



Issue X, Fall 2002

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Visit us online: www.rabbitsinthehouse.org



How I Bonded A Trio

by Suzanne Medairy

There is nothing better than seeing a “pile of bunnies” snuggling together. When it’s hard to see where one bunny ends and the next begins because they’re all lying together, content, it makes me happy to know my three have each other. That said, it can take a lot of work to get just two bunnies bonded, let alone three. Following are some tips and tricks that worked for me. But some of the best advice is in the *House Rabbit Handbook*: Expect your bunnies to hate each other at first, but at the same time, know they will eventually become friends. Knowing that fighting was nearly inevitable helped me to go into the project.

I got my first bunny, Bob, nearly six years ago. During his first several months with us, I ran across an HRS article about the benefits of having a bonded pair. So along came Lucy from HRS. Kathleen Wilsbach took care of the bonding for us, and afterward we were still fairly ignorant about what it takes to get bunnies to be friends. We saw only the end results, and Bob was much calmer and happier with his new buddy. A year later, we “inherited” Amos. We thought, “How hard can this ‘bonding stuff’ be?” Ugh! Little did we

know! Within minutes after Amos entered our home, Bob attacked Lucy and suddenly Lucy had Bob on his back while little Amos sat cowering in the corner, knowing he’d better stay out of the way. We quickly separated all three and had to go through bonding with all of them. We hadn’t realized that bringing in the new guy would unbond our pair.

Before you start bonding, make sure all your bunnies are spayed/neutered. That was mistake number one for us. So we put off bonding until Amos had healed from his neutering. Then we started by finding neutral territory. The area that worked best was our guest bathroom. First, we found if the space was too large the bunnies would run to separate corners and wouldn’t need to interact with each other, and the bonding would take much longer. Second, the bathroom had a tile floor. The bunnies couldn’t get much traction, so their fights didn’t accelerate quickly. Finally, it was an area that none of the bunnies had “claimed,” as they’d never been in that room before.

Once you’ve found a good location for bonding, arm yourself with “ammunition.” I kept a weak water pistol and a broom handy. If the bunnies began circling I’d wait to see if they ironed things out on their own. If the circling continued I’d give them a couple of light sprays from the water pistol so they’d associate the circling with the dreaded water. If things got worse, I’d use the broom to sep-



Bob, Molly, and Amos enjoy a typical snuggle.

continued on next page

continued from page 1

arate them. I used the broom after painfully learning that the bunnies don't distinguish between my hands and each other. Also, the bunnies hated the broom, so it was another means of using something that they didn't like to discourage the fighting. Toward the end of bonding, you'll start to see one bunny back down and become submissive to the more dominant bunny.

If the periods between fights get shorter and the fights get more serious, don't give up quickly. As much as you want the squabbling to stop, the bunnies will begin to associate fighting with getting their own space. What I did was take the three of them for a car ride, all in one carrier. That method puts them in a scary situation where they want to cuddle with each other for comfort. Placing them in the carrier or putting them on the washing machine works just as well (I did a lot of laundry while bonding!). Kathleen said she took Bob and Lucy shopping for Christmas trees. She said that was a turning point for them, being made to cuddle in a car all day.

As you're bonding your three, keep a close eye on their diet and how much they're eating and drinking. Lucy would avoid the food bowl on occasion because her eating would upset Bob.



The three happily eat together from the same food bowl.

Sometimes we put her in her own space with her own food to make sure she ate. Bonding is quite stressful for the bunnies, so they might tend to eat less, but make sure that they are still taking in food. In addition, we had a couple of quick runs to the vet. Amos would fight dirty and go for Bob's ears. The vet told us that one of the major arteries runs through bunnies' ears and Amos came really close to hitting that artery on one occasion.

Be aware that different situations can unbind a pair or trio. When we lost Lucy, Bob and Amos, after being bonded for over a year, started fighting. They essentially had to begin working out their pecking order again. Also, for a couple of years it seemed like the changing seasons in the spring and fall would cause the bunnies to start fighting, and we would go through mini-rebonding sessions.

When Molly joined us we approached the bonding with a little more experience. However, every bonding situation is different. While Lucy and Bob were both extremely stubborn bunnies, Molly, from the beginning, was a very submissive bunny who would just sit there while Bob displayed his dominance by humping her. We essentially had no fighting with the initial bonding. We did go through a couple of rebonding sessions though, when the boys got "spring fever" each year.

I absolutely love watching the dynamics among my three. Bob has become the "dad." I joke that he's the "godfather" of his little posse. Amos and Molly have more of a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. When we first got Molly, we kept her upstairs since she wasn't spayed yet. Amos would

sneak upstairs and sit staring at her in her cage for hours. It was like watching "puppy love," and he still seems to not be able to get enough of her. He follows her everywhere, smothering her with kisses. Both he and Molly have respect for "the godfather." When Bob hops over they stop licking each other and both begin licking Bob. Seeing the three of them stretched out cheek to cheek, in "bunny smiles," makes all the work of bonding worth every bit of it.

Upcoming Events

*Please check our Website for details on all the events:
www.rabbitsinthehouse.org*

HRS will participate in another National Geographic Passport Friday on December 27, 2002, at Explorers Hall in Washington, DC.

We will have a booth at the World of Pets Expo Jan. 31–Feb. 2, 2003, at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium, MD.
www.worldofpets.org

And we will also have a booth at the Super Pet Expo April 4–6, 2003, at the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly, VA.
www.superpetexpo.com

Geena's Legacy

Geena—gorgeous, big, red, soft, affectionate, demanding, queenly—succumbed to renal failure on November 3, 2002.

Each of our rabbits is special. So why do we single out Geena to memorialize? Partly because so many of our fosterers and members knew her and admired her. But mainly because in spite of her popularity, we were not able to fulfill for her our ultimate goal of permanent adoption into a loving home, and we take this sad opportunity both to reflect and to renew our resolve.

Geena was a New Zealand Red, large in size and in spirit. She had been in foster care with a volunteer from the Montgomery County Humane Society for a year when we took her into an HRS foster home in June of 2000. At that time she was named Digger; that could not have increased her adoption chances! Susan Easton renamed her after the actor Geena Davis because of her long-legged good looks and beautiful red hair.

