



"I would LOVE to adopt, but I am worried about how my dogs will react. Can rabbits and dogs be friends?"

The short answer: Yes, they can!

The long answer - Yes, they can, BUT - everything hinges on the dog's prey drive. For a successful interspecies household, a dog must have a low prey drive and must not be interested in chasing and killing wildlife. A low prey drive dog is gentle with other animal species, even in play.

Introducing dogs and rabbits should be done with caution and preparation. First, let's see if your dog is a good match:

- ◇ Dog has a low prey drive (is not interested in chasing small animals in yard, etc)
- ◇ Dog follows basic commands such as 'sit', 'down', 'stay', and 'leave it'
- ◇ Dog is calm and submissive
- ◇ Dog is an adult (puppies are normally untrained and unable to control their exuberant behavior, but there are exceptions – for example, your dog grew up with rabbits as a puppy!)
- ◇ Dog is a herding, **non-sporting**, or working dog breed. Generally speaking, avoid sporting breeds as these dogs have been bred to hunt. Avoid toy breeds if the dog is high strung or anxious. Breed recommendations are generalities to use as a baseline.

Passed the initial test? Individual personalities are most important to determine compatibility – we are here for consultation!

Ok, your dog seems like a good candidate. Here is where BBSC can help! Rabbits who are good candidates for a canine friend are:

- ◇ Outgoing, confident bunnies
- ◇ Relaxed, easy-going bunnies
- ◇ Bunnies that have been socialized to other animals

A shy, fearful rabbit is not a good choice.

Let's do it! Here are some ground rules...

- ◇ Never allow a dog to meet a rabbit who's confined inside a cage. Instead, allow the rabbit to freely explore the dog while the dog is lying down and on leash.
- ◇ Keep sessions short and gradually extend supervised introductions.
- ◇ Proceed slowly. Take your time and have patience.
- ◇ Safety of your rabbit is your top priority during this process.
- ◇ Use positive reinforcement and be consistent.
- ◇ Establish yourself and your rabbit at the top of the pack hierarchy.

Yay! They're friends.

- ◇ Always provide escape routes for both species (a place the rabbit can escape to if she feels threatened by the dog, a place the dog can go to escape a pestering rabbit).
- ◇ Always keep separate feeding areas.
- ◇ Never allow your dog to chase your rabbit, even in play.
- ◇ Supervision is required until 100% trust has been achieved.

Keeping a high prey drive dog or cat separated from a pet rabbit is critical but difficult and dangerous. A split-second accident can be fatal for the rabbit. If you think a dog or cat is not trustworthy with a small animal trust your gut OR consult with us.