Growing A Bunny Garden

When I think about rabbits in the garden, images of Mr. MacGregor waving his shovel like a mad man and Peter Rabbit scurrying away in his little blue vest come to mind. As country dwellers, my husband and I spent several weekends last spring building a large bunny-proof and deer-proof fence around our vegetable and strawberry garden.

It worked wonderfully. Of course, it should surprise no one who knows me that, as soon as we completed the project, I felt horrible for keeping the deer and rabbits out! So much to the delight of local neighborhood cottontails, we scattered carrot, spinach, and parsley seeds in the open field out back to grow into vegetables for our country critters to enjoy.

Whether you live in the country, the 'burbs, or the city, you can still have a little patch of leafy vegetables for you and your rabbit family to enjoy. Check out these gardens from two HRS members…in town and in the country!

Bunny Garden in the City

by Kathleen Wilsbach

The thing that excited me the most about moving from an apartment to a house with a yard was the opportunity to garden, not just for myself but also for the rabbits who share my home. Our Baltimore rowhouse has a fairly small backyard (15' x 40'), which consists of a few beds and a grassy lawn, but there is still plenty of room to plant some of our favorite vegetables and herbs and space for the rabbits to have a good romp.

With several exercise pens joined together, the rabbits can nibble grass and keep me company while I am working in the yard or sitting on our deck. However, like any homeowner who dreads dragging out the lawn mower, I have been disappointed with the small dent the rabbits make in the amount of mowing required!

The lawn is bordered by two beds that form an L shape. One is about 3 feet by 7 feet and one is 1.5 feet by 4 feet wide. There are a few shady spots that are filled with non-edible plants...
and flowers, but my true joy comes from focusing on the sunny beds, where I can grow plants for the rabbits to eat that I can’t find at the local market. One of their favorites is pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans*. The 4-inch plants that I plant in spring are usually 4 feet high by the end of the summer! The leaves are not fuzzy like regular sage, and, when crushed, they give off a wonderful, sweet pineapple scent. At the end of the season, they have delicate (and the rabbits think delicious) tube-shaped red flowers. Pineapple sage is an annual in our climate, so I have to buy new plants each year at the Farmer’s Market in Baltimore City.

Rabbits love the flavor of celery, but the celery available in most supermarkets (standard Pascal type) can be pasty, dangerously stringy, and devoid of flavor and nutrients. The part that the rabbits like best is the leaves, and they are often cut off before the celery reaches the store. Celery requires a long growing season and does not grow well in hot, dry summers. Since the hot and dry parts of our summer often start as early as June, growing your own celery is challenging in Maryland. Most amateur gardeners do not even attempt it.

Fear not, there are some very good substitutes. I have several bunnies that will swear by a perennial called lovage, *Levisticum officinale*, which looks a bit like celery, but is much easier to grow. I planted it three years ago, and each year the plant comes back bigger and more robust. Last year for the first time, I tried a variety called Afina cutting celery. Cutting celery looks like flat-leaved parsley but is loaded with celery flavor and tastes great in salads. Although this plant is an annual that needs to be replanted every spring, if you are careful when taking your cuttings, it can be harvested well into the fall.

The bunnies also enjoy several varieties of basil, but I have the best luck growing the regular sweet Italian basil. Be sure to cut off the buds before it flowers to keep it growing strong all summer.

As well as herbs, I also grow a few vegetables. To speed results, I buy most of my vegetables as plants, but there are a few things that are easiest grown as seeds sown directly in the ground. Several kinds of fancy lettuce mixes can be harvested by scissors and then allowed to grow again. Lettuce, like celery, is very sensitive to heat. To get a decent harvest, you must plant very early. I try to plant before or around March 15. When the weather becomes hot, the lettuce “bolts” (grows long stems and flowers). Most humans consider this stage of lettuce bitter and inedible. Usually, rabbits still like it, but the plants don’t last too long after this point.

Peas are another plant that must be sown very early. Although starchy peas are not recommended rabbit food, rabbits do enjoy flat snow peas. Since peas grow as a vine and need support, I grow mine in a row along my chain-link fence and put the lettuce in front of it. The lettuce benefits from the shade of the vines and, if you eat the peas yourself, your rabbits will really enjoy the pea vines!