A lot of adopters passed her over because of her size, nine pounds. Also, she tended to be somewhat aggressive with the rabbits we introduced to her. She had a rocky relationship with a prospective buddy, Bailey; after a few months their partnership was deemed to have failed for reasons of irreconcilable differences,



and Geena, with great regret, was returned to foster care.

In all, we knew Geena longer than two years. Those who shared their homes with her were always reluctant when circumstances required us to swap her to another foster home. She was very affectionate in her commanding way.

Geena's presence was large. Now she is large in her absence, and memories of her have sparked a thoughtful discussion about what she means to us. She has inspired a wide variety of comments and tributes:

"Although Geena never had a forever home, she was adored by all of us fosterers."

"Her demanding nature and feistiness toward the other bunnies made her stand out and shine. If she had been a woman, no doubt she would have been a feminist! She gave true meaning to the phrase 'Rabbits do have personality!'"

"Even though Geena never found a permanent home, she got lots of love and good care from many people, and whoever fostered her and was fond of her should be proud of that."

"It was certainly better than her



never having been taken in by HRS at all. I think we should feel that way about any animal—rabbit or other—that passes away while in foster care."

"I was very sad that no one at the match even took Geena out to see her other than me."

"I especially love the large bunnies, and Geena was no exception. Kurt and I both feel blessed that we were given the time to be with her, time to love her and play with her. She melted my heart every morning with her big bright eyes greeting me for her morning greens."

"I too have a large rabbit; unfortunately, she and Geena did not get along, or I would have taken her in a second."

"Geena was in foster care a long, long time, and perhaps that is something to consider when choosing a rabbit to adopt."

"Fosters receive the best medical care and postmortem follow-up, and this is yet another reason to make a donation and renew membership."

Rest easy, Geena. You are our inspiration to continue helping the big bunnies, the bunnies who are hard to place, the bunnies who live out their lives in foster care. We thank you. We miss you.

What Do Rabbits See?

by Dana Krempels

Many house rabbit “parents” are curious to know what the world looks like to their lagomorph companion. Why does it seem difficult for my bunny to find food right in front of his face? Why is my bunny so easily startled or frightened if I walk into the room holding a box or a grocery bag? Can my rabbit see colors?

The first thing to remember is that a rabbit’s visual system evolved under evolutionary pressures completely different from those which “designed” your eyes. We human primates, like our simian cousins, have forward-placed eyes which confer binocular vision and depth perception. This is essential for an animal originally designed to leap through the trees. Also, we have excellent color vision, a trait which helped our ancestors to find ripe fruit and tasty flowers in the forest canopy.

On the other hand, the rabbit visual system is designed—not for foraging and locomotion—but to quickly and effectively detect approaching predators from almost any direction. The eyes are placed high and to the sides of the skull, allowing the rabbit to see nearly 360 degrees, as well as far above her head. Rabbits tend to be farsighted, which explains why they may be frightened by an airplane flying overhead even if their human companion can barely see it. (It could be a hawk! Run!)

The price the bunny pays for this remarkable field of vision is a small blind spot directly in front of his face, but forward-placed nostrils and large, spooning ears compensate for that

minor loss of predator-detecting space. For an animal to have binocular vision, the fields of view of both eyes must overlap to some degree. The central blind spot in the rabbit’s field of view precludes a three-dimensional view of nearby objects. When your bunny cocks her head and seems to be looking at you “sideways,” she is actually looking as straight at you as is possible for a bunny. As far as we know, she does not have a primate’s level of depth perception at such close range.

What about color vision? In general, vertebrates have two different types of photoreceptor cells in their retinas: rods and cones. Cones confer high resolution, and, if more than one cone type is present, they also confer the ability to perceive various wavelengths of light as distinct colors. For example, we humans have three different categories of cone—their maximum sensitivities in the red, blue and green regions of the spectrum. The differing sensitivities of each cone type enable us to perceive different (visible) wavelengths of light as the colors of the rainbow.

Behavioral studies published in the early 1970s indicate that rabbits do have a limited ability to discriminate between some wavelengths of light, perceiving them as different colors. Evidently, they can discriminate between the wavelengths we call “green” and “blue.” Although rabbits may not perceive green and blue the way we do, they *can* tell them apart. This means they have limited color vision, probably

conferred by two different categories of cone cells (blue and green).

The other type of photoreceptor, the rod cell, confers high visual sensitivity in low light situations, but relatively poor resolution (i.e., a “grainy” picture). The rabbit retina has a much higher ratio of rods to cones than the human retina has. Although a rabbit can see better than a human in low light conditions, his low light image has much poorer resolution (clarity) than the daytime images formed by your cone-rich, primate retina.

Now you may wonder: “Can my rabbit see me clearly, or am I just a big blur?” As you read this page, you are focusing on the letters with a very tiny part of your retina called the fovea. This is a minuscule, cone-shaped depression in the retina, lined wall-to-wall with high resolution cone cells.

Rabbits, too, have small retinal areas with more cones than rods. However, this *area centralis* is not indented, and it has far lower cone density than our fovea has. The image formed by the area centralis is relatively “grainy” compared to the one formed by your fovea, but it serves the rabbit well. Using this image, your voice, body movements and scent as cues, your rabbit can recognize you (his favorite human)—as long as you’re not carrying a scary box that completely changes your familiar shape!

Knowing a little more about how another creature sees the world allows us to come one step closer to understanding its behavior—and modifying our own to make life happier for everyone. Remember that the next time your rabbit gazes at you with those deep, ancient eyes.

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Chapter Manager, Miami chapter, HRS
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Rabbit Supplies Sold by Our Chapter

These items are available only by pickup. Prices include sales tax.

