

DOUBLE YOUR BUN

HOW TO BOND YOUR BUNNIES by Natalie Sullivan (HRS licensed Educator at Georgia House Rabbit Society.) Special thanks to Edie Sayeg the chapter manager of GHR. Edie taught me everything there is to know about bonding and is an expert on the gentle bonding method used at the GHR center.

Photo credit to Natalie Sullivan unless stated.

WHY DO YOU NEED TO BOND YOUR BUNNY?

- Rabbits are social creatures and live a longer and happier life when bonded.
 - They provide emotional support to each other when one bunny is sick, bored, lonely, or stressed.
 - Once your bunny is bonded it doesn't take any extra work to care for two bunnies. They share a house, food, water, and litter box.
 - They will groom each other and keep each other clean and healthy.
 - They will keep each other company while you are at work or away, which means you will worry less!
 - The most important reason is **THEY ARE SO CUTE TOGETHER!** Nothing like watching two bunnies play together or watching a snuggled up pair of bunnies taking a nap.
 - Bunnies bond for life, don't deny them a lifetime companion. They will love you for it!
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BEFORE YOU BOND YOUR BUNNY THEY MUST BE SPAYED AND NEUTERED



- Bunnies can have babies every 28 days, each time they give birth they deliver between 5-7 kits. You can do the math!
 - It is much more difficult to litter train unless they are spayed and neutered.
 - 65-85% of female rabbits will get ovarian and uterine cancer by the age of three if they are not spayed.
 - Rabbits are less aggressive and have a higher quality of life when spayed and neutered.
 - BOTH female and male bunnies have to be spayed or neutered before an introduction.
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The Big Day – Bunny Speed-dating!



- Once you and your bunny are ready to welcome a new family member, you will make an appointment with one of our bonding counselors for their very first date at the Rabbit Center. We call this a **Bonding Introduction** or bunny speed dating.
- We do Gentle Bondings at the Center – the bunnies are always supervised by experienced bonding counselors. They start the bonding introductions in the largest room we have available – ***this is very important to not stress the bunnies immediately and to get a better read on whether or not they seem to like each other.***

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING TO THE CENTER WITH ME ON THE DAY OF THE BONDING INTRODUCTIONS ?



- You will need to bring your spayed or neutered bunny. It would be wise to make sure your bunny has been vet checked and is disease and parasite free.
 - A carrier that is big enough for 2 bunnies. In most cases, your bunnies will go home in the same carrier to facilitate the bonding process.
 - An open mind and positive attitude. Your bunny will ultimately have the final choice in their husbun or wife. You can choose a top 3 or 4 bunnies of your choice or just let us pick ones we think might fit, then your bunny will go on a series of speed dates. Based on their behavior during each date your bonding coordinator will help you and your bunny choose who will get the final rose.
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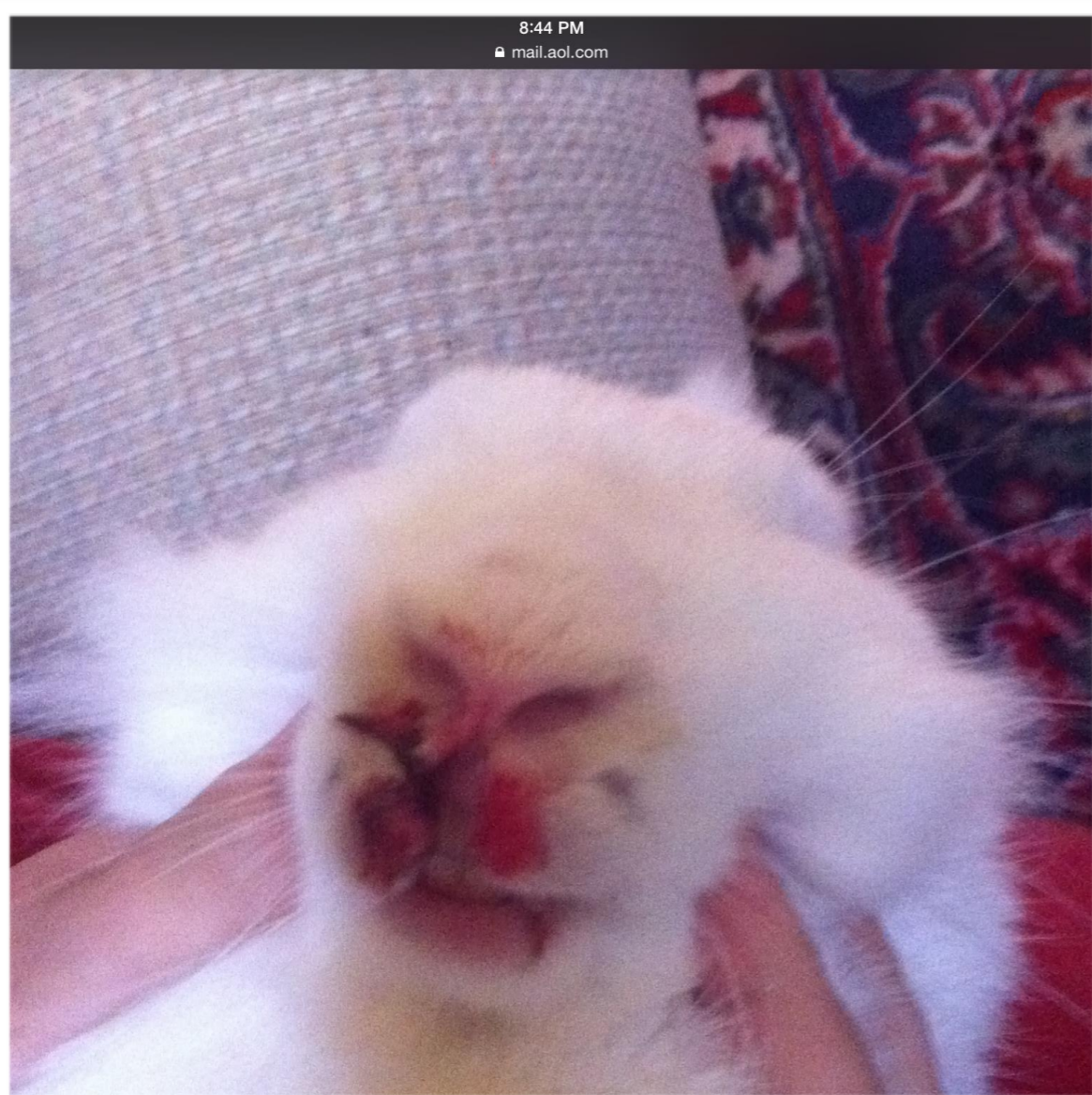
HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE BONDING AT HOME



Nose guards will prevent biting noses and feet

- You will need two separate houses until your bunnies are bonded. They will live in a DUPLEX setting until they are completely bonded. They need two exercise pens or habitats side by side where they can see, hear, smell and talk. Everything except TOUCH.
 - You will need 2 water crocks, litter boxes, food bowls, hidey boxes, toys, and two sets of bedding such as a mat or blanket. Once bonded you can use the extra supplies in your exercise area or rabbit room.
 - You will also need a broom or towel on standby just in case things get heated during a date. You will learn how to properly separate your bunnies during your bonding appointment.
 - **A designated neutral space or territory** in the house to continue the bonding process when you return home with your bunnies.
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WHY CAN'T I PUT MY BONDED PAIR TOGETHER IMMEDIATELY WHEN I GET HOME? WHY DO MY BUNNIES NEED TO GO ON DATES?



- Rabbits are territorial animals. Their relationships are built on trust which can take some time to establish. In the wild, rabbits live in a hierarchy and because they are prey animals they must know their role in the community. Trust must be there to protect the whole group from becoming prey and being susceptible to predators. Although your bunnies are domesticated rabbits, they still exhibit this behavior to an extent. That is why it is important to let your bunnies work out their relationship at their own pace.
- Rabbits can and will fight to establish dominance and territory. We start the process at the center (or any location determined by your facilitator) but it is your responsibility to REFEREE your bunnies and help them become friends safely at home and in their own home. If you are unable or just prefer to not do the bonding at home, we do offer a “Board to Bond” option – just ask us about it.
- **It is never safe to leave courting rabbits alone until they are bonded.** The picture to the left is an example of an injury related to a bonding accident. ***It is very important to keep your rabbits safe and injury free until the trust bond is established.***

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF BUNNY BEHAVIOR DURING THE BONDING PROCESS?



Just as no two humans are alike in their relationship building – so it is with rabbits. We are going to give you a few examples on the following slides.

- Initially your bunnies may ignore each other. You may even ask yourself if they even realize the other bunny is in the room with them. They are very much aware, just as you would notice a stranger in the room with you.
 - This is always a good sign because some bunnies will start fighting immediately when introduced. **Ignoring each other is a very good sign for bonding behavior. It could very well be the start of a beautiful friendship.**
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CHASING



- In the wild the male rabbit will chase the female rabbit. Before he even realizes what has happened, he has followed her back to the burrow. They will then mate and have babies. The female domestic rabbit still enjoys being chased.
 - There will be times where both female and male will chase each other. They are also establishing who is going to be the dominant rabbit. Let this happen, they are enjoying the chase. This is similar to human behavior in "playing hard to get."
 - The dominant rabbit is not always the male. In fact, most females rabbits wear the pants in the relationship.
 - You may also see one rabbit run circles around the other rabbit, while the other rabbit is sitting still. This is usually done to roundup their mate and show dominance.
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MOUNTING



- Mounting is yet another form of displaying dominance. This behavior is also used for determining who is the dominant rabbit. It can be the male as well as the female doing the mounting. Sometimes they may both do it. Let this happen as long as the other bunny is ok with it.
 - If you see that the submissive bunny is getting irritated you can loudly clap your hands and that will sometimes cause them to stop or you may need to gently give the mounting bunny a light nudge. Only do this if you think a fight is about to happen.
 - The picture to the left shows a male rabbit in a reverse mount. **You will need to make sure the female rabbit does not bite the undercarriage of the male rabbit.** This can result in a serious injury, so it is best to gently push the rear end to the side while the mounting continues.
 - After the bond has been established, mounting may continue and both may participate. It can also signal affection or just a reminder that I am still boss and I love you so much!
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NIPPING



