



## RABBIT-RABBIT INTRODUCTIONS

Introducing unfamiliar rabbits needs to be done carefully. Initially, you can provide side by side accommodation that will allow the rabbits to see and smell each other, but also hide should they want to. You can then prepare a neutral area in a new environment for both rabbits. Build up the time they spend together, and once they are spending one to two hours together, without problems, they can be introduced to their intended living space. Be aware of the signs of positive and negative behavior, and if you're concerned about your rabbit's behavior, seek veterinary advice.

### BEFORE INTRODUCING RABBITS

#### Neuter both rabbits

- Male rabbits can take up to six weeks to become sterile after they're neutered.
- Females shouldn't be bonded with another rabbit immediately post-neutering to reduce the risk of injury.

#### Prepare side-by-side accommodation

- Provide a barrier between the rabbits' enclosures that still allows them to see/smell each other, and lie side by side. Each rabbit must also be able to hide from the other whenever they want - ensure they both have constant access to hiding places.

#### Prepare a neutral area

- This needs to be somewhere neither rabbit has been housed before.

#### Know the signs of positive and negative behavior

##### Positive

- Sitting/lying side by side (even when the barrier is in between them)
- Grooming each other
- Seeking each other for positive interactions
- Behaving normally around one another

##### Negative

- Chasing each other
- Mounting
- Fighting
- Growling

### INTRODUCING RABBITS

#### Housing rabbits close to one another

- There may be some unrest in the beginning; however, this is normal and may last about seven days.
- Once they seem comfortable in one another's presence while living side-by-side, try swapping some of the rabbits' nesting materials over, or rubbing a cloth over one rabbit and then the other to transfer scent.

#### Short periods of being together with supervision

- Once the rabbits are comfortable with the sight and smell of each other they can be introduced for short periods in the neutral area.
- A familiar person should sit with them to supervise. While some negative behaviors are normal during introductions, these shouldn't be allowed to escalate. If they're mounting each other's head, which may lead to injury; or showing severe or persistent aggression towards each other, they need to be separated immediately. Be careful so you don't also get injured.
- During the first few introductions the area should be completely empty so you can observe them. If the introductions are going well you can introduce toys, hiding places, tunnels, etc., however you need to make sure there are enough for both rabbits.
- If things are going well gradually increase the time they're together so they're spending supervised time together daily.

#### Living together

- Once the rabbits are spending one to two hours together daily without any problems they can be introduced into their intended living space, initially under supervision.
- Rabbits can be left alone together safely once they're showing positive behaviors towards one another.

Always speak to your vet for more detailed advice before attempting to bond rabbits. And if you're concerned about your rabbit's behavior, seek veterinary advice.