

Rabbit Company

People don't realise that rabbits are incredibly social animals and, like humans, they can suffer from loneliness. Many owners keep a rabbit alone in a hutch, but this leads to a miserable lifestyle for rabbits. Rabbits have complex social lives and are happiest in company - therefore, rabbits should ideally live in friendly pairs or groups.

However, keeping the wrong pairings together can lead to unwanted kittens (baby rabbits) and/or fighting. The best combination is a neutered male and a neutered female. Even two neutered males are likely to fight, as, just like in the wild, pet rabbits are very territorial.

Neutering is important as it prevents unwanted pregnancies, can reduce fighting, and in females prevents uterine cancer. Speak to your vet for advice about neutering. If you are thinking of getting another rabbit, please speak to your vet for advice first. They will be able to help ensure you can meet the needs of a pair of rabbits.

Unfamiliar rabbits need to be introduced to each other very carefully and gradually, under owner supervision, preferably in a space that is new to both rabbits. If you've never bonded rabbits before, you must ask a vet, vet nurse or other qualified pet care specialist for advice on how to do this. If you rehome a rabbit from a rescue centre, the staff are likely to be able to advise you on introducing rabbits and may even be able to pair rabbits up for you.

It's incredibly beneficial for rabbits to start interacting with people and other rabbits from an early age. When they have reached one week of age (but not before) young rabbits should be gently handled every day. Familiarity with people will help your rabbits develop into friendly and confident adults. Exposing them to normal everyday sights and sounds is also important, so they're relaxed and happy in the environments they encounter.

Guinea Pigs

Contrary to popular belief, guinea pigs should not be kept as companions for rabbits. They have different dietary requirements and communicate differently too. Furthermore, rabbits can sometimes bully guinea pigs and can pass a bacteria onto them, which can cause respiratory disease.

Humans

Whilst humans provide welcome company, and you can have lots of fun playing, bonding and interacting together, it's still important that rabbits have the companionship of another friendly rabbit.

When handling rabbits, you should remember that they're ground-living creatures who can find being lifted and carried distressing, so whenever possible interact with your rabbits at ground level. Owners should also remember not to approach from above (as a predator would), but rather on the same level. When picking your rabbits up ensure that all four legs and the bottom are securely supported at all times. Rabbits should never be picked up by the ears or scruff of the neck.