

A Look At Rabbit Aggression

Understand a rabbit to avoid a scratch or bite from your rabbit.

By Caroline Charland

A rabbit's nails continually grow, which can make them very long and sharp. A rabbit will struggle to be put down if picked up when it does not feel safe. The result is a scratch, sometimes a bad scratch, on the person attempting to pick it up.

Don't take the scratch personally. Your rabbit wasn't trying to hurt you; it just means that your rabbit did not feel safe and struggled to be put down. One way to avoid scratches is to always keep your rabbit's nails trimmed.

Rabbits rarely bite. Some rabbits become aggressive if they are not spayed or neutered, or if they are kept in a cage with little human interaction. The combination of both often results in a rabbit that protects its living area by lunging, boxing and sometimes biting. If this is the case, a few simple changes will alter this behavior.

First of all, the rabbit should be spayed or neutered. An altered rabbit, once its hormones settle down, generally doesn't feel the need to defend its area as vigorously. The rabbit should also receive an enriching environment with plenty of opportunity to exercise and frequent interaction — either with people, another rabbit it is bonded to, or both. Rabbits naturally live in groups, so a singly kept rabbit is more likely to become lonely and destructive.

Don't Punish A Rabbit

Should you ever discipline your rabbit? The answer is a big "No!" Rabbits respond well to kindness and reward, not harsh words or punishment. If you use some form of discipline with your rabbit, your pet will not want to be around you. The rabbit will become scared and frightened of you and possibly even depressed and withdrawn.

Rewarding your rabbit for coming to you with strokes, praise and sometimes treats will benefit your relationship, growing it into a strong trust between you.