

## Bunny Aggression Directed Toward People

The most common reason for true bunny aggression is likely territorial behavior by sexually intact rabbits. Rabbits can be really quite bossy and I hate to admit it but I think the girls can be worse than the boys.

If your bunny is neutered and still showing aggressive behavior you need to rule out pain as a cause especially if this is a sudden change from normal for your pet.

Neutered bunnies that are physically healthy (not in pain) will show aggression, ie nipping and chasing, if they are frustrated or fearful. Make sure your bunny gets 2 to 3 hours of exercise and play time each day. Offer a variety of physically and psychologically stimulating toys that you change up on a regular basis so he/she does not get bored. Untreated willow baskets are fun for them to chew on and throw around as are hay burritos (hay stuffed in empty toilet paper tubes). Make simple obstacle courses out of boxes and cardboard tubes. Toys that make noise can be fun just make sure they are rabbit safe. A bored, under exercised and under stimulated bunny will become cranky.

Rabbits like to “call the shots” with the amount and type of human interaction they will tolerate with us. Sometimes it is best to get down on the floor at their level and just be in their presence and let them come to you if they wish. You can gently roll or toss toys on the ground for them to explore or chase. If your pet has a favorite type of fresh green or veggie that it loves set that next to you. Do not hand feed as that may only encourage more nipping. Only offer that special treat when you are interacting with your pet. This is a great way to try to bond with shy, fearful rabbits. You need to let them choose to come to you. When your bunny is enjoying this special treat gently reach over and stroke it on the head. This can mimic the grooming another bunny would do and may be better tolerated.

Don't forget rabbits also need to know they have a safe haven or space they can retreat to if they want to be alone. There is no reason why they couldn't have certain times of the day they want to be social with us and times they want to be left alone. It is up to us to try to figure this out.