

# Life is better together.



## Help your rabbit find a companion.

Bonding two rabbits together isn't as easy as just putting them in together and hoping they will get on. It is a process that has to be thought out carefully and can take anything from one day to a month or more. Both rabbits must be neutered before attempting to bond them together.

### **This is the process we find works best here at Assisi!!**

If your rabbit has lived on his/her own for a while, the first step is getting them used to another rabbit being present. Splitting an enclosure in two is the best way to do this, with each rabbit on either side of the fence, they will be able to get used to the sight and smell of each other. Make sure the fence separating is high enough for neither one to be able to jump over!! You will also need to make sure there is a bit of a gap between the fence that is splitting the two bunnies, as noses go through the fence for a sniff and they may nip each other! Once they have had a few days of getting used to each other's movements, and smells, you can start the neutral territory meets.

Start putting them together for short periods of time (generally 10-15 mins) in strictly neutral territory where neither has been before. Lots of distractions are necessary, so treats, toys, a few tunnels and even cardboard boxes for example. These distractions will be a big part of the bonding process, as you will be looking for the rabbits being more interested in the food/toys than each other. Changing the distractions up every meet will help to reduce the 'claiming' of toys. They are also good tools to naturally end a potential scuffle/fight without you needing to step in at all. You will need to be in this area with them, with a towel at hand in case any fights need to be separated. A little bit of chasing and nipping is normal, so try and not intervene too soon, however if the situation is getting too intense (rapid circling), it is better to separate the rabbits too soon that risk an all-out fight.

To separate a scuffle/fight, have a towel at the ready to throw over the rabbits. DO NOT pull them apart as one may have its teeth lodged in the other. Throw the towel over, put a hand to both rabbits and wait for them to become still. Slowly shift them apart, making sure that whichever rabbit has bitten, has let go. After a meet that has involved fighting, it is essential that you check both rabbits over to ensure they do not have any wounds.

Swapping bunnies over to each other's 'home' area helps, as this way rabbits cannot associate the side that they are on as being 'their side'. You can start this around 5-6 days of your new bun being home (as long as they are settled). Swapping rabbits into each other's area in the morning is advised, as litter trays are dirty, and scents are strong! Feeding both rabbits close to each other, with their separate bowls and still separated by the fence helps them get used to 'eating together' even if it is not yet out of the same bowl.

All of this will need to be repeated until the bunnies are relaxed in each other's company. You will be looking for small positive interactions (nose sniffing) but turning away from each other to do something else. Acknowledging each other presence but continuing to eat or play with a toy, not wanting to start a fight should be considered small victories!! When the rabbits are happy to groom each other and lie together, they can be left together unsupervised. The whole process can take anything from a couple of hours to a couple of months. The better the rabbits get on at their first meeting, the quicker they will bond. If you are able to put the rabbits together for very brief periods every day, they'll get used to each other far more quickly than if you do it less often.

If you need more information or help with your bonding, please contact the sanctuary!!