When your early crops start to die from the heat, you can put something else in their place for the remainder of the season. I like to start peppers or tomatoes in pots and then transplant them into the former early-vegetable bed. Some of my other favorites are edible flowers—nasturtiums, snapdragons, and sweet peas.

I don’t use any chemicals, so the bunnies can enjoy some weedy edibles like the flowers and leaves of dandelions and clover. It’s even possible to buy clover seed for your lawn from the Landreth seed company. Broadleaf plantain is a low-growing weed with large leaves that is another bunny favorite. Indian strawberries are also tasty bunny snacks. *Duchesnea indica* is a perennial vine with leaves similar to strawberries. The flowers are yellow with red fruit. It spreads rapidly in thin turf by means of both rhizomes and stolons. The fruit resembles a strawberry but is tasteless and dry. You can find photos of these and other weeds at: http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/weeds/.

These are but a few of the many herbs, weeds, and vegetables that your rabbit friends can enjoy. By the time the bunnies are finished weeding, mowing, and harvesting in my little city garden, they are ready for a nice long nap on the lawn. Time to grab the lawn chair, a lemonade, and a bunny or two and catch some zzzzz’s. 🤔

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This works to a degree for the lettuce plants, too. If you don’t cut the lettuce heads too low, the plants will sprout a second round of little side shoots of lettuce leaves. With Black Seeded Simpson, you can cut it back every few days and it will grow again very quickly.

For the bunnies, I grow parsley, carrots, beets (yellow, red, and striped for my amusement), different radishes, colorful chard, spinach, leaf beets, broccoli, collards, kohlrabi (I love to eat the bottom; the greens are for the bunnies), kale, wheat grass, and several varieties of lettuce. Again for my amusement, the lettuces are often different colors and shapes and in pots instead of being grown into veritable mountains over the winter in my backyard. Being owned by six bunnies and usually fostering at least three additional bunnies for our local HRS chapter, our household produces plenty of bunny manure mixed with hay and woodstove pellets. The conditioning of the soil requires a bit of hard work and time, but I enjoy it and am usually accompanied by several bunnies in pens frolicking in the yard and our dog, who is convinced I am out there only to entertain her. She has a tendency to put her ball right behind me when I am digging, just to remind me of my duty to throw it for her as often as possible.

If I do not get around to double digging every bed, I leave a couple to the weeds and encourage dandelions, narrow- and broad-leaf plantain, and tall grass, as well as chickweed, to grow. These weeds are harder than any of the veggies and will sprout very early in spring after the frosts have passed. My bunnies enjoy them and, according to German rabbit books, these weeds are good for them. Bonus!
My herb patch spills over with different varieties of peppermint, lemon balm, and basil. Along the fence line, I grow several kinds of raspberries: red, yellow, and black. We eat the fruit; the bunnies eat the leaves. A little something for everyone! Raspberry leaves and radish leaves seem to be a special bunny treat. There are four kinds of apple trees in our yard, and the bunnies love the bare branches in the winter and the leafy branches in the summer. The two older trees always need pruning; therefore, the bunnies often have apple branches on their menu.

What I personally love about the bunnies as consumers of my home produced greens, is their enthusiasm for them. My bunnies do not care how my produce looks, and they are not upset like my children if some bugs or snails had a snack before them.

A bunny garden is not as work intensive as a people garden because, as long as you don’t cut plants too low to the ground, many of the plants can be harvested over and over. Also, unless you want to, it is not necessary to start plants every four weeks. A little bit of time and effort results in a great variety of veggies for a small investment throughout the growing season.

Compost for the Garden

In the purest sense, rabbits and the garden are a two-way street. Of course, the rabbits enjoy what comes out of the garden, but the garden also benefits from what comes out of the rabbits! Rabbit poop (aka cocoa puffs, calling cards, gold nuggets, etc.) is a wonderful fertilizer. It is one of the few animal excrements that can be used straight or undiluted without the danger of burning the plants with too much nitrogen. Composting is the art of turning organic waste into a rich soil amendment called humus (not to be confused with hummus, which is a delightful edible made from chickpeas).