Hay

Regular Timothy	.....\$8.00/bale
Green Timothy	.....\$20.00/bale
Oxbow Timothy 2.5 lb	.....\$6.00
Oxbow Timothy 9 lb	.....\$18.00
Oxbow Timothy 25 lb	.....\$30.00
Oxbow Timothy 50 lb	.....\$40.00

Pellets

Oxbow Bunny Basics/T 5 lb	...\$5.00
Oxbow Bunny Basics/T 10 lb	...\$8.00
Oxbow Bunny Basics/T 50 lb	...\$38.00
Harlan Hi-Fiber 33 lb	.....\$15.00

Feeding Supplies

Crock-Loc Bowl	.....\$6.00
Ceramic Crock	.....\$6.00
Water Bottle	.....\$6.00
Non-Drip "Travel" Bottle	.....\$4.50

Litter

Tek-Fresh/CareFresh 50 liters	..\$13.00
Tek-Chip (pelleted paper) 50 lb	..\$16.00
EcoFresh (recycled paper) 10 lb	...\$4.50

Papaya Enzyme Tablets

Oxbow 200 tabs	.....\$8.00
Oxbow 500 tabs	.....\$12.00

Grooming Supplies

Slicker Brush	.....\$7.00
Metal Loop Brush	.....\$6.00
Detangler Comb	.....\$5.00
Nail Clippers	.....\$7.00
Scissors	.....\$10.00

Litter Pans

Small	.....\$4.00
Medium	.....\$5.00
Large	.....\$6.00

Housing

Exercise Pen 24"	.....\$55.00
Exercise Pen 30"	.....\$65.00

House Rabbit Handbook

Drollery Press Videos

Toys



Supply Volunteers to contact for more info and to arrange pickup

Baltimore, MD: Kathleen Wilsbach, 410/889-4104, kathleen@rabbit.org

Olney, MD: Susan Wong, 301/570-9152, Sbunny@erols.com

Bel Air, MD: Jodi Robertson, 410/838-3761, lapinblanc@comcast.net

Woodbridge, VA: Liz DiNorma, 703/670-3659, liz@rabbit.org

Alexandria, VA: Karen Jones, 703/619-1062, kjsmy@yahoo.com

GIFTS

IN

REMEMBRANCE

Nick & Claire Milando

*in Memory of
Frankie*

Frank Branchini

*in Memory of
Rowan*

Marie Hartke

*in Memory of
Rowan*

Joan Gilkerson

*in Memory of
Daniel*

Anne Imboden

*in Memory of
Daniel*

CHAPTER UPDATE

We have to start this column by pointing out some sobering numbers. So far this year we have **adopted out 54 rabbits and taken in 29 from local shelters**. The adoption number is only about half of the figures we achieved in previous years, and the rescue figure is less than half. Further, this year we have taken in **fourteen rabbits returned from earlier adoptions**, and we gladly accepted **four additional rabbits** who, although not originally adopted out by us, were buddies of returnees. We now have the task of trying to determine why our adoption figure is down, and as a chapter established for some years, we have the growing challenge of helping returnees. In spite of our efforts, these returned rabbits were not shown the devotion we sought for them. Our chapter's commitment to rabbits we adopt out is *lifelong*, and with your help, we *will* find ways to help our returnees, either by adopting them out again or, if necessary, by maintaining them in loving sanctuary care.

We also have some excellent news. Chapter Manager **Kathleen Wilsbach** recently received notice from the IRS that we have completed our five-year probationary period and the final determination has been made: **Our chapter has been approved as a full-fledged 501(c)(3) charitable organization!** Kathleen said, "I would especially like to acknowledge **Jamie Johnston Sargent**, our treasurer, for all her hard work on the chapter's accounting, which is the most important part examined for the determination. **Great Job!** We couldn't have done it without you! I'd also like to acknowledge all of

our volunteers for helping us carry out our stated goals—educating the public and rescuing rabbits—and all our donors and fundraisers for helping us garner the required public support."

Our rabbits for adoption are now presented not only on our Website and in the *Clover Leaf*, but also, thanks to the work of **Patti Henningsen**, on **www.Petfinder.org**, the Internet's most heavily used national, searchable list of companion animals for adoption. Color photos of the rabbits described in the *Clover Leaf* can be seen both on our Website and on Petfinder.

In March, HRS was invited to present a rabbit care information program at a 4-H meeting in Fairfax, VA. **Liz DiNorma** and **Judi Lainer** took foster bunnies and did two presentations at the 4-H March Madness event. The presentations were very well received, and foster rabbit Gregory was adopted as a direct result! In addition, in July Liz did two more rabbit care presentations from invitations that came out of the original March Madness event: She taught rabbit care programs both at a 4-H camp in Virginia and then at a summer school program at Swanson Middle School in Arlington, VA.

Also in March, HRS was invited to be the featured group for **National Geographic's Passport Friday** program. As usual, thanks to **Nancy Boyd** for inviting us! We really enjoy doing these programs. National Geographic Explorers Hall is in a prime location downtown, and many people stop by on their lunch breaks. We talked to people from around the Washington, DC metro area, as well as people from

all across the country. It's always fun to be able to direct someone to their local HRS chapter—in Florida, or Ohio, or Colorado, for example. We always ask people to mention to the other HRS chapters that they heard it here first!

April was a big month. HRS had a booth at the **Super Pet Expo** in Chantilly, VA, April 6–7. These events are exhausting, but are very worthwhile, especially from an education standpoint. Then, **Kathy Brooks-Denny** set up a booth at the **Takoma Park Co-Op Earth Day** celebration in Takoma Park, MD. And to round out the month, the **Spring Fling** was held at **Connie Tjoumas's** house in Columbia, MD.

We continued our work with the **Animal Welfare League of Arlington** by having a booth at their Animal Walk on May 11. And then in August, AWLA asked HRS to be a **featured guest** at their booth at the **Arlington County Fair**.

This summer we began offering some different events and educational opportunities for our members. In June, HRS member and **Tellington Touch practitioner Sandy River**, who is also a certified animal acupuncturist, presented an introductory **TTouch workshop** for rabbit caretakers. Many thanks to **Diane Reich** and her family for volunteering their company's conference room for this and other events. The workshop was very interesting and was enjoyed by bunnies and their people alike. Participant **Anne Imboden** said, "So many people sitting in a circle, smiling at their bunnies, who were lying contentedly on their laps, was a

PLEASE JOIN OUR CHAPTER'S VOLUNTEER NETWORK AND/OR MAKE A DONATION TO SUPPORT
OUR FOSTER RABBITS. SEE THE FORM ON PAGE 15.



