' chance of survival.

Third, **provide supplemental heat for any eyes-closed rabbits**. Place a heating pad SET ON LOW TEMPERATURE under half of the box.

Fourth, **DO NOT FEED THEM OR GIVE THEM WATER**. Giving an animal the improper diet CAN DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD and could decrease the animal's chance of survival. 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 rabbits to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator**. Our website contains a list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators in New Jersey. 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. The easiest is to put a laundry basket upside down over the nest during the day and removing it at night. OR 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 the mother rabbit'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.

### Important notes:

- Mother rabbits only feed their infants twice per day to protect the nest from her scent. You may never see the mother regardless of the excellent care she provides.
- Rabbits do not have good survival rates in captivity. It is always best to leave rabbits with their mother to give them the best chance of survival.
- Mother rabbits will still care for their infants after a nest disturbance.
- The trick of placing string or twigs over the nest can be applied. Place the string in an X pattern and check the next day. If the string is disturbed you can be assured the mother is returning to the nest.
- If you find a dead adult rabbit, don't assume it is the mother. 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. Rabbits are born without scent which protects them from predators. Moving the nest will cause the mother rabbit to no longer be able to find it - so leave it alone!