- Sometimes during the mount the bunny may nip the back of the other bunny. This is normal behavior, and you may see a small patch of hair laying in the floor once the mount is broken.
 - Your bunny may also do a nip and run. This is to get attention and is usually harmless. We call this a “Hit, Nip and Run!”
 - The nip and run is not to be confused with the bunny tornado. Watch closely at all times for a TIGHT RUNNING CIRCLE or Bunnies that CHASE TAILS. Break this up immediately, you are about to see a bunny tornado and serious injury could occur. This can also stall the bonding process! Bunnies have a good memory and will remember this bad experience. More on the tornado in a future slide.
 - You may also see nipping when one rabbit is in the litter box or guarding an area. Let this happen as long as the other rabbit is ok with it. They are working out the hierarchy of the relationship. Once again say "No" loudly or clap your hands as a distraction if you feel things are getting to heated. Always keep your broom handy to split up a heated display.
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MIRRORING



- This is when one rabbit copies the behavior of the other bunny. It is monkey see monkey do !
 - This can be laying down on opposite sides of the room, grooming independently, playing alone, or eating alone. Basically any behavior a bunny is doing independently to copy the other bunny. This is a very good sign! You will usually see them get closer and closer over time until they are eventually doing these behaviors together.
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GROOMING



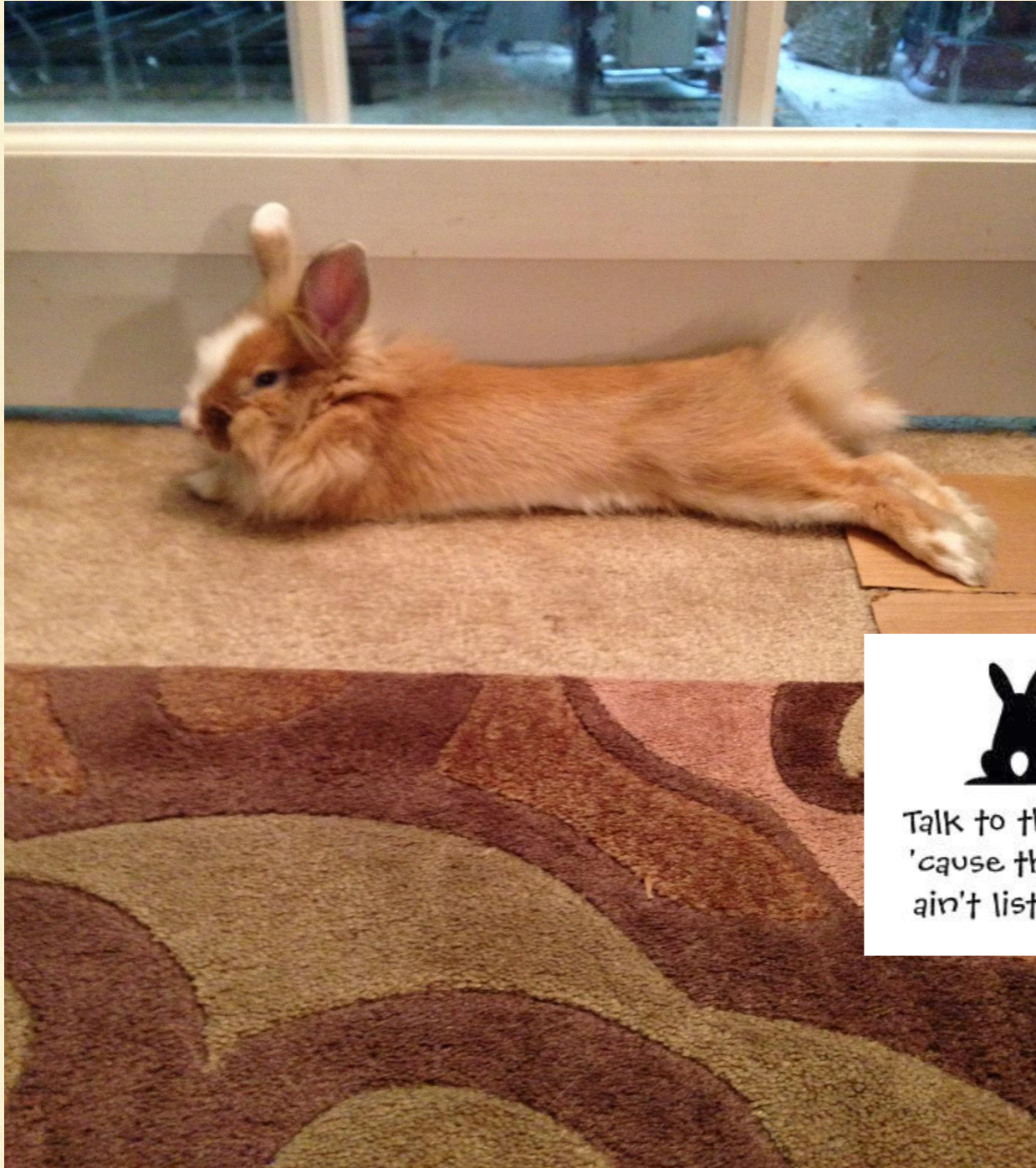
- ***Grooming of any kind*** during the bonding process is a good sign ! Whether it's independent or grooming each other. Independent grooming in close proximity of the other bunny is similar to a human getting ready for a date. They want to make themselves look presentable.
 - **Grooming is the name of the game. Mutual grooming is the single most important indicator of a bonded pair.**
 - In the picture one bunny has their head down. This is a request for grooming, and can be seen in all bondings. It may take some time for the other bunny to fulfill the request. Sometimes they are just waiting for the other bunny to make the first move. The more dominant rabbit seems to get the first kiss.
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BUNNY FLOPS AND BINKIES



- A bunny flop is when a bunny suddenly flops on their side. It may look like they are dead for a moment the first time you see it. This is a happy flop and it can happen during the bonding process.
 - Any jump for joy or "binky" during the bonding is a very good sign.
 - You may also see a few tail flicks if you are lucky and watching closely. This is when bunnies move their tails side to side in a quick motion. It is flirting behavior and can be seen at some point in most bondings.
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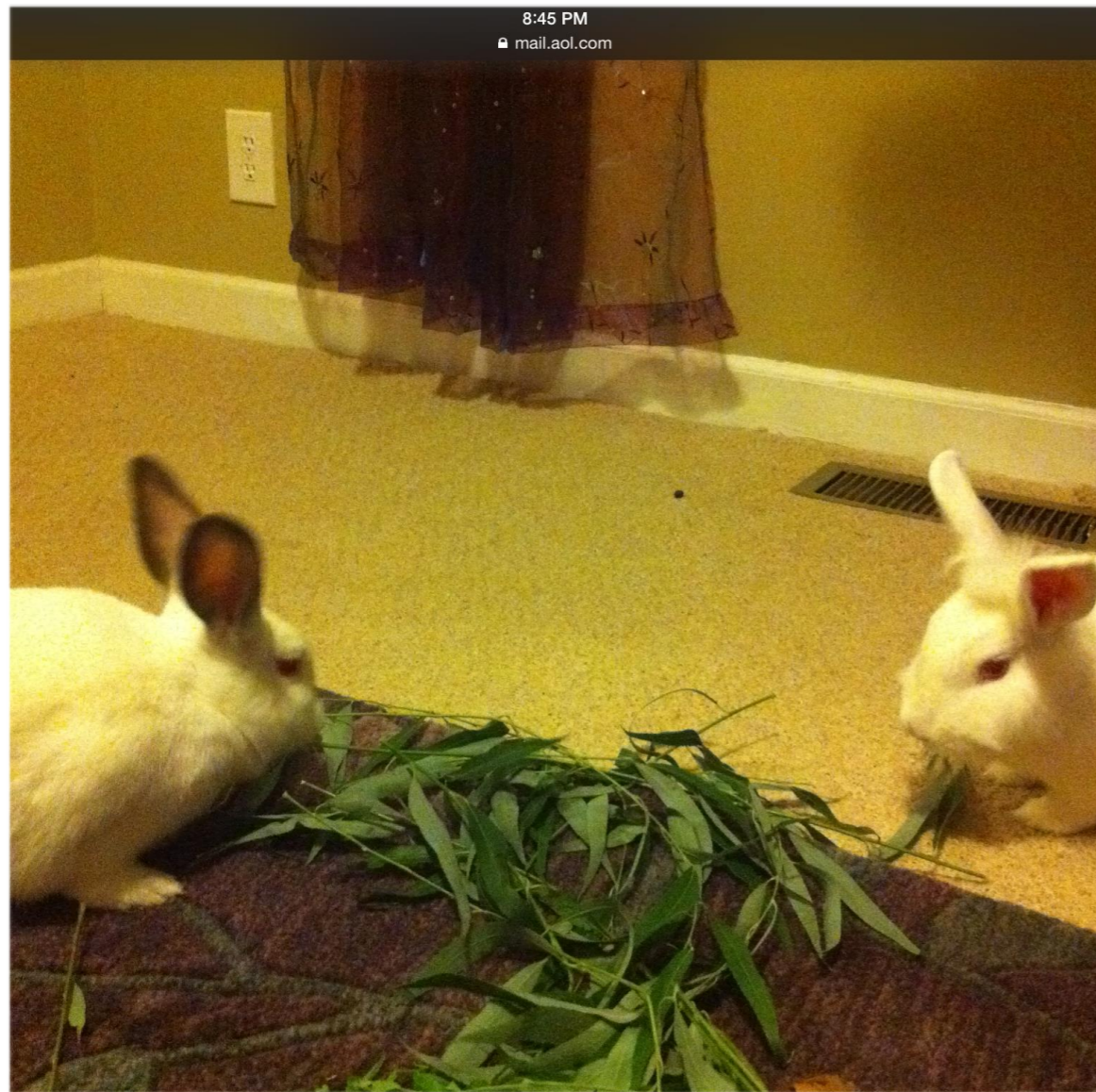
THUMPS AND BUNNY BUTT



Talk to the butt
'cause the ears
ain't listening!