Bunny Tune-Up: Alexis Billstone massages Natalie Medina's Blackberry.

scene not to be forgotten." This workshop took place in Hanover, MD; we are looking into being able to do workshops in other areas around the chapter.

Another new program was the **Bunny Tune-Up** in June in McLean, VA. Bunnies were weighed and diet was discussed with their people, then the bunnies were groomed and had their nails trimmed, and then, the big treat: a massage by **massage therapist Alexis Billstone**. Alexis works as a veterinary technician at Healthy Paws Animal Hospital in Haymarket, VA, and generously donated her massage skills for this event. Participant **Natalie Medina** reported that "Blackberry and Chip had a great time at the Bunny Tune-Up. Even Rose, who normally protests, had a good time getting a massage and could not resist enjoying it. **I would definitely take them to another Tune-Up.**" This is certainly an event we are working to repeat around the Chapter.

In July we again worked together with **MetroPets Online** to present a **Disaster Preparedness for Pet Owners** Seminar in Fairfax County, VA. This event was even written up in the weekly Fairfax section of the *Washington Post*.

We did not participate in the Montgomery County Fair this year. The fair is sponsored by 4-H, and as **HRS's philosophies** about rescue vs. breeding are in opposition to 4-H's philosophies, we were asked not to participate. We

found this interesting, considering that we have been asked to do care presentations at other 4-H events in other locations. We are, of course, happy to participate in those events and to **give any educational assistance we can** to 4-H members.

Another event that did not take place this year is the annual Fall Festival. Between scheduling problems and lack of volunteers, it became too difficult to try to make it happen this year.

For the second year, **Amber Winningham** was in charge of our annual autumn **Uncle Ralph's Cookie Sale**. This year's sale raised nearly \$1,500 to help pay for the care of our foster rabbits. The sale involves a considerable amount of work; thank you, Amber!

If you're looking for an opportunity to interact with other chapter members, albeit electronically, consider signing up for the **rabbit_chat mailing list**. The list is for local members only, and it has turned out to be a great source of information and support for the people participating. Sometimes we talk about "fluffy" things, like the cute antics that our rabbits share with us, but often we're talking about more substantial topics such as health and diet issues. And always the group is there for support when someone is going through a tough illness with their bunny or loses their beloved rabbit friend. You can sign up on the front page of our chapter Website at www.rabbitsinthehouse.org. If you're concerned about your e-mail inbox filling up with messages from the chat group, choose the Digest option when signing up. You'll then get one e-mail daily, containing all of the messages posted that day to the chat group.

Another privilege for local members only is our **bunnysitting mailing list**. Whether you need a bunnysitter or can offer to bunnysit, this is a good group to join, especially with the holiday season upon us. Sign up from the first page of our chapter Website.

We have a third Internet mailing list

that you can join from our Website, this one not restricted to chapter members only. It is a low-volume **announcement list** to keep you updated on upcoming activities. The list is a good way to be reminded of our spring candy sale and autumn cookie sale, training and educational opportunities that the chapter is organizing, and other important events.

Now we have two special stories to relate, concerning rabbits whose adopters did not mean it seriously when they agreed to give lifelong care to their rabbits.

Bart was adopted in our area by a family with a young daughter. We don't adopt out rabbits as pets for children, but we do adopt out rabbits to families who have children. Unfortunately, in this instance we were fooled into thinking that at least one parent had an emotional commitment to Bart and would be in charge of his daily care. Over a year ago the family moved to Washington State, where the father contacted the HRS chapter about putting Bart up for adoption. The young girl, now a teenager,

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ShadowLink, an Internet access provider, will donate \$1 per month per active account to the MD/DC/NoVA chapter of HRS and give a discounted price of \$14.95 per month to people who sign up through our link. This is a nationwide dial-up service. You can check out information about the service at:

www.shadowlink.com

But if you sign up, please do it through our link at the bottom of our home page:

www.rabbitsinthehouse.org

RABBITS FOR

All rabbits are to be adopted as HOUSE RABBITS only—no exceptions! \$60 donation. Your other rabbits must be spayed or neutered. Pictures of all our foster rabbits can be found on our Facebook page.

DIAMOND AND PANDA, both girls, can be adopted separately. We adopted them out in the autumn of 1998. The adopter moved to Arizona, and two years later she decided not to keep the rabbits. We are grateful that Brambley Hedge, an independent rabbit rescue in Phoenix, accepted Diamond and Panda on our behalf and cared for them until we found Carol Thielen to fly and escort them back to us. They arrived at BWI safely and now they need permanent homes.

KEVIN AND MIKEY are tiny guys but big charmers and full of energy, and they have excellent personal habits. Littermates, they've always been together and are close pals.

SUE ELLEN AND PAMELA are a pretty mother-daughter pair who were turned in to a shelter by a breeder. SueEllen, the young mother and a lop, is the more outgoing of the two. Pamela, the uppy-eared daughter, is somewhat more reserved.

MARBLE is a beautiful harlequin rex. Approximately a year old,



QUIGLEY

he was found as a stray. He is very active and curious, eagerly running to see what humans are up to. He dances for treats and carries his carrot across the room.

QUIGLEY is a lively young dwarf, very inquisitive and fun-loving. He is always sitting his haunches so he will not miss anything that is happening around him. If he can get your attention for a few pets, that's great, too!

SHERWOOD is a friendly, curious, and sociable little boy with a beautiful coat of mixed pumpkin-orange and gray. Once he gets to know you, if you sit on the floor he'll eagerly hop into your lap for petting or treats.



SHERWOOD

AVRIL is a tiny harlequin (orange with black stripes) 6-month-old dwarf, brought into the shelter after the children grew tired of them. She is a friendly, loving, sensitive girl who gets along well with other rabbits. Because of her small size, she would do best in a home with adults or older children.

