

Happy
Buns,
Happy
Hearts!



UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOR SIGNALS

Decoding Lagomorph Body Language, Hierarchy Dynamics, and Immediate Warning Flags

Observe
with love,
act with
care.



1. POSITIVE BONDING BEHAVIORS

Signs of trust, comfort & connection



MUTUAL ALLOGROOMING

Licking the forehead, eyes, or ears is the gold standard of affection and acceptance.



FLOPPING & SPRAWLING

A relaxed flop or full sprawl shows they feel completely safe around each other.



PARALLEL LOAFING

Sitting side-by-side like two loaves of bread means comfortable coexistence.



EATING TOGETHER

Sharing hay or greens peacefully is one of the strongest signs of a developing bond.



MIRRORED GROOMING

Grooming at the same time shows synchronized comfort and trust.



SOFT NOSING / NUZZLING

Not paying attention to each other is often a huge milestone!

2. DOMINANCE BEHAVIORS & ESTABLISHING ORDER

Normal social negotiation—monitor closely

BEHAVIOR	PURPOSE & CONTEXT	WHAT TO DO
 HEAD SLIDING (GROOMING REQUESTS)	Dominant rabbit presses forehead to the ground under another's chin, asking to be groomed.	ALLOW. Let them work it out unless it leads to frustration or nipping.
 MOUNTING (FORWARD)	Establishes top-rank status. Can happen in any spayed/neutered pair.	MONITOR. Limit to 10–15 sec. Stop if it causes stress or leads to chasing.
 FACE (REVERSE) MOUNTING	High risk of bites to eyes, ears, face & genitals.	INTERERRUPT IMMEDIATELY.
 CHASING (SHORT BURSTS)	Testing speed & boundaries in a neutral space.	ALLOW BRIEFLY. Intervene if it becomes relentless or cornering.
 NIPPING (MILD)	Quick nip to say "move" or "groom me."	OBSERVE. OK if brief & doesn't break skin.
 CHIN RUBBING (CHINNING)	Deposits scent to mark territory or the other rabbit.	HARMLESS. Normal scent marking.
 MILD FUR PULLING	May happen during social negotiation.	MONITOR. Stop if repeated, causes distress or skin injury.
 NOSE-OFFS	Both rabbits want to be groomed first.	ALLOW. Usually resolves on its own.

3. DANGER SIGNS

High stress or active aggression—intervene immediately!

 THE "TORNADO" (TAILS UP, CIRCLING) Rabbits bite while spinning in a circle. Can cause deep, serious injuries.	
 BOXING & SWATTING Rising on hind legs and striking forward with front paws.	
 LUNGING WITH FLATTENED EARS Head low, ears flat back, weight forward. A clear warning of an attack.	
 SUSTAINED BITING Clamping, holding, shaking—often leads to puncture wounds and bleeding.	
 PERSISTENT CHASING & CORNERING Relentless pursuit that prevents the other rabbit from escaping.	
 TAIL RAISED + STIFF POSTURE High arousal, anger or readiness to attack.	
 LOUD BRUXISM (TOOTH GRINDING) Loud, harsh grinding with tense posture = severe stress, anger or pain.	
 PERSISTENT PANIC Frantic escape attempts, banging into walls, rapid breathing, refusing food.	

BONDING BASICS: SETTING YOUR RABBITS UP FOR SUCCESS

SAFETY FIRST: Never use bare hands to separate fighting rabbits. Use a towel, dustpan, board or cardboard barrier.



START SHORT

Begin with 5–10 minute sessions. Increase gradually as they relax.



NEUTRAL SPACE

Use an area neither rabbit has claimed. Cleaned hallway, bathroom, or exercise pen works best.



FOOD CAN HELP

Offer hay and greens to create positive associations. Remove food if it causes possession or aggression.



SPAY/NEUTER FIRST

Wait at least 4–8 weeks post-surgery before formal bonding.



SUPERVISE ALWAYS

Supervise all interactions until the bond is stable and trustworthy.



GO SLOW AT NIGHT

Until fully bonded, house in separate enclosures side-by-side with a safe barrier.



Patience is key. Progress is not linear—celebrate small wins!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Q: How long should each bonding session last?

A: Start with 5–10 minutes in a neutral space. Increase gradually as rabbits show more relaxed body language.



Q: What is a neutral space?

A: An area neither rabbit has ever been to. Clean & scent-free with no hidden corners or claimed items.



Q: Should I feed them treats during bonding?

A: Yes, leafy greens or healthy treats can help. Remove food if either rabbit becomes possessive or aggressive.



Q: Can unspayed/unneutered rabbits bond?

A: Not recommended. Wait 4–8 weeks post-spay/neuter for best results.



Q: What if a bonding session goes badly?

A: Separate safely. Let them decompress in side-by-side enclosures. Slow down and try again.



Q: Why do rabbits pull out tufts of fur?

A: Minor fur pulling can happen during social negotiation. Stop if it becomes repeated, aggressive or causes skin injury.



Q: How do I tell the difference between a fight and normal chasing?

A: Normal chasing is brief and stops on its own. Fighting is relentless, includes biting, boxing or "tornado" spinning.



Q: Is it normal for bonded rabbits to have minor squabbles?

A: Yes! Short disagreements resolve quickly without injury or prolonged fear.



Q: Should I separate at night in early bonding?

A: Yes. Until fully bonded, keep them in separate enclosures side-by-side with a safe barrier.



Q: One rabbit seems terrified. What should I do?

A: Separate immediately. Shorten sessions and go slower to build their confidence.



Q: My rabbits are ignoring each other. Is that good?

A: Usually yes! Peaceful indifference means they feel safe enough not to monitor or challenge.



Q: Why does one rabbit always ask to be groomed?

A: Head sliding means "please groom me." It's normal social communication.



Q: Can bonded rabbits lose their bond?

A: Yes. Illness, pain, long separation or major changes can disrupt it. Rebond slowly if needed.



Q: How long does it take to fully bond?

A: Days to months—there's no set timeline. Focus on steady improvement, not speed.



Q: What is the best sign that bonding is succeeding?

A: More relaxed body language, eating together, sharing space, grooming and quick recovery after disagreements.



Rabbits communicate through subtle body language. By learning their signals, going slow, and prioritizing safety, you can help your rabbits build a strong, trusting bond for life.

NEED HELP?

Consult a rabbit-savvy vet or an experienced rabbit rescue/behaviorist.