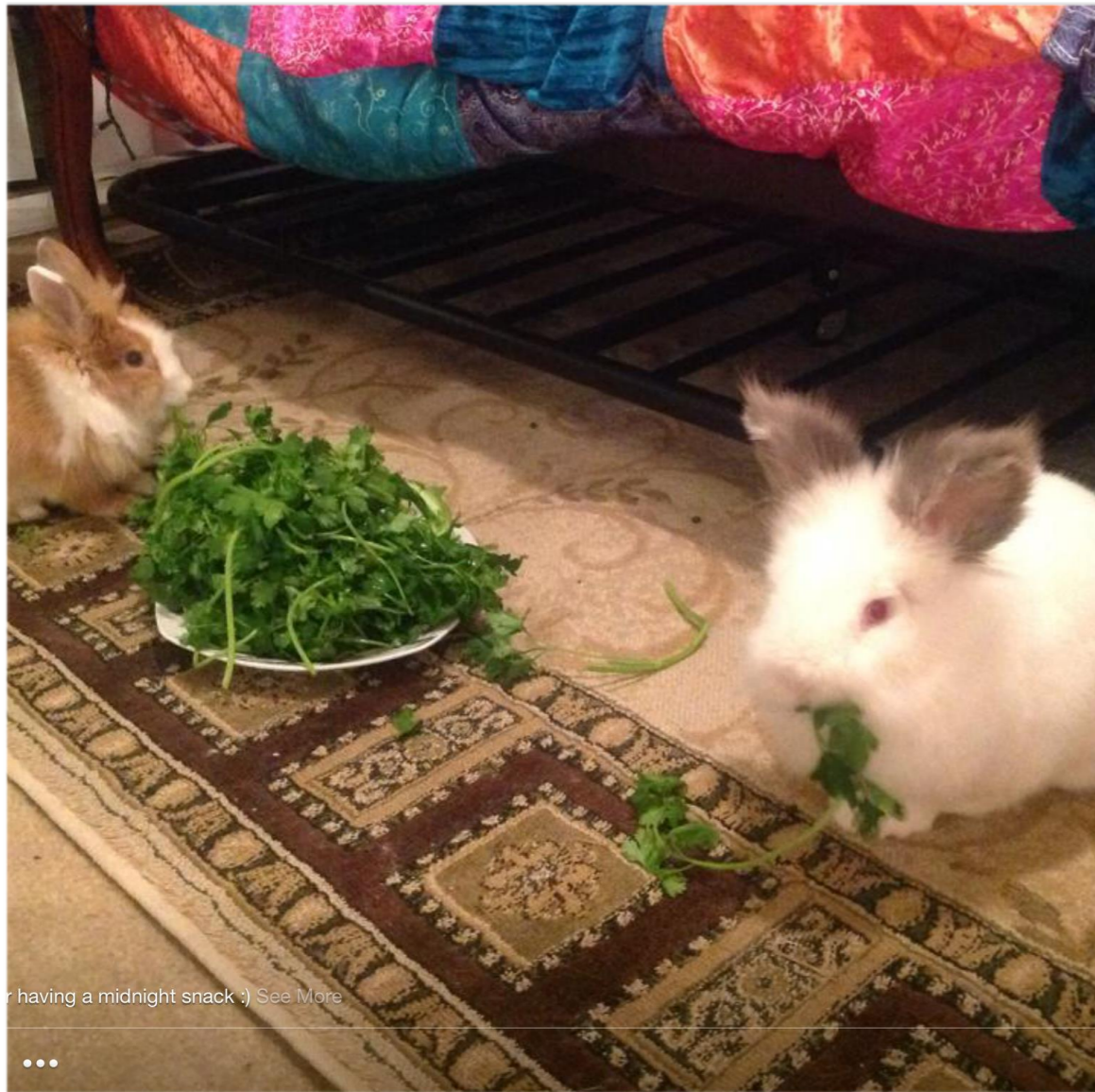
- Thumps are when bunnies use their back legs to stomp. They will sometimes do this to get the attention of the other bunny or because they are upset they are not getting the attention they feel they deserve. They want everyone to know they are not happy about this! A thump is a demand for attention or to let you know they are frustrated.
- Bunny Butt is when they turn away from everyone and pout and show everyone their backside. This can sometimes happen when they are not getting the response or attention they want from the other bunny. You may also be on the receiving end yourself after a vacation, long work day or vet visit. Bunny Butt is a non-verbal way of saying “I need more attention and I am not happy about this situation.”

EATING INDEPENDENTLY OR IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO EACH OTHER



- When a rabbit eats in the presence of another rabbit that lets us know that the bunny is not stressed.
- Every time your bunny is on a date make sure there is food involved. This will promote a happy feeling and facilitate the bonding process.

HOW DO I DO THE DATES AT HOME?



- **The dates must be done in neutral territory!**
- It is **OK** to use the area where your bunny has been exercising, but **NEVER** try and bond where your bunny lives. This is a recipe for disaster and somebun (and possibly you!) will get hurt.
- **The area needs to be as large as possible – the larger the better.** The living room or kitchen are good examples. Be sure to use an exercise pen to close off the couches and furniture. Nothing is worse than trying to break up a bunny tornado under a couch.
- Another date idea is dinner and a movie. Set up a large area in the family room, turn on the TV and put out some greens and hay. This may take time so have something that will keep you occupied if they are stalling and waiting for the right opportunity to do a fly-over or hit, nip and run.
- Another option is the kitchen area. Setup a large exercise pen to close things off and cook some dinner while watching the bunnies.

r having a midnight snack :) See More

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HOW LONG SHOULD THE DATES LAST?



white buns ! See More

- This depends on how things are going. After the car ride home you can start immediately.
- If the date is going well, let it continue as long as possible.
- If things are getting rocky try a 15 minute date and build up from there. Slow and steady wins the race!
- Patience, Patience, and more Patience! Just remember that you would feel uncomfortable if you were forced to stay in a room with a stranger. It takes time to build that trust bond.
- You do not have to do a date every day. If you are busy or stressed don't do the date. Rabbits are emotional and they sometimes sense your distress, which can cause the date to go badly.
- This is suppose to be a pleasurable experience for you and your bunny so take your time with the dates.
- You can do two 15 minute dates a day ,or if things are going well do a long marathon session. Just use your judgement.
- Some bonds will happen fast while others can take some time and TLC.

WHAT CAN I DO IN BETWEEN DATES TO HELP THE BONDING PROCESS?



- ***The single most important thing you can do is SWAPPING.*** Swapping the bunnies means taking JUST THE BUNNY and putting them in opposite habitat every day. This forces the bunnies to use the same food bowl, sleep in the same area, and use the same litter box the other bunny was using the previous day. This helps with dominance and territorial issues because they get used to each other's scents.
- **Changing the bunnies residence everyday is very important even if you don't do a date.**
- You can also swap stuffed animals that the other bunny has been using. This is called sending in a decoy. It is just another way to get them used to each other's scents and decrease that territorial drive.
- This is similar to children taking turns with bunk beds so everyone will get a turn on the top bunk.



EXAMPLE OF DUPLEX LIVING!

Two completely furnished houses side by side. Each day the bunnies will swap apartments and eat from their neighbors food bowls, use their bathroom, and sleep in their bed. This will decrease the territorial problems and keep the bunnies from claiming property. By swapping the bunnies, they will BOTH have a stake in the property which will decrease their urge to fight and claim territory.

HOW DO I EXERCISE MY BUNNIES WHEN THEY ARE NOT BONDED?



- Both bunnies still need their daily exercise outside of their duplex everyday. When they are not bonded they simply need to take turns.
 - Make sure you use a nose guard or another exercise pen to skirt the main apartment of the other rabbit while the other bunny is out exercising. This prevents any nose injuries incase there is an argument through the fence.
 - Nose guards are sold at the center and can be attached to the exercise pen with zip ties. You can purchase [on line here - http://www.specialtystoreservices.com/productchild.aspx?productid=39568&group=3532&img=3532.jpg](http://www.specialtystoreservices.com/productchild.aspx?productid=39568&group=3532&img=3532.jpg)
 - You will also notice an increase in poop outside the litter box and sometimes pee. This is for territory marking so you may need to get some indoor outdoor carpet to protect your flooring or inexpensive painters drop cloths. Once your rabbits are bonded the litter box habits should return and the poop wars should subside.
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MY BUNNY HAS FREE ROAM OF THE HOUSE OR ROOM

HOW DO I SWAP THEM ?