CORETTA loves to play with her toys, especially her soccer ball. She likes to see what is going on and will run from room to room. She will sit for pets when she is ready to rest between dances.

♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥ Happy Adoption

Dear HRS,

Peppen is doing quite well. He certainly is no longer the shy little bunny who wouldn't come out of his travel cage. We are really enjoying him. He has a very strong personality. He isn't a cuddly bunny. Rachel was a little disappointed about that at first. She gets a big kick out of him now. He has no time for cuddling, although he does like an ear rub, and he is always around checking out the toys and what we are doing.—Linda Lowitz

Dear HRS,

It was a little rocky the first few days, but I am happy to report that today Alice was seen grooming Theodore and last night they spent the night together in peace! They are now a happy pair.—Kathy Brooks-Denny

Dear HRS,

Remember when you brought that whole passel of bunnies over here to meet Tristan? He liked Myrtle, so we went with her. Myrtle and Tristan are practically inseparable now. She seems to just love him and spends a great deal of time grooming him. She's even become friendly with her human companions.—Deb Hoyt

Dear HRS,

Zoot and Aspen seem to have worked out their differences. Aspen has been a good influence on Zoot. He used to just lie around all the time; he's much more vivacious now. I'm so glad we were able to take Aspen in.—Emily Ayers

Dear HRS,

So far Trinket and Rocky are hitting it off in their bonding. I'm keeping my fingers crossed as I like her and think she'd be good for him. She initiated a nose rub the moment they met, hopped away and then came back and groomed his face! Since he's never had a companion and can be shy until he gets comfortable somewhere, I think he didn't know what to make of her greeting.—Colleen Coughlin

Dear HRS,

Samantha and Evelyn are doing great. This morning the cutest thing happened. Shea wanted to sit with them and color, and I was in the other room. I heard a lot of racket and went to discover what was going on. Shea had put a slinky on the top shelf with both of them. Samantha kept going to it and throwing it down and

ADOPTION!!!

ation per rabbit or \$100 for a pair, plus \$18 HRS membership for non-members.
an be viewed at our Website www.rabbitsinthehouse.org and at www.petfinder.org.

HONEY is a lovely Dutch mix with a strong liking for ear and cheek rubs. Although she is a sweetheart, families with young children may not appreciate the boxing talents she exhibits every now and then. She is a keen explorer and loves to run everywhere, binky, and run back to her favorite people.

JOSIE is a small rabbit with a big attitude. She knows what she wants and when she wants it. You will find her in the middle of all activity, telling you how to do things or asking for ear rubs.

JULIET is a sweet, kissing mini-lop with the most beautiful gray/lavender coloring. She loves to explore and follow people around and will immediately lie down if she thinks she is going to get petting and kissing. Juliet is young, born this year. She was found in a park with an empty water bottle and an empty food dish by her side.

KAATJE is a medium-size Dutch-rex mix, about 10 months old. She loves her toys and always wants to know what is going on around her. She is still a little skittish but is starting to really like to be petted and will give bunny kisses sometimes. She does not seem



MARCIE

to mind well-behaved dogs.

LEONA is a beautiful red, white, and gray French lop. Although she's only about 6 months old, she's at least 12 pounds of bunny! She's a little shy at first, but after she warms up to you, *watch out* because all she wants to do is either snuggle or play with you. She has excellent litterbox habits and she's full of energy and curiosity.

MARCIE is 20 lbs. of energy stuffed into a 4-lb. lop rabbit. She loves to run and dance but will not hesitate to stop for pets. Her favorite toy is the phone book.

BRONWYN is a dilute harlequin-colored rex. She has been in foster care for a very long time. Once she gets to know you, she is a real sweetie. She is on the medium to large side.

VANESSA, HUGO, AND FIGARO have been together for almost a year. Although we would like to keep them together,

we are willing to adopt out one of the bunnies to join another bunny looking for a friend. Vanessa is a beautiful red and white rex, as sweet as she is lovely to look at. Hugo is an adorable multi-colored mini-lop, a happy explorer who enjoys exercise. Figaro is a handsomely multicolored bunny who enjoys strokes and head rubs.



KAATJE

Adoption Letters! ♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥♥

watching it fall. She would even reach for it as Shea was putting it back up for her. I've been surprised by his patience and desire to just sit with them. He gets out of bed for school with excitement now because I let him have five minutes to sit with them and they usually come and eat some of their morning pellets from his hand.—Melinda Long

Dear HRS,

Rocky still has some moments of jumping Bella but it gets less and less. He has become a bit more adventurous — doesn't run and hide like he used to. Spends a lot of time grooming her; she loves that. She also loves the bathroom — spends a lot of time playing in there. All in all, it has been a success!—Marilyn Calfee

Dear HRS,

Everything is going pretty well. Brownie chases Jules occasionally but usually only after we've looked in on them. When they are left alone, they are usually quiet. Fortunately Jules is faster than Brownie and Brownie gets lazy after awhile, so she never catches him. Every once in a while, we see them sitting next to each other. It is very cute. So overall, I'd say they are progressing and will

at least tolerate each other until they become friends. It is really nice having civil bunnies.—Jess and Ken Michael

Dear HRS,

Quinna is making friends with all of us. The cats seem to think that it's normal to have a bunny in the kitchen again. Quinna comes running up to us for treats and loves it when Caroline and I pat her. She even let our dinner guests admire her and pat her (they all commented on what a handsome and sweet bunny she is). She has been slowly letting the sweetness of her temperament come out.—Cathy Gotschall

Dear HRS,

Your little energizer bunny Jingle is still running on full batteries! He is still a very messy housekeeper, but he makes up for it with his hysterical antics. He is definitely the king of the roost over here! He still seems to be pulling out Catherine's hair on the back of her neck. But they do hide out together inside the cardboard castle and groom each other a lot, and I'm sure they enjoy the bunny companionship.—Wendy Matson

Postmortems: A Delicate Subject

by Susan Brown, DVM

Midwest Bird & Exotic Animal Hospital, Westchester, IL

The correct name for the examination of the physical body after death is a postmortem, *post* meaning after and *mortem* meaning death. The term autopsy is used only for humans. A postmortem is an important diagnostic tool without which our knowledge of pet medicine would be sorely lacking.

