

The Clover Leaf



Newsletter of the Baltimore/Washington, D.C. Chapter of the House Rabbit Society. Serving Washington, D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia

Dedicated to the memory of Clover, our Chapter founder

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Choosing a Rabbit-Friendly Dog by Kate McGinley

"What breed of dog will get along with my rabbits?" This question is asked a lot, but it misses the main point. What doggy PERSONALITY will get along best with your rabbits is the question to ask, not what breed. While it's true to some extent that breed makes a difference—for example, certain terrier breeds might not be the best choice—we all know examples of these dogs living happily with rabbits and even smaller members of the animal kingdom. Some breeds that I know of living in peace with rabbits are Keeshonds, Collies, Pit bulls, Greyhounds, Scotties, Basset hounds, Corgis, and of course MIXED BREEDS! As you can see, good bunny-loving dogs come in all shapes and sizes!

Generally, a puppy of any breed is not the best choice. Pups don't have any manners yet and don't know their own strength. They are unpredictable and can



Dickens and his friend Ziggy

accidentally cause harm while just trying to play. Also, they haven't learned basic commands yet, like "NO" much less, advanced words such as "down-stay" and "gentle", which are essential for good dog/bunny relationships. However, if you are careful to control all interactions between the pup and your rabbits, it will work fine. Be prepared to monitor the pup's every move for some months until you have control and he has learned to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Most dogs should not be left unsupervised with rabbits until about the age of 2. It's better to err on the side of caution than go too quickly and risk serious harm to your bunny.

A mature dog is usually easier to integrate into the household. The best place to choose an adult doggy companion is your local shelter or dog rescue group, here you will find a large



Flowers shares his snack with Shiloh

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Matilda the pit bull visits with Sylvia

selection of dog personalities. At the shelter, look for a dog who is calm and somewhat submissive. Talk to the dog and gauge her attention to you and responsiveness. Look for a dog who is eager to please you but fairly quiet. Age of the dog doesn't matter; her rapport with you is the most important thing. Spend time with the dog out of the shelter run—is she extremely excited? Does she jump wildly on everyone around, ignoring entreaties to get DOWN and OFF? Don't expect to find an

obedience-trained dog at the shelter, but look for that combination of attentiveness and calmness. A dog who is calm but ignores you might also ignore your commands when you bring her home. If you are a first-time adopter, you may want to ask a dog-savvy friend to accompany you to the shelter.

Once you bring your new dog home, don't introduce her to your house bunnies right away. She needs to feel part of your family before she can learn that the rabbits are family too. It's very important that you are in charge of your dog. She must feel that you're "leader of the pack." Take a dog obedience class. They are great for establishing your leadership and dominance even in a distracting situation. Above all, be consistent. Never let your dog be overbearing with your rabbits. It's risky for the rabbit and counterproductive for the relationship between dog and human. Dogs need clear rules. Most dogs have a strong sense of "family." While they may not hesitate to chase a wild rabbit or strange cat outside, they usually are quite protective and loving with the animal members of their own family.

The House Rabbit Society has an excellent hand-out on introducing dogs and rabbits titled "When Fido Met Thumper." We would be happy to send a copy of this article to you. Send your request with an SASE to HRS, P.O. Box 50311, Baltimore, MD 21211. If you have internet access, the url of the article is: www.rabbit.org/journal/1/dogs.html Also available from Drollery Press, the publishers of the House Rabbit Handbook, is the video "Introducing Rabbits," which explores introducing your rabbit to dogs, cats, and other rabbits. Arrangements may be made to view it by contacting one of our local foster volunteers.



J.D., Carly and Morris share a cuddle

HAPPY ADOPTION LETTERS



Isabelle

Dear Kathleen,
Just thought you might be surprised to hear - as I was to see... that two nights ago when I opened the door to the buns room (they were both out) I finally witnessed snuggling between Mozart and Isabelle. She

was laying stretched out and he was licking her head and then they would lay with their noses pressed together! He still runs like the dickens when he's finished but the snuggling sessions seem to be getting longer each time. Finally, some progress! Hope all is well with you and yours and if I don't talk to you before have a great holiday! Lisa Jurist

Hi Susan,
Just wanted to let you know that the buns are doing great! They haven't fussed at each other since they've been home. They ran around and thumped when I first got them home but have since calmed down. They snuggle alot, but I still haven't seen them groom each other. I'm sure that will come with time. If I can find some time, I'll take pictures. Thanks a ton, Monet's much happier now, Danielle

Dear Kate, Good news! I'm absolutely crazy about Freda! She's my shining little bunny star. She's so interactive and loves to explore - she hops up on the sofa with me to snuggle, and hops in and out of the tub in the morning! She's a smushy little peanut and I'm so thrilled to have her. If I have a week that I get home before I begin REM sleep, I'd love to compose an article on rabbit obesity man-

agement - I can't promise anything REAL soon -my list grows longer by the hour! Take care! Wild about Freda, - Jackie S.

Kate: Forgive me for not writing sooner but it has been hectic around the office this week. Well, we've had the little brute for a week now and fall in love with him on a daily basis. He and Pie spend hours facing each other and licking each other's head. We've taken them into the family room [all carpet] and they have a ball bouncing around all over the room. We are thinking about changing his name to Franklin E Bunny as he has already defeated the security of the fireplace screen and Escaped several times. He is really being enjoyed by all. All of us have come to the conclusion that this is what Piewacket needed to get her out of the doldrums and into the dancing arena...believe me she is out and into the arena. More later, Franklin, Pie, Cozy, Mariellen & Skip



Franklin

Hello Kate, it's Jamie Johnston. I was the one who adopted Milo from the House Rabbit Society back in September. I wanted to let you know that my bunnies absolutely LOVE each other. Wherever he goes she goes. They are inseparable! I know I did the right thing by adopting him. They have a favorite chair that they sit in together every night when I go to bed and are there waiting for me every morning. Of course I can't turn on the light too bright because it disturbs their sleep (God forbid!). Anyway, I hope everything is going well and please keep me informed of anything new going on. Hope to see you soon! Jamie