The benefits of composting are many:

- Reduce waste sent to landfill.
- Reduce greenhouse gases.
- Reuse organic materials.
- Recycle natural nutrients.
- Improve soil without chemicals.
- Produce rich humus for plants.
- Save money on chemical fertilizers.

Composting is easy. When you think about it, things decompose naturally without intervention. The tricks of composting are simply to make things decompose faster. A perfect mixture of material by weight consists of 50 percent brown (carbon-based) material and 50 percent green (nitrogen-based) material. Most recommended litters for rabbits, like recycled newspaper and uneaten hay, are compost-friendly carbons. Rabbit urine, although not green, is very nitrogen rich. So a soiled litterbox containing [insert your favorite slang for rabbit poop here] contains both of these essential components for a balanced compost pile. Add the vegetable leavings and things really get cooking!

Be sure to keep the pile moist by adding water. The organisms need water to survive, but not too much or you will exclude all the air. The ideal moisture level of your compost pile should be like that of a wrung-out sponge. CareFresh litter soaks up a lot of water, so you will need to keep a close eye on the moisture level of your compost pile.

Composting can be done in several ways. If you have space, you can simply pile all your material in a big heap and turn it with a pitchfork. The bacteria will work faster when provided with air, which is why turning the pile speeds things up. As long as you provide enough air, the organisms will work aerobically. This process does not smell. However, if the bacteria begin to work without air, anaerobically, the odor can be unpleasant. Turn your pile often and the decomposition is surprisingly odorless. Your neighbors will thank you.

You can build a simple bin out of pallets to keep it more contained. If space is at a premium (as it is in many small city yards), you can use a plastic commercial container. Gardener’s Supply sells pyramid composters. They have a large top opening for depositing raw material and a smaller door in the bottom for removing the finished product. A special aerating tool will speed things along. A bin should be between 3’ x 3’ x 3’ and 5’ x 5’ x 5’. A bin that is too small cannot retain enough heat. If the bin is too large, it won’t get enough air to the center of the pile.

Once your compost has decomposed and is a dark rich color, it is ready to use. Mix it into your garden beds in the spring for added nutrients or make a compost “tea” by adding water to it in a bucket to pour around established plants and bushes for a good jump start to the growing season. If you have a large enough supply, you can use it as a nutrient-rich mulch all season long. Don’t forget to thank your rabbit companions for their contributions to the garden. Rabbits have a sense of duty, too!
Chapter Update

World of Pets Expo
The year started off on a good note with our annual staffing of a booth at the World of Pets Expo in Timonium, MD. This year, we teamed up with the Metropolitan Guinea Pig Rescue. A lot of our members stopped by to say “hi” and buy supplies and gifts for their rabbits. We provided a lot of free information to people new to the care of rabbits. Our volunteer foster rabbits who helped at the booth were a big hit, creating an interest in several people to submit adoption applications. Thanks to Faye Levine and Jackie Hill, for helping with setup. Thanks to Debbie Guidry, Monnica Felix, Judi Lainer, Becky Piercy, Debbie Kenny, Laurie Kuhn, Wendy Spey, Jodi Robertson, Patricia Flynn, Laura-Lynn Renner, Katrina Wagner, Kathleen Dunleavy, Kathleen Wilsbach, and Lisa Mock for staffing the booth and their help in making this event successful.

Central Veterinary Conference East
We were very pleased to have been invited to have a booth at the first-ever Central Veterinary Conference (CVC) East in Baltimore. HRS was invited as the only nonprofit because of our respected reputation as a National Organization. This was a general, not exotic, veterinary conference. Many veterinarians stopped by to discuss rabbit care. Some rarely see rabbits in their practice. They returned home with more knowledge of rabbit care and plenty of information to hand out to their clients. Thanks to the volunteers: especially Tonya Penkrot and Emil Volcheck, who took time off from work to set up the booth, and Judi Lainer, Laurie Kuhn, Jodi Robertson, Christine Luehman, Diane Reich, Wendy Spey, Kathleen Wilsbach, and Becky Piercy, who spent their time educating the conference attendees. This show was the debut of our new booth design. Thanks to Wendy Spey for building the new PVC display wall. We expect to be invited back again next year for the second annual CVC East. The show organizers were very happy with the attendees’ response to our presence.