A postmortem should be performed within 48 hours of death. It is best to get the pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible after death and to keep the body cool (below 60 degrees if possible), but *not* frozen. If the tissues freeze, the sharp ice crystals can damage them. This may affect the ability of a pathologist to assess microscopic tissue samples accurately.

What actually happens during the postmortem examination? Most often the entire animal will be examined because we have found that sometimes what is obvious during life is masking other disease that is only discovered after death. To get the whole or “holistic” picture, it is best to look at all the organ systems. To do this, it is necessary to make an incision on the underside of the pet from the neck to the anus in order to be able to open up the body cavity and take a look.

Initially organs are examined in place to look for gross abnormalities. Eventually the organs will be removed for closer examination. The cause of disease may be obvious to the naked eye, but often it is necessary to take

small samples of tissue and perform further testing such as microscopic examination, bacterial culture, viral isolation, or toxin assessment.

It is possible for the veterinarian to sew up the incision after the postmortem is completed. This is referred to as a “cosmetic postmortem” which returns the animal’s physical body to as normal appearing a state as possible.

Why should a postmortem be performed? The following are some of the important reasons to consider a postmortem examination for your pet:

MULTI-PET HOUSEHOLDS. A postmortem may reveal disease that could potentially spread to others in the household. If disease is diagnosed through a postmortem, preventative measures can be taken.

ZOONOTIC DISEASE. A postmortem can reveal potential zoonotic disease, which is disease transmissible from animals to man. This is particularly important for human members of the household with immunosuppressant diseases such as HIV or hepatitis.

CAUSE OF UNEXPECTED DEATH. When a pet dies suddenly or without obvious cause, owners often blame themselves for negligence or oversight. Usually this guilt is unwarranted but without a postmortem, the cause of death will remain unknown. Not only do owners and veterinarians continue to torture themselves with second guesses, but also without the postmortem there is

no information available to prevent the same problem with future pets if the problem is preventable. It is often a relief for clients to know that the death was not something they could alter or prevent in any way.

EFFECTIVENESS OF TREATMENT REGIMENS. Without this feedback, veterinarians cannot know for certain if treatments that are used, including medications, diets and surgeries, are effective. With information from a postmortem, veterinarians can make improved therapeutic choices in the future.

GENETIC/DIETARY/ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS. We have learned a great deal, for instance, about appropriate diets in rabbits from postmortem examinations of pets that succumbed due to the poor diets we fed in the past. We can thank those early pets that passed on and the veterinarians who examined them for the improved health and longevity of these animals today related to improved diets.

A postmortem examination can be an extremely useful tool in continuing our quest for knowledge on the improvement of health in our pets. Often veterinarians are hesitant to bring up the subject because it is so difficult to think about at the time of death and grief. Try to think about this subject and come to a decision about how you will proceed *before* the time comes. If you are not comfortable with a postmortem, your veterinarian will respect your decision. This was your friend in life and it is ultimately your decision as to what happens after death.

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“I Am Comforted Somewhat”

A postmortem exam can provide many benefits. Here, in their own grief-stricken words, are thoughts expressed by chapter members after the death of a beloved rabbit.

“Besides feeling terrible for losing such a sweet friend, I feel guilty because I wonder if I’ve missed some signs somewhere about her impending death. How could a vibrant bunny just plop dead like that within a couple of days?... How can I find any closure to what’s happened to our sweet bunny?”

“I have no idea what happened.... I sure wish rabbits could talk.... If only he had given me some indication I could have rushed him to the vet, but there was nothing. Is this normal?”

“The doctor has absolutely *no* idea whatsoever what the problem was. X-rays revealed *nothing!*”

“I want everything examined to find out what went wrong. I did everything with no money limit as to their getting well.”

“Dr. Giebel reported his post-mortem results. He states that Wabbadoo died from liver failure. He acknowledged that the spay surgery anesthesia set the deadly events in motion. However, when performing the surgery he noticed that Wabbadoo had an abnormally high level of fat deposits most probably caused by a malfunctioning liver that was improperly metabolizing food. In retrospect,

and after performing the postmortem, he was able to point to this problem.”

“Dr. Engel just called. She had the results of Lindoro’s postmortem. He had digestive and renal lymphoma. That was quite a surprise in such a young, seemingly healthy rabbit. There was nothing she did to cause this illness and nothing she could have done to save him.... I would never have guessed in a million years that it would be cancer.”

“Those little white spots were not calcium. They were anaplastic sarcoma (giant cell type), a very aggressive kind of cancer. That is why we weren’t able to buy Rowan any time with fluid therapy. Dr. Gold said that kind of cancer spreads and grows very quickly.... I know guilt is a natural part of grief. I was feeling guilty that maybe I should have taken Rowan for more acupuncture to see if we could get him off the Rimadyl.... Dr. Gold was glad to learn the kidney failure was in no way connected to Rimadyl.... He said this type of cancer is very rare in rabbits, but I wonder if partly it is just not diagnosed. I hope this knowledge will someday help another rabbit.”

“Dr. Stahl was able to do a necropsy on Phillip this evening.... There was nothing anyone could have done, so neither he nor I should beat ourselves up about it.... He told me that if I had brought him in earlier, they still would not have been able to save him.... So, we finally have closure and I think that the vet and I are both feeling better

because there was nothing either of us could have done.”

“The vet called me today with Cammie’s histopathology results.... There was no suggestion of infectious disease.... He said that it was an unfortunate fluke that both bunnies had two different terminal disease processes going on at the same time and that none of it showed up in the blood tests.”

“Mischief was suddenly unwilling to eat; I rushed him to Dr. Stahl but he didn’t respond to medical care and kept deteriorating during the day. He died in my arms at the vet’s that evening. Postmortem showed probable cause of death to be a ruptured liver.”

“Jerry and I knew we had to have this done because we have two more rabbits at home.... I am comforted somewhat by the fact that Thomas did indeed have something that explained his sudden demise.... We can only learn from it, and rabbit research needs the information postmortems provide.”

