

Bunny Love

By Erica Berg

We all know rabbits can hop, but most people don't realize what else they can do ... or how much fun they can be! Most bunnies truly enjoy human companionship. From watching TV at your side (they won't change the channel!) to playing with toys, bunnies will keep you amused with their great personalities.

Unfortunately, many rabbits don't get to display this fun-loving side of themselves to humans. Often purchased at Easter for children, or on a whim because bunnies are cute, many rabbits are relegated to life in a small cage outdoors or in a garage, with minimal attention given to them. But, with just a little time and proper handling, bunnies can make wonderful, interactive pets. Peter's story will demonstrate how much rabbits enjoy attention from people.

Peter's Tale

Peter is a California beach bunny. No, that's not an official breed – it's where he was originally found and rescued. Though it's not known how he escaped, rabbits are very good diggers. Without proper fencing and supervision, they will dig right under a fence and keep on going. Or, he could have been let loose by his people, who were under the mistaken impression that pet rabbits can survive on their own. As a domesticated rabbit, Peter would have had a hard time surviving on a beach (or in any other wild habitat).



Peter was fortunate – he was found on a beach in Santa Monica by a man who does marine mammal rescue. The gentleman brought him to a local veterinarian, where he was neutered before continuing his journey to the Best Friends' Bunny House. Spaying or neutering bunnies not only prevents unwanted breeding, but also helps keep bunnies healthier and eliminates undesirable behaviors such as spraying.

Before Peter's arrival at the Bunny House, the staff at the Best Friends Clinic discovered what a friendly fellow he was. He even enjoyed the company of a cat while there. When introduced very carefully and gradually, it is possible to integrate rabbits with certain other animals. Here at Best Friends, we hoped that Peter would find a bunny friend to bond with. Bunnies usually do enjoy the company of another bunny or two, but can be very picky about whom they choose as their partners.

Like some cats and dogs, however, some bunnies prefer to stay solo. Peter is one such bunny. He hasn't managed to make any bunny friends, and has made it clear that he prefers the company of humans to rabbits. When you open the door to his cage, he will come bounding over to see you and to be petted. Most rabbits enjoy having their foreheads stroked; Peter likes it so much that he will stay indefinitely. When you set him down on the floor for playtime, he will follow you around until you notice him (which

is very hard not to do!). Peter happily sits with volunteers for long periods of time, just being loved.

While Peter can't be trusted with other rabbits, he's a delightful "bunny ambassador" when it comes to humans. For people who have never spent any "up close and personal" time with a rabbit, meeting Peter is a great experience. They get a chance to see how companionable bunnies can be. When groups of children come to tour the Bunny House, Peter is the one chosen to give the kids an opportunity to pet a rabbit. Besides learning how to properly care for a rabbit, the children also see how affectionate rabbits can be.

How many rabbits have the potential to be as affectionate as Peter? If they are given the chance to live indoors with their humans, probably the vast majority. A rabbit living in a cage outside all alone would be so much happier being part of the family. Bunnies make very good house pets. There are a variety of ways to confine rabbits to prevent them from chewing on things when you are not home. Additionally, rabbits can be successfully trained to use the litter box, and their droppings have little to no odor. Give them good-quality food, some love and affection, and you are on your way to having a healthy, happy companion for 8 to 12 years.

So, what's next for our bunny ambassador? Well, it looks like Peter has found his forever home! He is going to Colorado to live with a young girl and her family, who have fallen in love with him. While we will definitely miss him, we feel confident that among the 130 rabbits at the Bunny House, there are other candidates for bunny ambassador.

If you are thinking of adopting a rabbit, visit the bunnies at your local rescue group and discover what wonderful animals rabbits truly are!

Erica Berg is a bunny caretaker at Best Friends, where she helps tend to the daily needs of a wide variety of rabbits. She has enjoyed learning about bunnies, and wants to share that knowledge with others.