Annapolis Kicks into High Gear!
We’ve had a wonderful upsurge in interest from Annapolis HRS members in being involved and volunteering. We had a small organizational meeting with the people who had contacted us to meet in person and discuss some ideas. Barbara Fuechsel hosted the event at her lovely home in Harwood. In attendance were Cindy Haywood, Anne McConnell, Cheryl Gregory, Melissa Soucy, Monnica Felix, and Kathleen Wilsbach. Cheryl Gregory has volunteered to be our new supply-selling location in the Annapolis area. We also have a couple of potential new foster homes in the area.

Anne Arundel County SPCA Walk for the Animals
Cindy Haywood and Monnica Felix accepted responsibility for organizing our table for the Anne Arundel County SPCA Walk for the Animals on April 30. They did a great job staffing the table and were joined later by Kathleen Wilsbach, who came straight from a California red eye flight and the National HRS board meeting. At the very end of the day, we were also joined by former HRS adopter Amy Hoch, who had been promoting the AA SPCA rabbits for adoption at the SPCA mobile adoption vehicle.

Humane Society of Harford County’s Picnic with Your Pet
Laurie Kuhn and Kit Hudgins spent a rainy afternoon on April 8 at the Humane Society of Harford County’s Picnic with Your Pet event. Even though the weather did not cooperate, they were able to answer many questions on rabbits as family pets, hand out HRS information, and increase awareness of the state of rabbits in local shelters.

Easter and Other Events
Chris Brannon and Kay Bannon did an education table at the Meadowside Nature Center’s Easter event on April 14. This is the second year that HRS has been invited to attend. Having a live rabbit there always attracts the kids and their parents. Nicky Robertson and Karen Gurneck (formerly of San Diego HRS)
staffed the HRS booth at the Arlington Animal Welfare League’s Walk for the Animals on May 13. Chris and Carla Picket had a table at For Pet’s Sake Open House on May 13 in Middletown, MD. For Pet’s Sake sells natural pet foods and supplements. Chris Brannon had an education table at the Frederick County Animal Shelter’s Open House on Sunday, May 21.

New Additions

We want to welcome two new additions to our membership family. Matt and Tracey Hill welcomed a baby girl, Sarah, to their family at the end of February. Amber and Drew Elburn welcomed a baby girl, Peyton, to their family in March. Congratulations to both families!

Fundraising

Since Amber was busy with her new family, she was not able to organize our Easter Candy Sale this year. Thanks go to Lisa Mock for jumping in at the last minute to make the fundraiser a success. We raised over $1,000 to help support our chapter rabbits. The big seller this year was Lisa Randle, who sold an amazing $978. Lisa Mock was our second highest seller at $350. Thanks also to participants Jodi Robertson, Wendy Spey, Connie Tjoumas, Noel Diprospero, Angela Blackwell, Bryan and Janelle Jones, Liz DiNorma, Darlene Saudarg, Kathy Winter, and Kathleen Wilsbach.

Chrome for Critters

Chrome for Critters on June 10 was a two-part awareness event starting with an hour-long motorcycle ride that ended at an old car and motorcycle show. Chrome for Critters promoted animal welfare, spay and neuter efforts, and all the good work that local rescue groups do! At the car and motorcycle show, they had space for all participating rescue groups to set up an information booth. There were local vendors, food, live music, a local rock radio station’s DJ, and a Bowie Baysox baseball game. Turnout was not as good as we had hoped because high winds put a damper on the accompanying motorcycle ride. All proceeds from the event were turned into donations to every rescue group or animal welfare group that participated. HRS will receive a portion for our participation. Thanks to Faye Levine and Wendy Spey for getting there early to set up and for cleverly improvising when our display couldn’t stand up to the wind. Thanks also to Cindy Haywood, Cheryl Gregory, Barbara Feuchsel, and Kathleen Wilsbach for staffing our booth.