- You will need to purchase an exercise pen and apply nose guards with zip ties to the bottom of the pen to prevent nose injuries. Nose guards can be purchased at the Rabbit Center or at Specialty Services online at this link - (see previous slide)
<http://www.specialtystoreservices.com/productchild.aspx?productid=39568&group=3532&img=3532.jpg>. These are similar to the NIC cubes except they are completely mesh and no little teeth can get through. You can also use cardboard along the bottom of the pen secured with zip ties. It is best to use as many nose guards as possible and it will work best if the bunnies can see and smell each other
 - The exercise pen needs a full setup: bedding, litter box, food bowls, toys, and hidey box
 - Each day they will take turns spending time and living in the exercise pen; one bunny will be free roam and one will be in the exercise pen. The next day SWAP just the bunny and continue until they are bonded in a neutral territory
 - You will still need to continue the dates in the most neutral territory possible. **DO NOT do the dates where the bunnies live. This includes the exercise pen or anywhere the bunnies eat, sleep, or use the litter box or hidey box. Chose the most neutral area and largest area in the house to initiate the dates.**
 - Any time you have courting rabbits they have a tendency to loose their litter box manners while bonding – we call these the Poop and Potty Bonding Wars. You can buy an inexpensive painters drop cloth or cheap area rug to protect your flooring or carpet until the poop wars subside. Don't panic, litter box habits will return to normal after the bunnies get used to each other.
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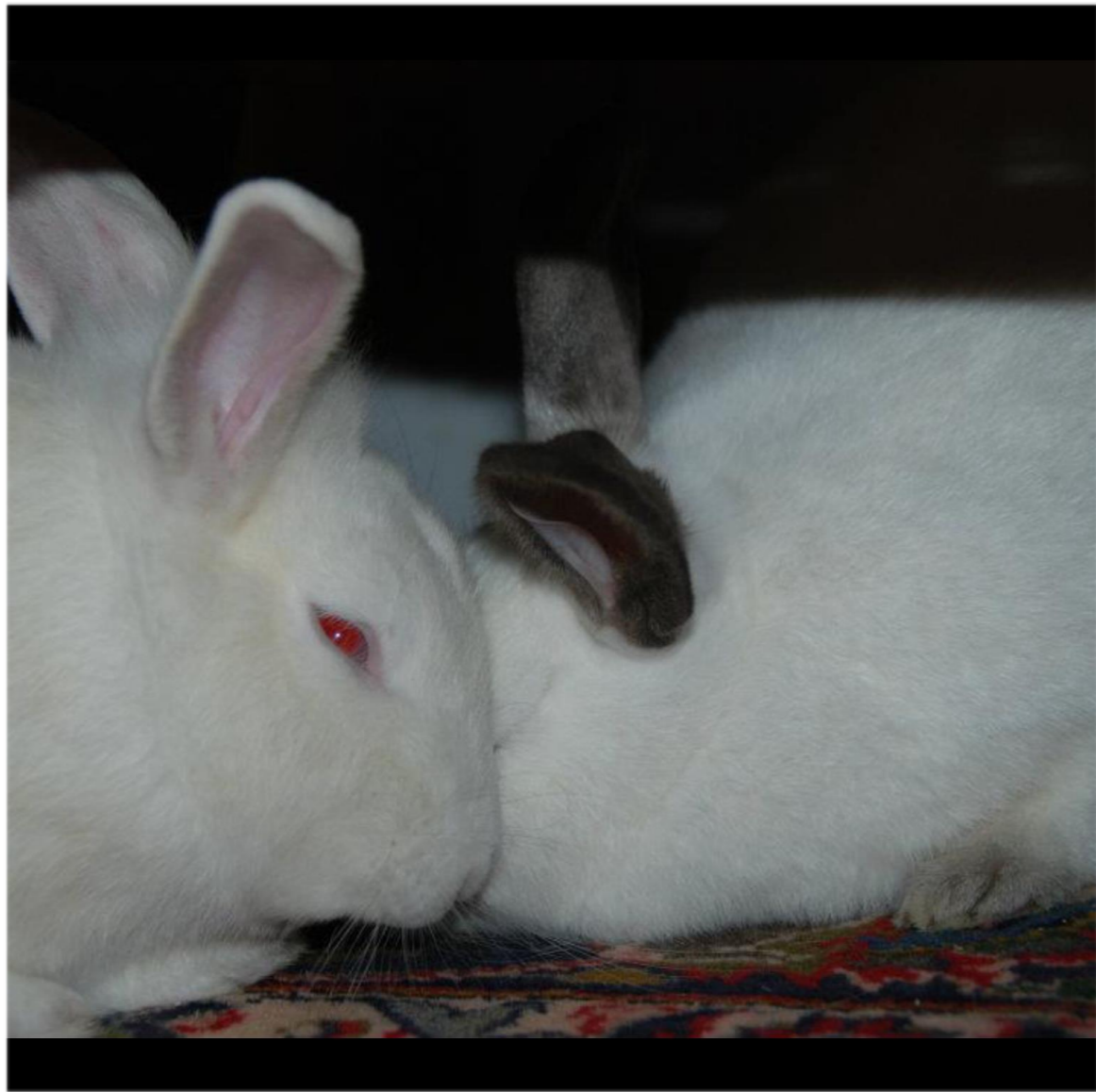
WHAT CAN I DO DURING THE DATES TO HELP THE BONDING PROCESS?



Notice the humans relaxed clothing!
It is so important for the human facilitator
to be comfortable and relaxed!
The buns do pick up on your stress levels

- BUNNY MAGIC is the most important thing you can do DURING the dates. Bunny magic is when you put the bunnies side by side and pet them. This helps rub their scents together and helps them get used to each other.
- This can be done towards the beginning of the date to break the ice.
- It can also be done when both buns are tired after a round of chasing, and it should be done at the closing of every date if possible.
- The bunnies can be jumpy at first but they really enjoy this and they feel as though they are being groomed by the other rabbit.
- This "false grooming" technique can sometimes help the bunnies to start grooming each other by themselves.
- The picture to the left is an example of bunny magic !

MORE BUNNY MAGIC



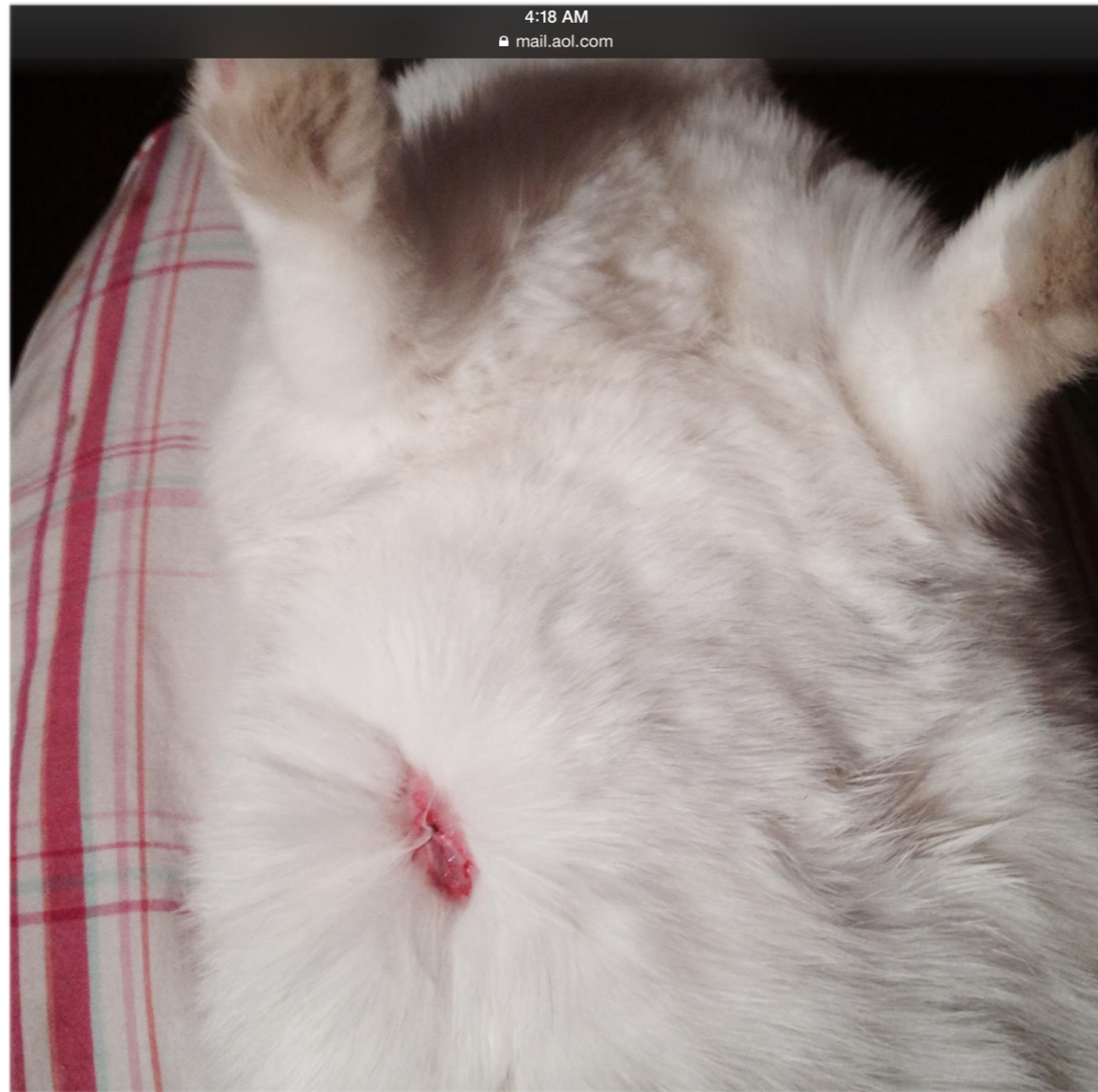
- At some point during the courting process both bunnies will put their heads down and request grooming from the other rabbit. However they can be stubborn and both want the other rabbit to initiate the grooming.
- When this happens just simply bend over and give them both a scratch on the head. Sometimes this stand off can lead to tension and impatience and a fight can happen. Bunny magic can help both bunnies feel as though they are getting a little attention until they start to groom on their own.
- **This is FAKING IT UNTIL THEY FEEL IT !**

WHAT DO I NEED TO WATCH FOR DURING THE DATES?



- A bunny tornado is a tight chasing circle. It looks like the bunnies are chasing each other's tails. This should be broken up immediately by putting a broom between the two rabbits. Be cautious because you can get bitten and injured while trying to break up a tornado. Make sure it is a soft broom and also use a loud voice – even yelling.
 - Once the tornado is stopped inspect each rabbit for injuries and separate the bunnies. It is best to put the bunnies back in their duplex and not allow any dating for at least two weeks. During this break make sure you continue to swap the bunnies to reduce the territorial and dominance behavior.
 - You can try again after a cooling off period or bunny break. It is best to start again in a very LARGE space, and if possible somewhere new.
 - **Most bunnies will raise their tail and put their ears back before an attack and assume a stance.** It is important to watch for any "tail popping" as it is the first sign before an attack. You can sometimes prevent a tornado by watching body language.
 - NEVER let a tornado go on, rabbits will remember this and harbor bad feelings for each other.
 - All is not lost after a tornado! If it is caught early the bonding can be saved. If you are too nervous to try again, contact your bonding coordinator for a follow up session at the center.
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SO THE TORNADO HAPPENED AND NOW I HAVE AN INJURED BUNNY! WHAT DO I DO NOW?



