



Bonding Rabbits: How we can help

At the branch we advocate introducing rabbits in a manner that prioritises their sensitive natures (see *Techniques to Avoid* below). We believe the best way to introduce two rabbits is to have them live side-by-side in your own home before making any introductions and then taking your time with their 'dating'. So if you are looking for a companion for your existing bunny then here is how we can help you find their perfect match!

1. **You can take home one of our rabbits on a 'foster' basis for up to six weeks so you can see if they will be compatible with one another.** This arrangement is subject to a successful home visit, the signing of a fostering agreement and on the understanding that you care for our rabbit in line with our branch policy and follow our bonding guide.
2. By fostering rather than adopting it means that if the bonding does not work out then the rabbit can be returned without any quibble.
3. **We can loan equipment** to enable two rabbits to live side by side. If they are indoor rabbits we have large indoor pens approx 4.5ft high that can divide a room. For outdoor rabbits we have a 7ft long collapsible run and cover. For purely practical reasons we are unable to lend hutches so this is something you would have to provide.
4. Our team have many years expertise in regards to rabbit bonding. **We can offer you in-person support and advice** (if you live in the catchment area) or telephone/email support. We will also provide you with means of contacting us 7 days a week, including out of office hours.

Brief summary of bonding process

(For full details see ['Adopter's Guide: How to Bond Rabbits'](#))



1. The **rabbits live, ideally, side by side with one another for two weeks before any introductions** are made. This is to allow the RSPCA rabbit time to adjust to their new surroundings and for the owned rabbit to adjust to the presence of a new arrival and the perceived 'threat' of them in their territory. NB this timescale can vary according to the needs of the individual rabbits.
2. The **next two weeks is dating time.** The time is right to attempt the first date when you are seeing positive signs between them (see ['Adopters Guide: How to Bond Rabbits'](#)). You will also know within the first two to three sessions whether it is worthwhile proceeding any further. We usually call you around this time to see how things are progressing but welcome

contact from you at any time. NB this timescale can vary according to the needs of the individual rabbits.

3. The **fifth and sixth weeks are to consolidate the relationship** and in most cases you know by now whether the rabbits are going to be compatible. Usually by the sixth week rabbits are living together but each attempted pairing can be different, we are on hand to offer expertise guidance and advice, so please stay in touch! As we've said before, this timescale can vary according to the needs of the individual rabbits.

Techniques to avoid

- **Introducing unfamiliar rabbits needs to be done very carefully and takes a minimum of two weeks.** Injury and severe stress can be caused if rabbits are introduced poorly or attempts are made to introduce incompatible rabbits. Additionally poor introductions can lead to rabbits creating negative associations about other rabbits and so may not bond with any other rabbit in the future.
- Methods such as 'speed dating' can be highly stressful for rabbits and could result in serious injury and is likely to be unsuccessful in forming a long-term compatible pair. This is because transporting rabbits can in itself be a cause of stress for a rabbit, but then being introduced to another rabbit without a prior period of becoming familiar with the sight and smell of one another can result in an incompatible pairing, stress related illness and/or injury through fighting.
- The method known as 'stressing' where rabbits are placed into a frightening situation (such as a car journey, pet carrier together or the bath tub) relies on fear to force the rabbits to tolerate each other and 'pair up'. This method can also lead to incompatible pairing, stress related illness and/or injury through fighting.



Ultimately we want happy, compatible bunnies so our methods are based on a gentle and sensitive approach to help them find a friend.

**To discuss rabbit bonding don't hesitate to contact us on
0161 882 0680 option 4.**