Baron’s K9 Country Store Annual Second Anniversary Bash

The House Rabbit Society was invited by Stacy Duffy-Martin, owner of Baron’s K9 Country Store in Bel Air, to set up an information booth at their Second Annual Anniversary Bash on Saturday, June 23. Although the forecast looked bleak, the big rain held off until the function was over. Even though it was mainly a gathering of dog owners, several people came up to the booth to ask about rabbits and rabbit care. There were even a few people who spoke of having both dogs and rabbits living in harmony in their own households. The most popular pieces of literature handed out discussed having rabbits, dogs and cats all under one roof. Phil and Laura-Lynn Renner set up the booth with HRS material on one end of the table and Noah’s Wish information on the other. Laura-Lynn and Phil took the opportunity to talk about what you can do to prepare your rabbits in the event of evacuation as well as to discuss the nine rabbits that our chapter brought into our foster care system from Noah’s Wish after Hurricane Katrina. They also handed out copies of the most recent HRS newsletter and the Pet Evacuation Preparedness information put out by Homeland Security.

Passing of a Dear Friend

At the end of June, we lost our dear Easter girl. After injuring her back, she went into G1 stasis and we couldn’t get her eating again. But we really want to remember her, not for her medical issues, but her sweet, sweet personality. Easter was the only rabbit I’ve ever had who would run up to you to be picked up and kissed. She could never get enough petting, so I am very glad that Wendy took her in and gave her lots of couch time and kisses. Wendy did a wonderful job taking care of Easter, although I know Wendy thinks she got the best part of the deal. I just wish they could have had more time together. Easter is also survived by her harem of boys (Aristotle, Bailey, and Emanon), who did have time to say goodbye to her.

National News

Since serving on the National HRS board since 2003, our Chapter Manager, Kathleen Wilsbach, has been elected to serve as President of the National HRS for this year! Congratulations, Kathleen! Marinell Harriman will continue to serve on the board. Mary Cotter of NYC HRS is serving as Vice-president. Margo DeMello continues to handle the financial and many of the administrative responsibilities for the National HRS.

Adoption News

We are always looking for a central location to hold our rabbit adoption events. Thanks to Connie Tjoumas for allowing us to invade her house many times. We also thank Diane Reich for providing space at Biocoustics for our larger matches. We could not have these events without them.

So far this year, we have had fourteen adoptions, which have allowed us to take fourteen rabbits into fos-
nally adopted after almost two years in foster care, was returned when his adopter died unexpectedly. Luckily, McTavish was able to return to his original foster home, so we were able to spare him some stress after all he had just been through. We hope he finds a new permanent home soon.

A large percentage of our adoptions come from people who are looking for companions for their current rabbits. Our volunteers work very hard on these bondings to ensure the match is a successful one. As a result of these volunteers’ hard work, many of our rabbits and their new partners get to experience living “happily-ever-after.” If you have room in your home for another rabbit, please consider allowing your rabbit to participate in our “dating service.”

**Sanctuary Rabbits**

HRS remains committed to taking back and providing lifelong care for any rabbit that we originally rescued and adopted out. These Sanctuary rabbits were featured in our newsletter two issues ago. As mentioned, we have taken in a few more since then and are now caring for a dozen such rabbits. Seven of these rabbits are now over nine years old and are doing quite well for elderly rabbits.

Contessa currently has the most severe health problems. She came to us as an amputee, missing one of her front legs from an earlier bout with bone cancer. She did very well getting around on three legs, but, with age, her arthritis has caused her increased mobility problems. We are providing her with arthritis management care, including medication and chiropractic and acupuncture treatments. Recently, these treatments have become less effective and Contessa is currently spending a lot of her time prone and unable to lift herself to a standing position. We hope to change this very shortly with the purchase of a special cart, which will help support her weight so she can once again get around. Luke is enjoying good health, but still requires periodic molar trims and a soft food diet. His partner, Kira, is currently not taking antibiotics; her upper respiratory symptoms appear to be under control.

**Girl Scouts Deliver... Cookies? No, a Condo!**

Two of our Sanctuary rabbits, Fergus and Guinevere, who live with Judi Lainer, were on the receiving end of a beautiful condo specifically designed for them, courtesy of Emmeline Burton (daughter of HRS member and adopter Laurel Wannow) and Christine Handy, both are Cadettes from Reston, VA Girl Scout Troop 3200.