- Things can happen in a blink of any eye. Remain calm and try to assess the damage.
 - It is best to call your rabbit savvy vet. There have been times where a bunny will need a staple or stitches. Sometimes a bunny will need an antibiotic to prevent an abscess. When in doubt check with your vet. Better to be safe than sorry. These incidences are rare but can happen on occasion.
 - There have been cases where there was an injury and the bunnies eventually bonded. You will need to keep the bunnies separated and allow the injured bunny time to heal. Be aware this could lead to a longer bonding process.
 - **It is always best to contact your bonding coordinator after an injury to make a plan on how to proceed.**
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HELP! THINGS WERE GOING GREAT AT THE CENTER AND NOW THAT I'M HOME IT'S WAR WHAT SHOULD I DO ?



- It is never possible to predict how bunnies will act when they get back to their home environment. If this happens it is definitely a territorial problem.
- The ONLY way to help this is to swap your bunnies daily !
- Try a LARGER space and a NEW SPACE.
- Use the kitchen or an area that is rarely used for exercise and thoroughly clean that area with a white vinegar mix. This will rid the area of the other bunnies scent and give the bunnies a fresh start
- If you have fighting immediately after getting home, it may be best to swap without any dates for 1-2 weeks. This will allow your bunnies to become familiar with each other. This is similar to humans getting to know their new neighbors. Once they have been next door for a week or so you become more familiar with each other.
- If all else fails contact your bonding coordinator for further assistance.

SO MY BUNNIES ARE FIGHTING AND GOING INTO A TORNADO EVERY TIME I TRY AND PUT THEM TOGETHER, NOW WHAT ?



- The most important thing you can do is swap, swap, swap ! Then try a LARGER space and a DIFFERENT SPACE. You can save a bonding by trying those 2 important steps, bigger space and new space !
- If all this fails you have options:
- You can bring them into the center for a reevaluation. Keep in mind that you may need to try a different rabbit. Unfortunately this may be necessary in rare cases, just keep this in mind when you begin the bonding process.
- A home visit by your bonding coordinator can help in some cases.
- Board to bond is also available. You will need to board your bunnies for one to two weeks. **While your bunnies are boarding,** your bonding coordinator will do the bonding at the center. If your coordinator is still having problems you will get a phone call and will be given the option to possibly try another bunny that may be more compatible.

HOW LONG DOES THE BONDING PROCESS LAST?



- It just depends on the bunnies. In about 3-5% of bondings there will be a love at first sight. In about the same percentage, they exhibit behaviors that show they will never bond – even trying to kill each other and/or cause dire injuries.
 - Other bondings can take anywhere from 2 days, 2 weeks or 2 months. In rare cases it can take longer. Your bonding coordinator can help you if you are having a difficult time with the bonding.
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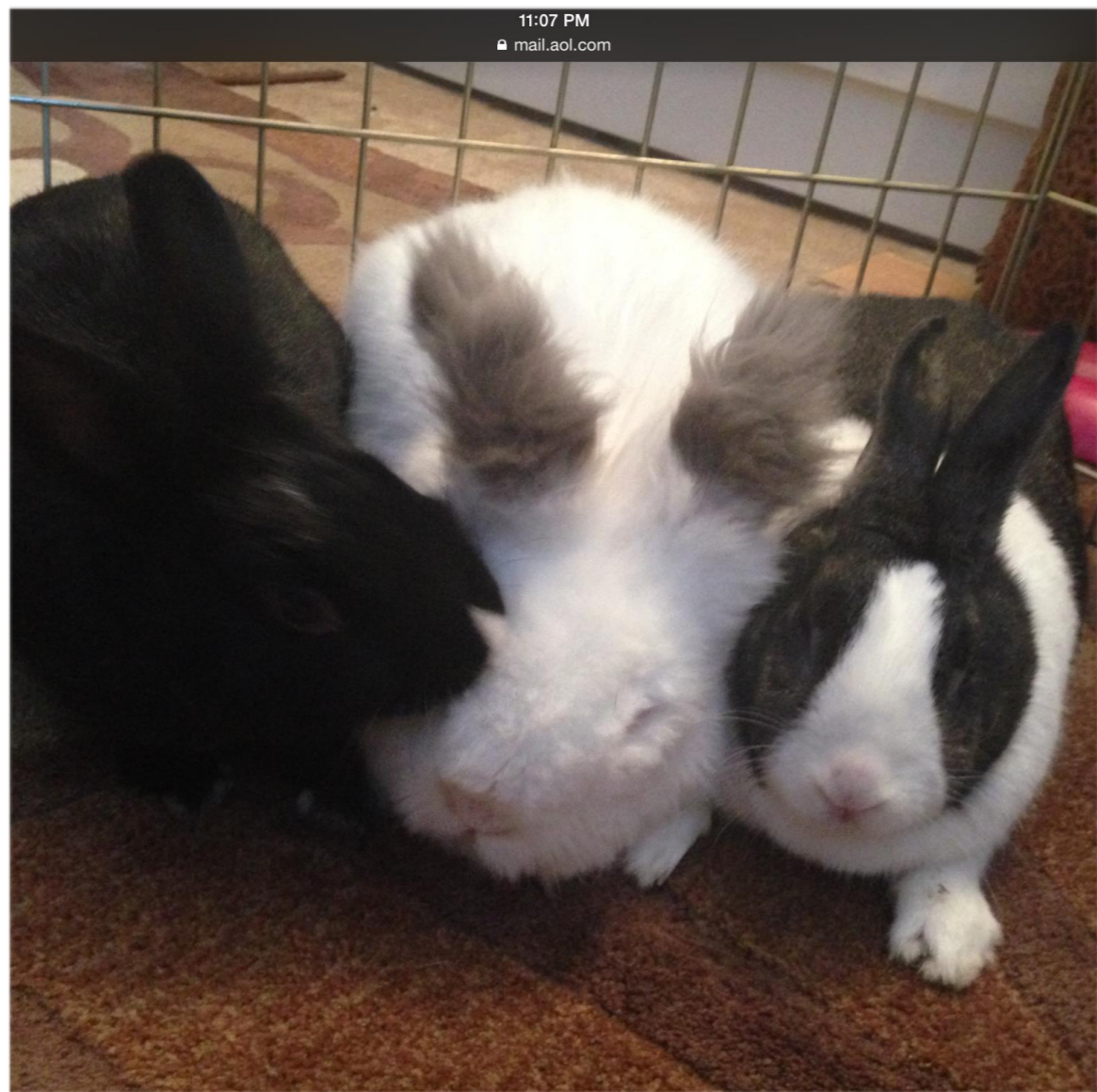
WHAT ABOUT THE YOU TUBE VIDEOS WHERE THEY BOND THE BUNNIES IN A BATHTUB OR SMALL SPACE THAT FORCES THEM TOGETHER?

- **This is a stress bonding and is not recommended.** The goal is to referee a "gentle bonding." You want to keep your bunnies stress free and healthy. It may take extra time and effort but it is worth it to do the right thing for your bunny.
 - Forced bondings can also be false bondings! Bunnies will suddenly unbond once they are free from the tiny spaces. This is why breeders can put so many rabbits together in one cage. They are stressed but once they are rescued and given a larger space you will see the bonding behaviors start to develop.
 - No one wants to stress the bunnies, all house rabbits are companion animals and need their space to run and be free. For this reason, we believe the best way to correctly and humanely bond your rabbit is the "gentle" method you will learn in your scheduled bonding session.
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CAN I BOND TWO MALE RABBITS OR TWO FEMALE RABBITS?

- The easiest bondings are male / female bondings.
 - However after bunnies are spayed and neutered it is easier to bond same sex rabbits.
 - A bromance (male-male) bonding can happen. With any same sex bonding, it can sometimes be more difficult but not impossible. You need to expect a longer courtship and be willing to put in a little more time.
 - Female-female bondings are the most difficult but can and do happen. It is easier with any same sex bonding if they were litter mates or siblings. As with the bromance bondings, extra time and a longer courtship may be needed.
 - It really just depends on the rabbits and their personalities! There have been a few cases of fairly easy same sex bondings. If you are very interested in a particular rabbit it doesn't hurt to try. Just remember that it is ultimately up to your bunny. If you are interested in a same sex bonding let your bonding coordinator know during your appointment.
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IS IT POSSIBLE TO BOND MORE THAN TWO RABBITS?



- It is possible to do a multiple bonding with three or four bunnies or even more, it just depends on the personality of the bunnies.
 - With multiple bondings it is best to do an introduction at the center just to have a helping hand in case things go badly.
 - It may also be wise to do two weeks of swapping at home before attempting any dates.
 - The dates should be short in length and progress in time as the bunnies become more familiar with each other.
 - If you are interested in a multiple bonding let your bonding coordinator know to allow for a longer appointment time.
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WHEN HELPING MY BUNNY CHOOSE A PARTNER DO THE BUNNIES NEED TO BE THE SAME SIZE, COLOR, BREED, OR AGE ?



- They do not need to be the same breed or color.
- They do not always need to be the same size. There have been several bondings where the male is much larger than the female and several successful bondings where the females are much larger than the male. Size is not a problem if the bunnies are getting along. The only time you would have a problem is during a bunny tornado, but if you are watching the bunnies closely during the date as you should be - this should not be an issue.
- It is ultimately up to the bunnies to make that final decision. We are just there for introductions and to referee to prevent injuries.
- Age is not a factor but should be the most important thing to consider. Rabbits bond for life and can become stressed and grieve after the loss of a partner. However there have been several age gap bondings that work out nicely. If you have a senior rabbit it may be better to attempt an older rabbit first. Please mention this to your bonding coordinator prior to your appointment. There are several senior rabbits in foster homes.
- <<<Age gap rabbits that bonded quickly in the picture!

WILL MY RABBIT LOOSE INTEREST IN ME IF I BOND THEM ?

- No this is a common misconception and should not be a reason to deny your rabbit a companion.
 - Your bunny will still pay attention to you and love you. Please realize that there is a certain amount of emotional support that you cannot provide to your bunny. A companion rabbit is the best gift you can give your rabbit. A companion rabbit is a huge source of support for your bunny, and all bunnies have a higher quality of life and happier life when bonded.
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THE DATES HAVE BEEN GOING WELL HOW DO I KNOW MY BUNNIES ARE COMPLETELY BONDED?