Our deep appreciation goes to all who wrote to share their experiences, feelings, and findings.



Final Arrangements

by Jennie Langdon

In the grief of having just lost a rabbit, choosing final arrangements can be a challenge. Experience has shown that veterinarians are not familiar with all the options in our area. It is better to inform yourself and choose before the need is immediate. Any of the following choices is possible even if you choose to have a cosmetic post-mortem done.

- Burial on your property; check with your county Animal Control office about legality, although these laws are rarely enforced. Before choosing this option, consider that you might move in the future; what would you do then with your rabbit's final resting place?
- Burial at a pet cemetery. Some are owned and managed commercially, as adjuncts to human cemeteries or as separate entities; others are run by humane societies.
- Cremation, either individual or group, with several additional choices, such as:
 - having the body picked up at the veterinarian's office or your home
 - taking the body to the crematory yourself
 - participating, any way you wish to, in the process of individual

cremation, which takes about two hours

You can either purchase or provide a casket or urn. Even a pretty tea tin, about 4.5" x 3.5" x 3.5", is sufficiently spacious for the cremated remains of a ten-pound rabbit. You can purchase a memorial marker or headstone and have it engraved. You can have ashes scattered, or scatter them yourself.

You can also choose to leave the body at the veterinarian's office for final disposal. None of these choices is either right or wrong. The one that meets your own emotional needs and your budget and gives you a sense of peace is the correct one.

Look in the yellow pages under both "Pet Cemeteries & Crematories" and "Cemeteries" to find the services near you. Call offices; visit cemeteries; ask about pre-need arrangements (choosing and financing ahead of time). There are differences among the entries listed for our area in availability of service, timing, cost, and willingness to meet any individual requests that are important to you.

May you have a long and happy togetherness with your rabbit, and may you have chosen final arrangements before the day you need them. ☹

Thanks to the following Special Friends who donated \$24 or more to help the rabbits:

JOYCE E. AIVALOTIS
KIMBERLY J. ANDERSON
JEANETTE CERTANO
VICTORIA CLEMENTS
COLLEEN COUGHLIN
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MARA HURWITT
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PATRICIA KING
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TOM & CHERYL KUCSERA
JESSICA MICHAEL
JOYCE A. MULLINS
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
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CONSTANCE TJOUMAS
UNITED WAY
BEVERLY WEINSTEIN
WILEY REIN & FIELDING, LLP
JEAN E. YOUNG

Special thanks to the following veterinarians who provided discount services, making it possible for us to rescue many needy rabbits:

BLUE RIDGE VETERINARY ASSOCIATES
BROOKEVILLE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
FALLS ROAD ANIMAL HOSPITAL
24-HOUR SHOCK TRAUMA
FALLSTON VETERINARY HOSPITAL
KENTLANDS VETERINARY HOSPITAL
KINGSBROOKE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
OLD FARM VETERINARY HOSPITAL
RIDGE LAKE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

We also thank the chapter members who bunnysat for other members and, instead of payment, requested that they donate to the chapter.

Rabbit Catalog

Season's Greetings!

Those happy moments spent with our companion animals seem to have even more meaning now, reminding us that no matter what happens in this world, our rabbits and others like them will always need our help. So we have put together a little Rabbit Catalog for you. The items on these pages include some that are familiar and others that are new. All purchases will help our chapter to continue rescuing, rehabilitating, and rehoming shelter rabbits into carefully screened homes, giving them happy lives in a permanent situation. All proceeds will directly impact the lives of rabbits in need.

Won't you show your pride in your companion rabbit by ordering today? Simply fill out the order form and mail it in with your check or money order. You can expect shipment within three weeks. Then you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you're helping rabbits. And, oh yes: it's also a good time to renew your membership and to join our Volunteer Network.

Many thanks for your continued support. *Hoppy Holidays!*

Kathleen Wilsbach, Manager
Maryland/DC/Northern Virginia Chapter
House Rabbit Society

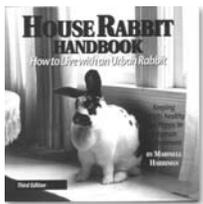


Rabbits 2003 Calendar
Photos by
Mimi Cotter
NYC HRS

\$12.60



Red Button \$1



House Rabbit Handbook by Marinell Harriman, 3rd Edition. Understanding, appreciating, and caring for rabbits: health care, litterbox training, diet, exercise, toys, and behavior. **\$10**



Nail-Trimming and Handling
A gentle technique, simple and straightforward, without trancing or restraining. VHS Video by NYC HRS, 38 min. **\$20**

Your First House Rabbit

A vital resource for immediate and continuing reference. VHS Video by Marinell Harriman, 40 min. **\$20**



Introducing Rabbits

Introducing pairs, adding to a group, and how-to's for friendships with cats, dogs, and guinea pigs. VHS Video by Marinell Harriman, 30 min. **\$20**



Shaping Your Rabbit's Space: THE FINE ART OF INTEGRATING LIFESTYLES. Inventive solutions and thoughtful ideas for practical cohabitation with a rabbit. By Marinell Harriman. Indicate Video, Video CD, or CD for Mac, 10 min. **\$14**

Knowing Your Rabbit's Routines: WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHEN TO WORRY. Creating routines to help with training and using them as monitors of health and well-being. By Marinell Harriman. Indicate Video, Video CD, or CD for Mac, 10 min. **\$14**



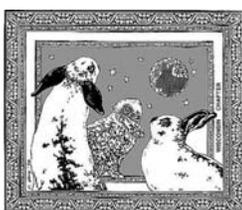
A Rabbit's Place is in the House

Artwork by Lara Byers, MD/DC/NoVA HRS. Forest Green. T-shirt: 100% cotton, available in S M L XL 2X 3X. **\$15**
Sweatshirt: 90% cotton/10% poly, available in M L XL **\$25**

Rabbit Activist T-shirt

Artwork by Laura-Lynn Renner, MD/DC/NoVA HRS. Small HRS national logo on front. Text on back introduces HRS and gives 10 facts about rabbits. Designed to be read by a person standing in back of you. White. Available in S M L XL **\$15**

NEW!