The girls built the condo themselves and delivered it on April 15. It has doors that open to the second and third levels in case of emergency and for cleaning purposes. The 100-percent cotton carpets are removable for washing. The condo is on wheels so it can be easily moved to approximately half in planning, on a project chosen in or outside of Girl Scouting, one which must reflect some aspect of community service. We are thrilled that they picked the House Rabbit Society for their project. The troop also made a generous monetary donation to our rabbits!

**Shelter Volunteers**

We have many members volunteering at local shelters in their area. These members keep us informed of the rabbits in the shelters. They also disseminate rabbit care information and improve the life of the rabbits while they are in the shelter. Two of our newest shelter volunteers are Lisa and Nevin Randle, who take rabbits from the Humane Society of Harford County EVERY weekend to off-site locations, where they have a table to help get rabbits adopted. They also educate the public about proper rabbit care and adoption and give out House Rabbit Society literature.

**Without volunteers, there would be no HRS**

Our HRS chapter is an ALL-volunteer organization. ALL our volunteers who help us in ways both large and small are the reason we are able to do all that we do to help rabbits. Please take a look at our Clover Leaf Classifieds on page 16 in this issue. If you don’t see a job description that fits your talents, don’t be discouraged. Please contact us to discuss other possible ways you can use your talents to help rabbits! 🐰
“I’m pregnant!”
You’ve taken the test. You’ve seen the pink lines.
You’ve taken the test again. And again. And those pink lines are still there.
It’s true! You’re pregnant! And you’ve got bunnies! Uh, oh... hang on—what does the big news mean for your bunny friends?
The birth of a new baby is one of the biggest changes that anyone can experience. Everything changes! But that doesn’t mean that your rabbits can no longer be a part of your soon-to-expand family. You’re adding to your family, not taking away!

Pregnancy
The most important thing that you can do is to remember to ask for help. Hook up with a family member or a friend or neighbor who is willing to give you a hand when you need it. Be sure to do this early in your pregnancy, because you never know when your pregnancy is going to become a source of frustration when dealing with everyday things. There will be many folks around looking to help you with baby things, so finding someone that’s going to be more focused on helping you with your animals is a good idea.

In the first trimester, you’ve just jumped onto the hormonal roller coaster. In addition to crying for no reason, “morning” sickness (that might last all day!) and fatigue are just two of the potential early symptoms that might make caring for your furry friends a challenge during the first few months. If you’ve got a significant other in your life, it’s easy to ask that person to help you out if suddenly the smell of cilantro makes you run for the bathroom with the queasies. If you’re going it alone, you might need to make some adjustments to feeding (how about parsley instead of cilantro?) or to scheduling (clean out the litter boxes in the morning when you’re feeling better, rather than in the evening when fatigue has you asleep on the couch).

During the second trimester, most women feel better, so you might not need to call on your helper as much, but, during the third trimester, your expanding girth can make even the simplest tasks a Herculean effort. By the time you’re approaching your due date, you can’t see your feet, you can’t bend over... heck, you can’t even go up a flight of stairs without taking a rest! This is the time during your pregnancy when it’s going to be most important to have a support system to help you with your animals.

Don’t wait until you’re struggling or getting overwhelmed before you start looking for someone to assist you. In addition to the everyday stresses and strains of pregnancy, bear in mind that you might be hit with the unexpected at any time, like being put on bed rest.

Oh, Baby!
The blessed event has arrived! Your beautiful baby is here! Of course, you’re exhausted, either can’t sit down (normal delivery) or stand up (c-section), have completely lost track of days and nights, and are generally completely overwhelmed.

Now is definitely time to call in all your helpers for assistance with the normal, day-to-day things that you just aren’t going to be able to handle for a while, including helping out with your animals. Don’t use this time right after baby arrives to determine that you can’t handle having pets! Your hormones are still in flux, you are probably getting only 2 hours of sleep at a time, and your world just changed. Hang in there, accept help, and you’ll get through it.

