



Are you considering bonding your rabbit with another rabbit?

If you are considering finding your bunny a friend, there are some things that you need to take in consideration before taking that leap of faith. If you are too hasty and if you just bring a new rabbit home without consulting with your rabbit – you may have some serious trouble bonding them. In general bonding rabbits can be very difficult and rarely is there an instant bond.

Like people, rabbits like to slowly build relationships and they have better chemistry with some rabbits and it may not be that cute rabbit you pick that they like. If you do this wrong, it is very likely that you will end up with two rabbits that do not like each other, and you will have to keep them separated which is probably not what you had expected when you thought about getting a second rabbit in the first place.

The first thing you must know is that you need to allow your rabbit to have some input on who they like.

If you ever saw the old cartoon “Watership Down” you know that rabbits can fight and be very aggressive and can kill each other very quickly. When you think of rabbits, it is hard to believe that they are capable of such aggressive behaviors, but they are very territorial creatures and they hate change, especially a stranger moving in uninvited. Because they are fastidious and picky, they should have some input on which rabbit that they choose to share their space with.

For this reason, we strongly encourage you to look up bonding techniques (rabbit.org) and familiarize yourself before adopting so that you know what to expect.

Before adopting a rabbit from us, we will ask you to bring your rabbit and do an "initial" meet and greet to get an idea if your rabbit is compatible with another rabbit, particularly the one you want to adopt. We are looking for behaviors that are bad from the start, for example if your rabbit is chasing or the other rabbit is obsessively chasing your rabbit and will not stop. That is a bad sign that they are not compatible. A little chasing is ok but what we do not want to see is chasing that cannot be broken up and they do not separate and respect the others space. Behaviors that are good, are they respect each other's space and somewhat ignore the other rabbit. Contrary to what you might think, that is a good sign that they are bondable. There is no other way to determine this without doing a meet and greet.

Like dogs, you do not want two “alphas”, there can only be one alpha so you have to have one submit to the other. The rabbit that is the alpha rabbit is the rabbit that bows down to the other rabbit. The rabbit that bows his/her head is telling the other rabbit that they are the boss and they are asking for the other rabbit to groom them.



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Speed dating: The initial meet and greet is done in a neutral area which gives us a pretty good idea if they are compatible because both rabbits will be a little insecure.

Depending on the results of how they interact at the meet and greet session would determine if you should adopt that rabbit. Most often, the rabbit that you want is not the rabbit that your rabbit will choose so you need to go into it with that in mind. Your bunny should always have some input on who his/her new roommate is.

Both rabbits should always be spayed or neutered, and this is very important because hormones are the cause of aggression. For the safety of our rabbits and your rabbit, you will need to provide proof that your rabbit is fixed before we do a meet and greet session.

You should never attempt to bond your rabbit if your rabbit is not spayed or neutered, or the other rabbit you want to adopt is not spayed or neutered. Both need to be equal, on equal grounds, including being non-hormonal. Both sexes are hormonal driven in different biological ways that can cause aggression in rabbits. Both being spayed and neutered will greatly increase the chances of a successful bond.

Prepare your home prior to bringing home a new rabbit.

You need to prepare your house before you adopt. You cannot just plop a new rabbit in your rabbit's area and expect that they are going to get along, even if the initial meet and greet went well. That will be a big mistake on your part mainly because your rabbit feels like the King or Queen in his area and you must make them feel as uneasy as the new rabbit – again making them equal on an emotional level.

You will need to move your rabbit to a neutral area that they are unfamiliar with and have never been in before.

Your rabbit's setup needs to be moved to a neutral area - somewhere (in a room) your existing rabbit has never been in before. This is important because your rabbit needs to be on the same emotional level as your rabbit, so she does not feel superior. Your rabbit was free roam prior to bonding... during the bonding process you will have to confine your rabbit to an exercise pen strategically placed next to your rabbit but where they can see, smell, and interact without physically touching. Only during short intervals do you let them out to explore together, gradually increasing the time as fighting lessens. The time it takes to fully bond varies between rabbits. Sometimes this can



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happen within the 1st month and sometimes it takes 6 months or longer. If they fight you separate and start over the next day. Only when they stop fighting can you move them back together to the same area you had prior to adopting the second rabbit.



Example of the proper bonding setup in a neutral room



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Stress Bonding techniques

To help bond faster, there are some other techniques you can try such as the bath tub method and car rides. To learn more about those techniques please research on rabbit.org.



How do I know when my rabbits are bonded?

The signs to look for is that they are starting to lay next to each other in separate pens and when they are out exploring together - you may see them grooming each other or ignoring each other, which is a sign of mutual respect. You may see them lying next to each other in the litter box. Just remember, slow and steady wins the race so do not expect instant results, and this time varies from rabbits to rabbits. Once they are fully bonded you can move them to the area you had the other rabbit previously and they will share the space without issues.