

watchful eye. As the bunnies continue to get along well, you can enlarge the area where they interact, and allow them more time together. Eventually, once they can stay together for several hours without any problems, you can allow them play time outside of the enclosed area. Again, keep a watchful eye to prevent any fighting. Once you go a whole day without problems, you can let them spend the night together.

### **FIGHTING**

It's not unusual for two rabbits to seem to like each other but still fight. It has to do with dominance, territorial issues, and sometimes even jealousy. Often you have to resort to additional measures to get the rabbits to "trust" each other or seek out each other for comfort.

### **On the road again.**

Car rides are one way to "stress" bunnies just enough to get them to cuddle and seek comfort from their new companion. The best way is to get someone to go with you. Place the bunnies in a box, in the back of your car. If you only have a small sedan, put them on the back seat on a towel. You can sit in the back seat to watch them. Have a friend drive your car, adding a bit of erratic behavior to scare the bunnies a bit. Good examples are starting or stopping suddenly, turning corners a bit more sharply than usual, driving over speed bumps, etc. Sometimes it's best to find a big empty parking lot where you can do circles, hit speed bumps and drive a little crazy, and not worry about getting a ticket.

If you're on your own, you can place the two bunnies in a carrier together and go for a

drive. Again, a bit of erratic behavior (not enough to get a ticket) will help to "shake them up" a bit. A good long drive, then a date in neutral territory once you get home can help.

### **Shake things up a bit.**

Other ways to get bunnies to seek comfort from each other is to put them in odd situations at home. In the slippery bathtub, in a litterbox on top the dryer (with a pair of tennis shoes banging inside), in an office chair next to you while you work on the computer. Sometimes just putting them in strange situations will help to enhance their dependence upon one another for comfort.

### **RESOURCES FOR BONDING**

The House Rabbit Society has many great articles to help you through the bonding process. Some are:

- <http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/behavior/expect.html>
- <http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/behavior/bonding-tips.html>
- <http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/introductions.html>
- <http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/multiple.html>
- <http://www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/behavior/bonding.html>



**San Diego House Rabbit Society**  
**619-718-7777**  
**hrs@sandiegorabbits.org**  
**Visit us at [www.sandiegorabbits.org](http://www.sandiegorabbits.org)**

# **SAN DIEGO**

## **HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY**

### **FINDING YOUR RABBIT A COMPANION**



**To find a companion for  
your rabbit, email  
[hrs@sandiegorabbits.org](mailto:hrs@sandiegorabbits.org)  
or telephone  
**619-718-7777****

# **BOTH RABBITS MUST BE SPAYED or NEUTERED**

Over the years, House Rabbit Society (HRS) volunteers have found few generalizations that can safely be applied to all rabbits. The more rabbits we meet, the more exceptions we find. Only one truth remains unchallenged: Rabbits are not meant to live in solitude, away from members of their own kind.

Bunnies enjoy the company of other bunnies. They love to nuzzle and groom each other, to sleep on top of each other, and to share a big plate of salad or a box of hay. The sight of two bonded rabbits enjoying each others' company brings joy to all who witness their happiness.

Although they are naturally sociable, rabbits don't always know this important fact about themselves. Introductions can be a thorny business and stressful for all involved.

## **FIRST STEPS**

The first step to choosing a companion for your rabbit is to ensure that your bunny is altered and has been given time to allow its hormones to die down - about 4 to 6 weeks. Then, keep in mind your rabbit's sex. Male/female pairings are the easiest, with same-sex pairings next. There is some debate over whether male/male or female/female pairings are the most difficult; it will ultimately

depend upon the personalities of the two rabbits involved.

## **ADVANCE PLANNING**

Before bringing home a second rabbit you need to plan for the bonding process. Where will the two rabbits live before they are bonded? They must be housed separately - but side-by-side - to give them time to get to know each other. All introductions must occur in "neutral" territory; a place that your rabbit has not frequented, or can call its own. Bathrooms, kitchens, patios or spare bedrooms can work well for this.

Once bonded, where will the newlyweds live? You will likely need to create a larger living space to include the new rabbit. Also, if your current rabbit is "free run" don't assume that your new rabbit will be able to handle that level of freedom. Plan to keep both rabbits confined during the bonding period and maybe afterward, when you are not home to supervise.

## **LET ME CHOOSE**

Rabbits typically prefer to choose their new companions. Bringing home a new rabbit, to meet your current rabbit, can often end in disaster. Especially if your current bunny is a female. It's best to take your current rabbit along with you to meet new bunnies at the shelter or local rabbit rescue, to allow them to pick out a new friend. The process for this is very similar to the "dating" process discussed on the next page. Do yourself a favor - let your bunny choose.

## **THE DATING PERIOD**

Expect the bonding process (or dating period) to take anywhere from 2 weeks to about 2 months. Sometimes it takes less time and sometimes it takes more. The key to success is to take it slowly, always supervise dates well, and don't pressure the bunnies to get along too soon. Rabbits need time to get used to each other's presence; the smells, sounds, and habits of each will all be "new" to the other.

Conduct dates in a small area, about 4 feet square. Puppy exercise pens work very well for this purpose. You can also use the bathroom floor, bathtub, or a small enclosed area where you can maintain control.

Set both rabbits down together and move them beside each other, with their heads pointing in the same direction. Pet them both, across the ears and down the back, to soothe and quiet them as they get used to the bunny next to them. Pause for a bit, to see how they respond to each other's presence.

Presenting their head for grooming, or leaning into the other is good. Nipping or chasing is not. Keep a close watch to prevent negative behaviors such as lunging, nipping or chasing. If this starts, reach out and quickly place a hand on the head of the "chaser" and calm the bunny. Slide them back beside each other and start over. As the bunnies begin to accept each other you can relax a bit and allow them more freedom to interact, still keeping a