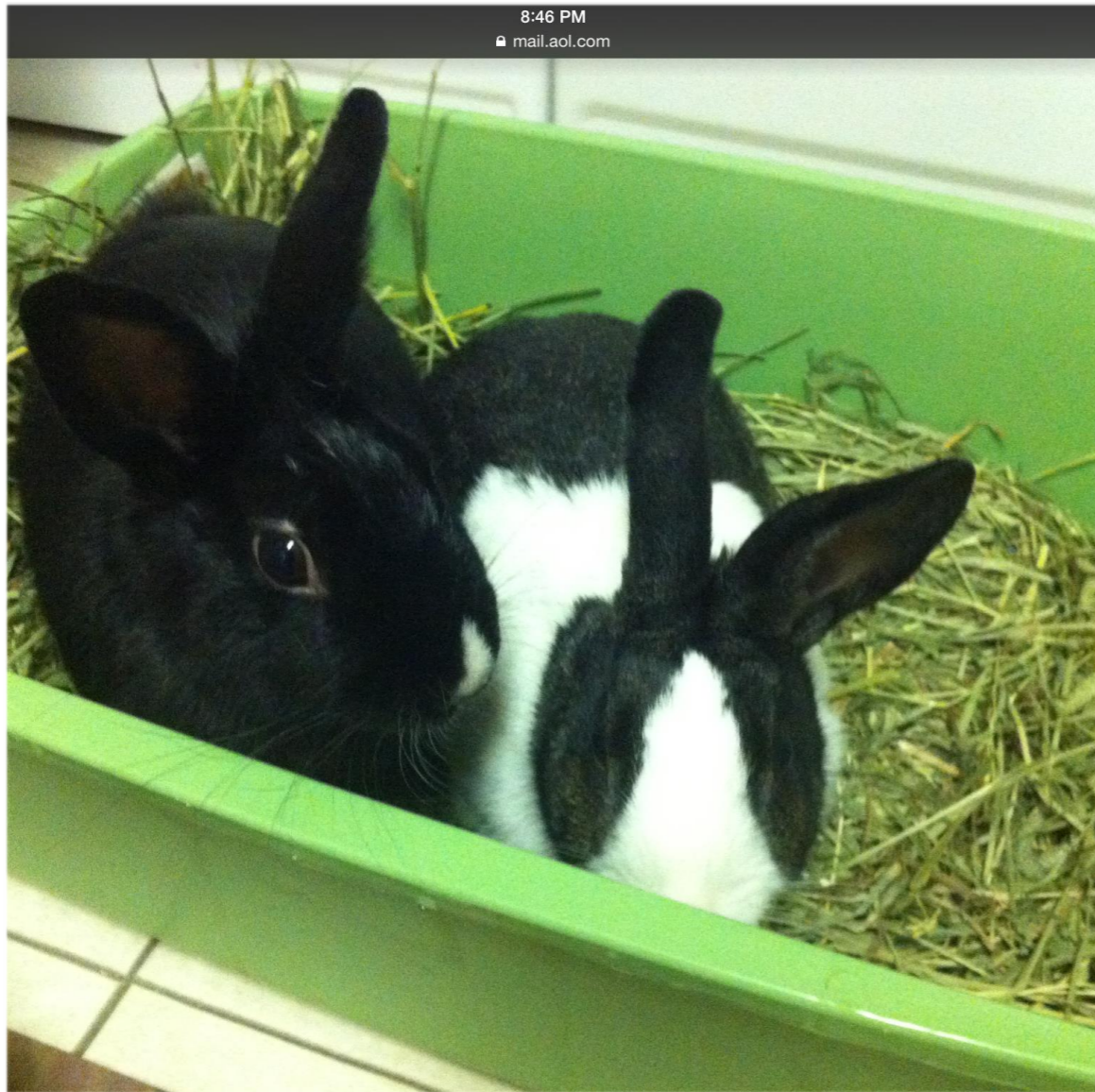
- Laying side by side is a very important sign, They will slowly close the gap, nap and lounge together. Also, when one or both are grooming each other – it is now time to pronounce they are Husbun and Wife!
- Bonded pairs love to be in each other's company.
- Nothing is cuter than two snuggle bunnies !

THEY WILL EAT FROM THE SAME BOWL



- However, it is best to give them two small food bowls just to discourage jealousy. Bonded rabbits don't mind sharing, in fact they enjoy and look forward to dinner time but they seem to like to know there is food for both.
 - It is easier to have your bonded pair eat the same pellets. If your newly adopted bunny is eating a different pellet than your bunny, you will need to transition the bunnies to the same pellet to make things easier.
 - NEVER change a bunnies pellet suddenly. This can cause stasis and other medical problems.
 - To transition mix 3/4 of the old pellets with 1/4 of the new pellets. Then mix the pellets half and half. Then mix 1/4 of the old pellets with 3/4 of the new pellets. Slowly transition to the new pellets. This should be done over the course of two weeks to prevent your bunny from having any gastrointestinal upset.
 - **During this transition it is extremely important to monitor for poopy butt and make sure your bunny is eating both unlimited hay, fresh greens, a small amount of plain pellets and pooping!**
 - As always if your bunny suddenly stops eating give them 1 ml of children's gas drops (simethicone) and call your vet immediately. You also need to monitor your bunny's temperature if they are not eating. There is a video example of how to do this on the GHRS website. **If you have any questions about this process contact your bonding coordinator immediately.**
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THEY WILL USE THE SAME LITTER BOX



- Bonded rabbits will use the same litter box without fighting – make sure you have one big enough for both with space to move around.
 - The litter box is like the sandbox in elementary school. It is where all the fighting goes down. This is a huge territorial area and can cause a turf war.
 - During your bonding introduction appointment your bunnies will be given a litter box to see how they interact.
 - If you get home and you have one bunny that nips and takes control of the litter box, this is a territory problem. The solution for this is swap, swap, swap. You can also clap your hands and say NO when the bunny lashes out.
 - Litter box scuffles can be common in bondings, just be there to referee and prevent injuries.
 - If it continues to be a problem - setup two litter boxes in different areas for a while and see if this helps. This is probably a good idea to do permanently also.
-

YOUR BUNNIES WILL MUTUALLY GROOM EACH OTHER



- Bonded rabbits will groom each other without the help of bunny magic.
 - There will usually be one rabbit that grooms the other rabbit more.
 - Grooming is what bonding is all about. That is why they put their heads down during the dating phase. They want to be groomed.
 - The video to the left is an example of a bonded pair grooming.
-

THEY WILL PLAY TOGETHER AND SHARE TOYS



- Bonded rabbits will enjoy their exercise time together. They may still chase each other and sometimes nip. This is a game!
 - They will share toys and hidey boxes.
-

NOW THAT MY BUNNIES ARE BONDED IN A NEUTRAL TERRITORY HOW DO I GET THEM TO MOVE IN TOGETHER?



- Everyone always worries about moving day. There are a few simple things you can do to ensure this goes smoothly.
 - First you need to clean the area. Clean all the water bowls and food bowls with soap and water. Change the litter box and wipe it down with white vinegar. Wash the blankets and vacuum the rugs. If you have tile flooring mop the area with a white vinegar and water mix.
 - You also need to rearrange the furniture to make everything seem new.
 - When you transition them to the new home, make sure you watch them for a while to ensure they do not fight.
 - There may be a few tiffs but if they are bonded you should be able to get things back under control. Clap your hands and say no if things look heated. You may even need to open the area up and make it larger.
 - If you still have problems, take them out and put them back into their neutral space. They may need more time. Toward the end of the bonding process you should be able to relax and do your normal household routines while your newly bonded pair play and groom in a neutral area. They may need several days of this bonded bliss before spending the night together. A few marathon dates in neutral territory before move in day can be extremely helpful.
-

I'M NERVOUS ABOUT THEIR FIRST OVERNIGHT DATE AND MOVE-IN DAY!