Bunny in the Moon T-shirt

Artwork by Carolyn Long, WI HRS, illustrates the Eastern folk tale of the rabbit in the moon. White with blue sky around moon. Available in S M L XL 2X. **\$15**

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY



A Rabbit's Place Is in the House Magnet \$2

NEW!



Buy a Bunny a Little Time Bumper Sticker \$1

Poster 1' x 3' \$10

Everything I Need to Know I Learned from my Bunnies



- Meditate and reflect on life frequently
- Be selective about who you let touch you.
- Snuggle and kiss with your beloved often
- Digest the newspaper daily
- Eat a good share of fresh vegetables and fruit each day
- Kick up your heels once in a while!
- Be curious about everything in life
- Keep yourself well-groomed at all times and don't forget to wash your ears
- Avoid those who growl at you
- Never take yourself too seriously
- No matter where you live, you can make it homey and fun with a little rearranging of things
- When frustrated or angry, play with your toys, throw some sand or get someone to hold you

Owned by a Rabbit Picture-Frame Magnet \$3



NEW!



A Rabbit's Place is in the House Bumper Sticker \$1

Order Form

Ship to:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State ____ ZIP _____
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If you are not currently a member of House Rabbit Society, we invite you to join! See Membership Area below.

(in case we need to contact you about this order; your info will not be shared)
 Mail to: House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 50311, Baltimore, MD 21211

Item	Size	Quantity	Price Each	Total Price

Would You Like to Become a Member of HRS?
Is Your Membership Current? Has Your Address Changed?

Rabbit Catalog
 Total \$ _____
Prices include sales tax.

Is it your TIME TO RENEW? Please check the expiration date on your mailing label. If your membership has expired, please renew by filling out the form below.

I'd like to become a member of HRS! / Please change my mailing address to:

Name _____ Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

- Local and National HRS membership\$26 Local HRS membership\$8
 National HRS membership\$18 Must also be a national member

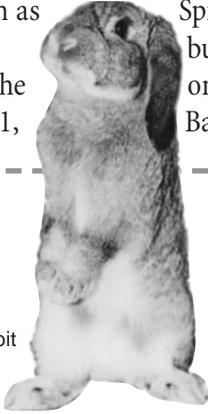
Members receive the *House Rabbit Journal*

Total Remittance for Rabbit Catalog and Membership \$ _____

Make check or money order payable to **House Rabbit Society**

HOP TO IT!

You can become more active in House Rabbit Society by joining our chapter's Volunteer Network. As a member of the Volunteer Network you will learn more about House Rabbit Society goals and activities by working directly with chapter veterans. Volunteer activities include assisting with foster rabbit care, fundraising, community outreach, newsletter production, and chapter activities such as Spring Fling and Fall Festival. To join the Network, please e-mail Volunteer Coordinator Nicole Koller at bunerabbit@comcast.net, call 410/889-4104, go to our Website www.rabbitsinthehouse.org and fill out the online volunteer form, or fill out the form below and mail it to House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 50311, Baltimore, MD 21211.



If you would like to volunteer, check all that apply:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet Expos/public events (staffing education tables) | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Hosting and organizing social events | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic design projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driving rabbits between MD, DC and NoVA | <input type="checkbox"/> Bunnysitting | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Mailing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bonding rabbits | <input type="checkbox"/> Fostering | <input type="checkbox"/> Classes and/or seminars | <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Hosting rabbit matches | <input type="checkbox"/> Distributing literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with shelters |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Assisting fosterers with rabbit care |

THANKS!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
 Phone _____ E-mail _____

I would also like to make a donation of \$ _____ Make check payable to House Rabbit Society

MAIL TO: HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 50311, BALTIMORE, MD 21211

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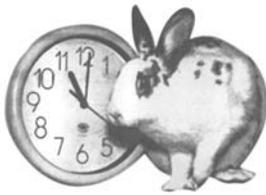
wasn't taking care of him anymore. Bart, a sweet lop who is now 6 years old and has been solo all his life, has been in HRS foster care in Seattle ever since. He can be seen on that chapter's Web page of adoptable rabbits, although now that he is entering senior age, his chance of being adopted is reduced.

Mercedes was adopted from us by a woman who then moved to Indiana, married, had a baby, and no longer wanted the beautiful, six-year-old, chin-chilla-colored Mercedes. Hearing that the new HRS chapter in Indiana was being asked to take in an older returned rabbit originally from our chapter, Kathleen discussed the situation with

our former Fostering Director, **Kate McGinley**, who had also moved to Indiana. Kate then adopted Mercedes! Even as we face the distressing problems of rabbits returned to us, sanctuary rabbits, and rabbits adopted from us and then dumped in other parts of the country, Kate's words give us reason to smile: "Mercedes is fantastic; she gets along great with Ziggy and Miles. After a couple of months, I just took down the barrier and they were an old married trio right off the bat. She is very loving and sweet. I'm sure she could jump over the barrier that contains the boys and her, but she doesn't. I think she is just happy, you know?"

Wishing You
 and
 Your Rabbits
 Happy and
 Safe Holidays!





BUY A BUNNY A LITTLE TIME

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY
P.O. Box 50311
Baltimore, MD 21211

INSIDE

Geena's Legacy

What Do Rabbits See?

Postmortems

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Origin of the Word "Bunny"



We can only guess at the origin of "bunny." *Bun* was an English dialect word, recorded from the sixteenth century, which was used for a squirrel or rabbit. It seems that the word turned into the endearment *bunny* in the following century, and only later was it transferred back to the rabbit. There is a suggestion that the word may have originally referred to the small tail of the rabbit, in the same way that a tight coil of hair at the back of the neck was also called a *bun*, because both were roughly the shape and size of the cake. Others argue that the origin was the Gaelic word *bun* that meant a stump or root, and which could refer to the tail of a hare. But neither origin explains why it was applied to a squirrel, whose tail looks rather different. But then, we don't know for sure where the word *bun* in the sense of the cake comes from either, so it's all quite obscure.



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