



Bonding Bunnies

Introducing a new rabbit into a household with an existing bunny can be like bringing an intruder in from another rabbit warren. The process of introducing two rabbits is known as bonding which can be stressful for both the people and rabbits involved. It is, however, incredibly important if you want to achieve a harmonious living environment for them.



Below are a few helpful tips on how to make this introduction as smooth as possible.

Age and Gender

Rabbits tend to establish a hierarchy relationship, and this can be determined based on the age and sex of the rabbits. It is recommended to have rabbits of similar ages or younger than the existing rabbit. To have the most success in an amicable relationship, both rabbits must be sterilized (desexed). This helps to decrease the threat on the existing rabbit of the new rabbit coming into their territory.

In some cases, although there are many exceptions to this rule, it is more successful to have a mixed gender pair – a male and a female. Some rabbits will be more accepting of the opposite sex rabbit and will bond better.

The Introduction

Introducing a new rabbit into an environment with another bun should be carried out gradually, ideally at least a month after they have been sterilised.

Before the rabbits meet for the first time, you can gently rub both of their noses and body with a strong-smelling substance. This helps to disguise the individual smells of each rabbit. Some things to use include strong smelling herbs like parsley, mint or basil otherwise vanilla or lavender essence also works well. This can also be rubbed on the fur of the rabbits too if need be.





It is important always to introduce new rabbits in a neutral territory, ideally somewhere where both rabbits have never been before. This might be a laundry or bathroom or a certain safe spot in the garden.

Decorate this area with lots of interesting things like boxes/tunnels and yummy food items. Creating a fun and enriching environment will hopefully keep the rabbit's interest on these items instead of each other.

The initial introduction should only be for 5 – 10 minutes at a time but repeated regularly throughout the day. As they begin to accept each other the length of time can be extended. Bonding rabbits is a long process and often can take several weeks.



Hutch Placement

Place their individual hutches next to each other, so that they can get use to each other's smells. While they are living separately, you can occasionally swap over their litter trays into the opposite rabbit's cage or actually swap the rabbits over to each other's cage so they can accept the new smells as being part of their living environment.

Fighting

You must be prepared that your rabbits might fight. If this occurs or you witness any signs of aggression, be quick to separate them. Rabbits can be vicious when they fight, and they can inflict severe injuries to one another. It can also be a dangerous situation for you, so when you intervene, make sure you wear gloves or have a broom close by to gently separate the rabbits with if needed.

If a fight does occur, end the bonding session and try again later. Never leave the rabbits unattended while bonding and always check them over afterwards for any bites or wounds. If a fight does occur, rabbits will usually target the genital area, the nose and the ears.

Bonded Rabbits

If you're lucky enough to have two bonded bunnies, they will likely spend a lot of their time grooming each other eating and even toileting together. Two snuggled up bunnies sleeping together is a good indication that they have successfully bonded.

Unfortunately, there are some occasions where rabbits simply won't bond. They are all individuals, and we can't expect them to always get along.





If you are trying to bond your rabbits or are thinking of adding another bun to an existing one, always be prepared that bonding may not be successful and that the rabbits may have to live separately.

If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.



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