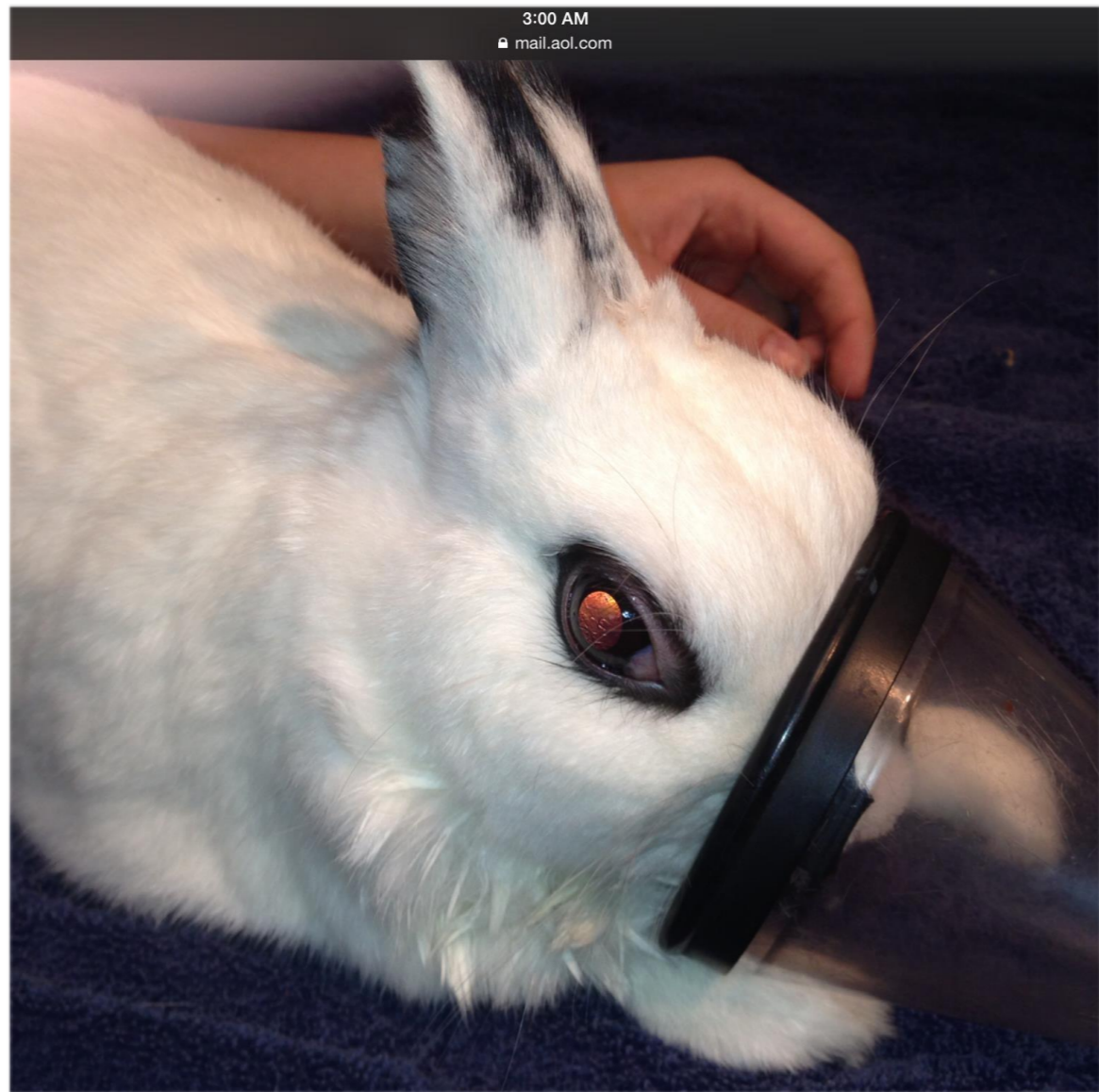
- You always want the move to be in the daytime or in the morning. That way you can stay up and keep an eye on them.
 - Some people spend the night close to the enclosure (such as the couch or air mattress) to ensure there is no fighting the first night. Some people have even used baby monitors or baby cameras.
 - **The transition should be easier** if they were spending long days together in the neutral zone. Just like people, bunnies need several long dates to feel comfortable before spending a weekend together. Bunnies may need a few marathon dates or an overnight date or two in the neutral zone before taking the next step.
 - Marathon dates in the neutral zone and maybe a few overnight dates in the neutral area should ease the mind of any commitment phobic rabbit, and make moving day less stressful. A slumber party in the living room or family room is a great way to keep an eye on your bunnies for an overnight date. If the date goes smoothly you will most likely have an easier and less stressful move in day.
 - When you are sure they are ready, break down both duplexes or the areas they are sharing and completely clean, vinegar and rearrange it for the move-in. You can change things back later if you want but you want to throw them off as much as possible that they have moved into their “forever together home” now.
-

MY BONDED PAIR HAVE BEEN DOING GREAT SINCE THE BIG MOVE-IN DATE BUT ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY HAD A TIFF WHAT DO I DO ?



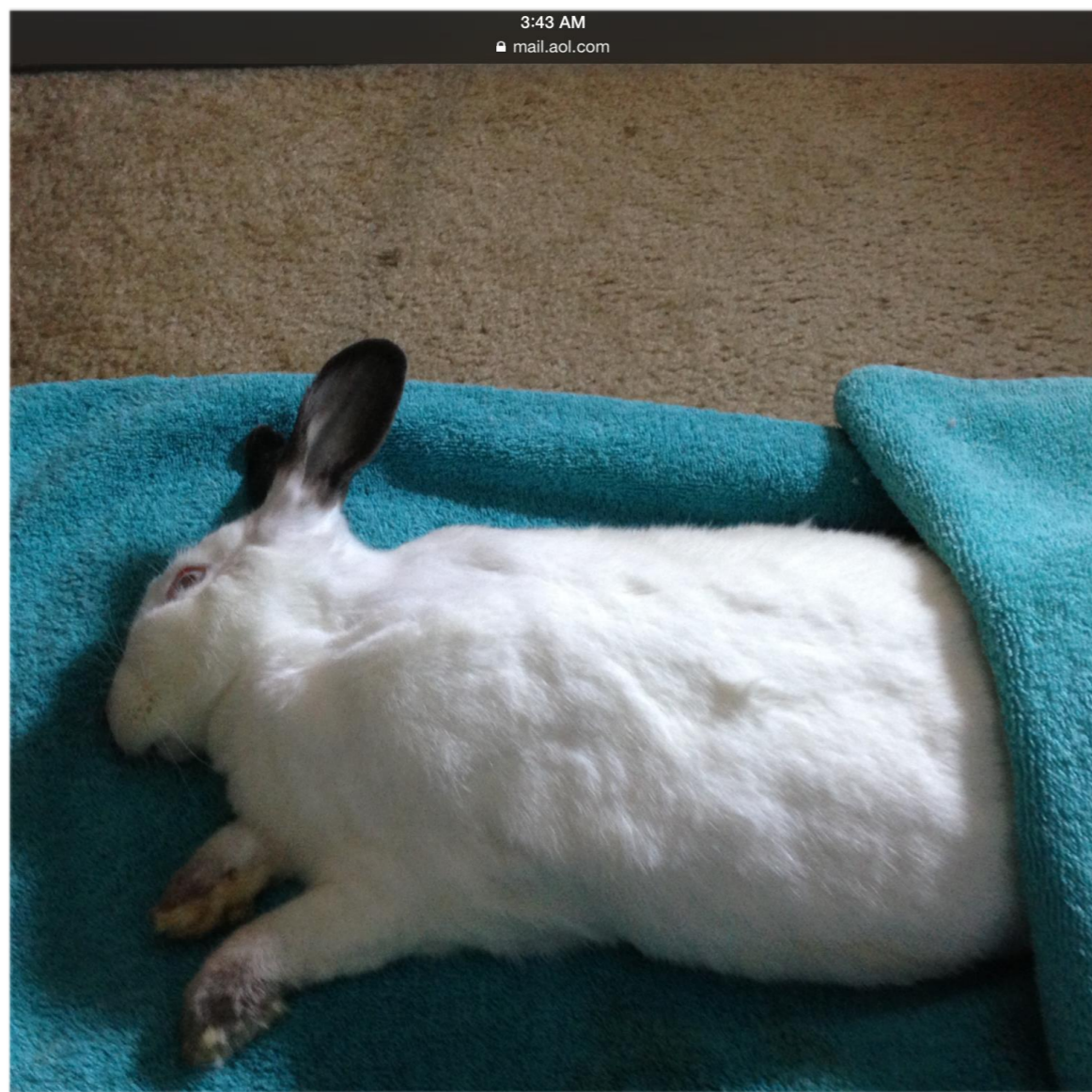
- Congratulations you now have an old married couple that like to bicker and pick at each other every now and then.
- If they don't break up the argument up themselves, put them in the carrier for some time out and maybe take a short drive around the neighborhood. This is as close as you can get to marriage counseling.
- You can also take them out of their house and put them in a large neutral zone area. They may just need a little time alone to cool off and will most likely sit on opposite sides of the room for a while. Any time you have a tiff, just go back to the basics of bonding. A large and neutral area – and two enclosures and swapping if it continues!
- Most of the time they will be back to snuggling and eating together within the hour.

ONE OF MY BUNNIES IS SICK AND NEEDS TO GO TO THE VET DO I SEPARATE THEM FOR THE DAY ?



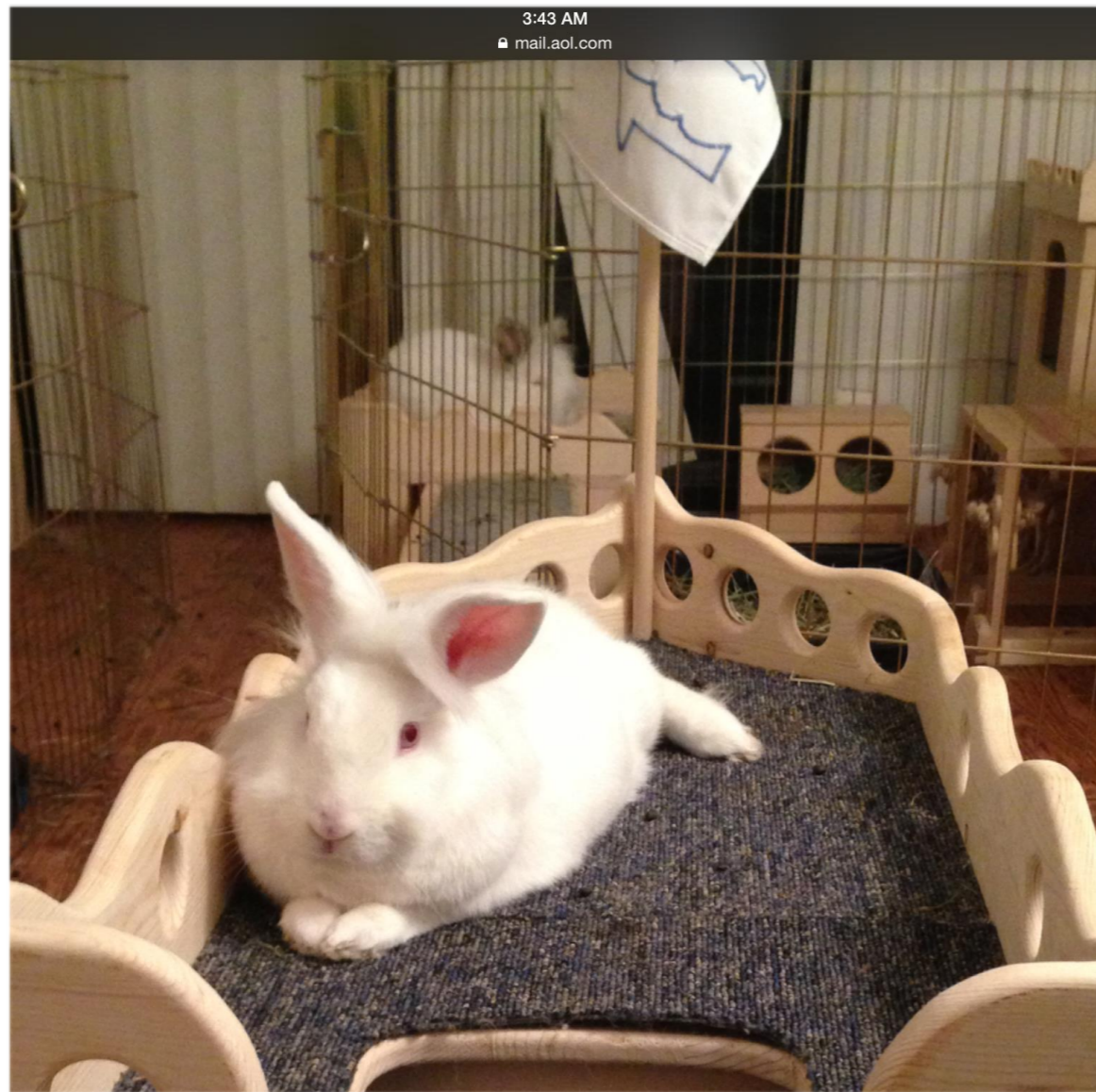
- You should never separate a bonded pair especially if one of the bunnies is sick. They need their companion during this time. **THIS IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHY YOU BONDED IN THE FIRST PLACE.** If there is ever a time to leave them together it's **NOW!** Take them in the same carrier to allow the other bunny to be there for emotional support.
- Don't worry about your other bunny getting sick or catching something. If they have been eating from the same bowl and using the same litter box they have already been exposed. Share this concern with your vet if this is something you are worried about.

