

Rabbit Bonding

Rabbit Care 3 of 4



Helping Local Animals



REMEMBER RABBITS CAN LIVE HAPPILY IN A GROUP, NOT JUST AS A PAIR. IT'S ESSENTIAL TO THEIR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH THAT THEY DO NOT LIVE ALONE.

Rabbits evolved to live in groups and as social animals they need to live in either a pair or a group. It's essential to their physical and mental health that they do not live alone. To make sure they can live life happily together they need to have had a successful bonding when they are first introduced.

A.R.C. can bond A.R.C. rabbits to an existing rabbit that you may already have, or we can bond two of our own rabbits if you'd like a pair. Unfortunately we cannot offer a general bonding service but we are often asked what's the best way to bond rabbits. It can be a tricky process but with the guidance below you should be able to achieve successful bonding.

- Be prepared that bonding may take around 3 days
- Both rabbits **MUST** be neutered before bonding takes place except where a baby rabbit is too young to be neutered – see our rabbit neutering section for more details
- Bonding must take place on neutral territory for both rabbits. We suggest bonding rabbits indoors in the relatively confined space of a large carrier and then an indoor cage
- Begin by putting the rabbits together in a large carrier so that they do not have a lot of room to run around and chase each other. Plus, it is easier to keep the rabbits with you in order to intervene if the rabbits start to fight
- It is quite normal for one rabbit to mount the other when first put together - females may mount the male or the other way round. They may attempt to nip each other's bottoms and pull fur. You'll have to use your judgement on how far to allow such behaviours
- After about an hour, by which time the rabbits are quiet, they should be moved from the large carrier to an indoor cage in which neither has ever spent any time. This should be in a room with which both rabbits are completely unfamiliar. There may be some more mounting and chasing at this stage but it should quickly settle down
- For the next 24 to 48 hours it is likely that the rabbits will studiously ignore each other and sit on opposite sides of the cage but they should no longer fight
- After about 48 hours, all being well, the rabbits will have become gradually more relaxed with each other and will begin to sit together and, if you are lucky, groom each other
- The rabbits are ready to go into their permanent hutch when they are quiet, calm and sitting together looking relaxed. Their hutch should be thoroughly cleaned (water with some vinegar added helps to neutralise the smell of the resident rabbit) and if possible moved to a new position.
- The rabbits should be kept in the hutch for the first 24 hours or so - if it is a 2 storey hutch it may help to allow the rabbits only one storey to begin with and then gradually give them access to the second storey. They should not be allowed access to a run or the rest of the house (if a house rabbit) for at least 24 hours, possibly longer depending on how well they are getting on
- The time scales here are guidance only - some rabbits take longer to bond and others are well bonded very quickly. Bondings should not be hurried and rabbits should be monitored carefully at first.

Once your rabbits are bonded, they bond for life and it's important that they keep that bond. If you need to take one rabbit to the vet for any reason, you must take the whole bonded family with you. We would never recommend separating bonded rabbits.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET A FRIEND FOR YOUR EXISTING RABBIT

'Please also read our How To Give The Best Care For Your Rabbit, Neutering and Diet'

FOR MORE ADVICE, PLEASE CONTACT US:

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