



Forest of Dean
Gloucestershire

The Bonding Process. How to Bond Your Rabbits Successfully.



Please make sure you read to the end of this document before you start trying to bond your rabbits.

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Rabbits are so much happier living in pairs and need a partner to help them groom the bits they can't reach themselves, they often clean each others eyes and ears which helps them stay healthier.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE OF BONDING IS NOT TO RUSH THE PROCESS, LET THE RABBITS DICTATE WHEN THEY WANT TO BE TOGETHER.

Step one:

You will need two sleeping areas, you can use a two tier hutch if you securely cover the hole to make two hutches or you can use two individual hutches. If you are planning to carry out this bonding process in your house rather than outside, you could use two dog crates instead of hutches.

Step two:

Keep the rabbits in their separate hutches or runs during the day and at night swap them around so that each one spends the night in the other rabbit's hutch. This alternating between hutches/cages at night will allow the two different scents to intermingle and the two scents will become familiar to both rabbits and should no longer be seen as a threat by either rabbit.

Step three:



You will need a run that is divided in the middle by wire, so that the rabbits can see and smell each other without being able to bite or fight each other.

Ideally the run you use should be small enough that that are always in fairly close proximity while they are in it.

Step four:

Once the rabbits are relaxed in each others company and are lying either side of the wire next to each other, you can start to put them together for short periods of time in a neutral area e.g. if the rabbits have always been in the garden, put them in the bathroom or kitchen.

YOU MUST STAY WITH THEM DURING THESE INITIAL STAGES TO ENSURE THEY DON'T FIGHT.



If they are house rabbits put them in a room where they haven't been before or in an area outside. Make sure you put a carrying cage or box in the area you are using to put your rabbits together in so that if one of them is feeling stressed they have somewhere to go and hide.

Step Five:

The Rabbits will try to mount each other to establish who will be the dominant one of the pair. The submissive one of the pair will usually put his or her nose down to the ground in front of the other rabbit as a sign of submission. If one of them is being chased too much and getting stressed, separate them before it escalates into a fight.

IN MY EXPERIENCE IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO BOND RABBITS ONCE THEY HAVE HAD A FULL SCALE FIGHT

Step Six

Increase the amount of time the rabbits spend together everyday. Once they start grooming each other and are happy to sit together for longer periods i.e. several hours, **YOU MUST KEEP AN EYE ON THEM AT THIS STAGE.** They should then be able to stay in their combined run together for the day, but should be



separated again at night when they are put back into their individual hutches. Do this for a couple of days before putting them together in a hutch at night.

THIS IS TO MAKE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT THEY ARE HAPPY TO BE TOGETHER BEFORE THEY ARE SHUT IN A CONFINED SPACE TOGETHER OVER NIGHT.

All this may seem like a lot of effort, but when you see two contented and happy rabbits living together in harmony, you will know it's all been worth the effort.

If you have any queries during this bonding process you can email Jane at: enquiries@carrottopsrabbitrescue.org.uk