ONE OF MY RABBITS HAS CROSSED THE RAINBOW BRIDGE HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY GRIEVING RABBIT?



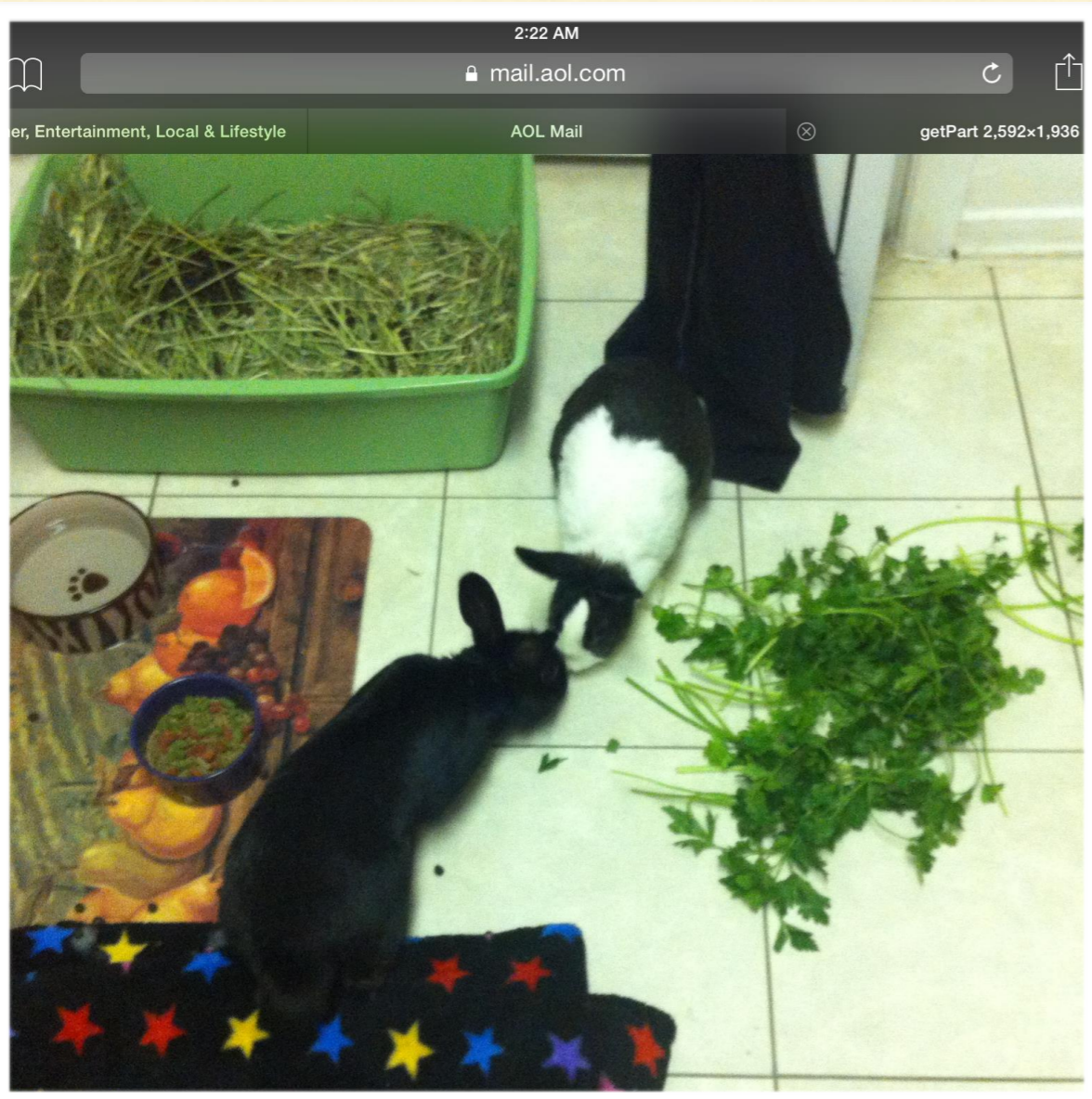
- You must allow the surviving bunny **ALONE TIME WITH THE BODY**. They may groom the body, nudge them in attempt to wake them, or lay beside them for a while. They know their companion is gone. If you don't do this they may look for their mate day after day and it can be heartbreaking to watch.
- Peek in after an hour or maybe even up to 3 hours, if your bunny is away from the body it is now time to remove their body from the room.
- If your rabbit passes at the vets office and you can't give them alone time together there, take the body home. It is really necessary that you allow ample time for the viewing. Allowing your bunny alone time with their companion is the most important step in the grieving process and will enable them to not constantly look for them – many will not take a new mate if wondering when their love will come home! It is a gift you give your bunny. It does help them to handle their grief and move on – much easier than for us humans.
- It is best to do the viewing at home even if you have to make another trip to cremate.

HOW DO I HELP MY GRIEVING RABBIT?



- After the viewing, your bunny may become depressed and have loss of energy. This is normal for most deeply bonded rabbits.
- It is your job to monitor for poops in the litter box and make sure your bunny is eating properly. Some bunnies have been know to go into stasis after the death of a companion. There have been rare cases where rabbits need supportive vet care during this time, especially if they are not eating.
- Make sure you give your bunny extra attention and check on them frequently. Also, please give them a stuffed animal – many bunnies will continue grooming a stuffie.
- PLEASE Consider a rebonding if your bunny is healthy!
- Some bunnies may refuse a new partner, while some take to a new bunny quickly. If your bunny is not doing well with new introductions, they may need more time.
- In rare cases the healthy bunny can pass just from the grief of their loss – this is why we do recommend finding them a new mate as soon as possible. This has also been know to happen in humans who have been married for long periods of time.

POP QUIZ! IN THE SCENARIO BELOW, THESE BUNNIES ARE ON DATE 2. THEY BOTH HAVE THEIR HEAD DOWN AND ARE REQUESTING GROOMING. IT'S A STANDOFF AND NO ONE IS MAKING THE FIRST MOVE. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO ?



- The answer is BUNNY MAGIC
- Bend over and scratch both bunnies on the head
- This false grooming will rub the scents of each bunny together and help them to start the grooming process on their own.
- "Fake it until they feel it "
- This decreases tension and can prevent fighting. Both bunnies feel as though they are getting the attention they deserve.

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING
TO DO WHEN THE DATES
ARE NOT GOING GOOD AT HOME ?

- Make the area larger
 - Change the area of the date
 - Both is best!
-

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO DO BETWEEN DATES?



- **SWAP the bunnies !**
 - Take just the bunnies and place them in the opposite duplex.
 - This forces the bunny to use the food bowl, water bowl, hidey box, litter box and blanket of the other bunny.
 - You must swap the bunnies every day even if you don't do a date.
 - This is the only way to reduce territorial problems.
-

YOUR BUNNIES ARE FIGHTING AND IT TURNED INTO A FULL BLOWN TORNADO. WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Separate the bunnies
 - Assess for injuries
 - Swap the bunnies for at least two weeks with no dates; put them on a bunny break.
 - Then try again after the bunny break ! Try a BIGGER area and DIFFERENT area. If you are too nervous to try again, call your bonding coordinator for a follow up bonding appointment at the Center.
-

WHEN CAN MY BUNNIES MOVE IN TOGETHER?

- You can move them in together when they are completely bonded in their neutral space.
 - This means they eat from the same bowl, share greens, sleep and nap together, use the same litter box and one, and or both GROOM each other!
 - You **MUST FIRST** clean the area and rearrange bedding, furniture and boxes before the big move in.
 - You must watch them closely for a while after they move in together. It is best to move them in together during the day. This can allow for more time to monitor and assess the newly bonded pair.
 - It is **ALWAYS** easier to move the bunnies in together after they have had a few marathon dates and one or two overnight dates in a **NEUTRAL** territory.
-

WHAT IS THE MAIN INDICATOR OF A BONDED PAIR?



- Laying side by side and mutual grooming
- Nothing is more rewarding than seeing your bunnies cuddled up and grooming each other!

WHAT ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF MARRIAGE COUNSELING?



MAN OVERBOARD !



- Always go back to bonding basics, move the bunnies to a large neutral area and allow a cooling off period.
- Put them in their carrier and take a drive around the block.
- Try a couples massage, BUNNY MAGIC!
- Feed them! Try some fresh hay, greens, or a treat. Let them work things out over dinner.
- If it starts to happen often, try to observe why. Is it litter box or food related. If so, add a second litter box or food bowl. Add a few new toys or hidey boxes.
- MAKE their house bigger! They may have outgrown the starter home.
- They need more exercise or time out of the pen. They could be bored and have nothing else to do except argue.



HAPPY BUNNEYMOON

Our very best to the Happy Couple!



AND THEY LIVED HOPPILY EVER AFTER!

The End!
