

Rabbits as Companions — An Inside Look

Many people ask the question, “Are rabbits more like cats or dogs?” The answer they often receive from rabbit people is, “Neither. Rabbits are like rabbits.” While this answer is strictly correct, it is not terribly helpful in helping them understand companion rabbits. I most often liken rabbits to **humans**. However, as pets, rabbits have some dog-like characteristics and some cat-like characteristics — in different proportions, depending on the individual rabbit.

Rabbits are like dogs in forming a very deep bond with their human companions. They are very loyal and very “in tune” with their human’s emotions. It is tough to hide worry or sadness from your rabbit. Rabbits crave human companionship and can become quite depressed if they are separated from their human or if their human suddenly has no time for them. Some rabbits are quite creative in finding a way to be in the same room with their human — even when not invited by their human.



Rabbits are independent like cats. You might think this statement contradicts what was said in the previous paragraph, but it does not. Rabbits crave human companionship, but they want it to be on **their** terms — when they are in the mood, on their “turf” (usually the floor) and only for as long as they are interested. A rabbit who wants your attention will let you know and may not take “no” for an answer. Stormy always wanted attention, but he seemed to be most insistent when I was brushing my teeth. He would tug gently at my pants leg. If I didn’t finish brushing quickly or find a way (toothbrush still in mouth) to give him a couple of pets, he would gently nip my leg as if to say, “I’m not kidding, I want attention **now!**”

In terms of behavior and training, rabbits are more like cats than dogs. They are very intelligent and, like cats, can be trained to use a litter-box. I'm convinced that they are bright enough to be taught tricks and obedience like dogs. Most, however, choose **not** to be ruled by their human. Whether I say, "Come here," or "Stop that!" my rabbits give me a look that clearly says, "I hear you and understand... and I'm going to continue doing as I please." I could tell you that I had Murray trained to beg for his favorite treat foods — however, the truth is he had me trained to drop whatever I was doing and serve his dried cranberries or apple slice when he moved to a certain spot in the kitchen and begged.