After a while, you’ll realize that life slowly gets back to “normal” — a new normal, but normal nonetheless — and you’ll be able to consider how you’re going to balance things like spending time with baby and spending time with your rabbits. Take some time when baby is napping to hang out with your bunnies and reconnect. When you’re feeding them or changing litter boxes, take an extra few minutes to give them pets and love. Are you going to be able to give them the same amount of attention after baby is born than before? No, probably not. But that doesn’t mean that you can no longer provide them with a loving home. It just means that everyone in the household has to adjust to life with the newest member.

The House Rabbit Society national Web site (www.rabbit.org) has a lot of great information on living with children and rabbits, from tips when bringing baby home to teaching your child to interact with your rabbits. On the home Web site, go to the bottom in the search box and type “children.”

Oh, and by the way... something that you might want to consider when choosing a baby gate: Should the baby gate just keep the baby out? Or should it also keep the rabbits in? It only took my dear Phoebe about a minute to remind me that these are two very different questions.

When all is said and done, the fact is that, since James arrived, my rabbits (and cats) can no longer be the center of my universe. They are, however, still a very important part of our family, and I want James to grow up with that experience.
Rabbit Digs

by Michelle Wilhelms

It is twirling around the room, leaping and dancing, makes you laugh. His little butt twitching as he devours a fresh piece of banana is most adorable. His sleeping so soundly makes you smile and wish you could sleep so contentedly. But when your rabbit takes a nibble out of your favorite chair or digs intently at your oriental rug, you cringe. You may send him away with a loud clap only to watch him sneak back just moments later to reassert his intentions.

There is no doubt rabbit behavior can be frustrating and very trying to us mere mortals. When faced with “destructive” rabbit behavior, some people resort to giving away their pet rabbit or banishing him to a cage, garage, or yard. Some even declaw their rabbit, a debilitating surgery that can cause permanent damage and disability.

How do we stop these unwelcome behaviors? First, let’s look at why rabbits do what they do.

Rabbits are rabbits. They enjoy a good dig and a challenging chew; it’s their nature. In the wild, rabbits dig and burrow underground, building entire communities beneath us. Gnawing and chewing are also essential to proper rabbit dental care. As San Diego veterinarian Dr. Jeffrey Jenkins states, “The upper and lower incisors (front teeth) of rabbits grow 4 and 5 inches a year, respectively. Similar statistics for cheek tooth growth are not available; however, the rate is significant. In the normal rabbit mouth, biting and chewing of food continually grinds down the teeth, keeping this growth in check and the teeth at stable lengths.”

Digging and chewing, along with other daily exercise, are also an important physical and psychological pleasure for your rabbit. Rabbits who are cooped up in a cage for days on end are more likely to be aggressive and cranky. Rabbits should get out for play time and burn off energy on a daily basis. This will make for a happier, healthier, and friendlier rabbit.

Redirect

How do we survive the destruction our furry friends might cause? You cannot explain to a rabbit not to chew your favorite table leg, but you can redirect his behavior. Redirecting his behavior is the key. Once your rabbit decides the heavy-duty cardboard tunnel you gave him is a good chewing alternative, he is well on his way to being “trained.” Until then, remember he is not being intentionally difficult, he is just hard-wired to chew and dig. And, because rabbits are creatures of habit, be sure not to let an unacceptable behavior go unattended; it will only get worse as Bun develops the bad habit. As soon as he starts nibbling on the couch or table leg, clap your hands or remove him from the area and give him something else to do to help him develop a different habit.

If Bun is particularly stubborn, you may have to block off or cover a problem area for a period of time to break the habit. But be sure to figure out a different way to keep him busy and entertained.

Too much freedom is also a common element with extremely destructive rabbits. Make sure he has some time in a large cage or pen to help with training. Rabbits learn by repetition, so the more consistent you are with him, the faster he will pick up the behavior you want. Develop a daily routine for him. Despite the popular “dumb bunny” phrase, rabbits are actually quite intelligent. It is up to their human caretakers to understand their needs and provide appropriate alternatives.

Bunny-proofing

Although most rabbits tend to chew and dig less as they mature, be prepared for a lifetime of chewing, just in case. You’ll want to train Bun early to chew acceptable items, and you’ll want to bunny-proof your home to save your sanity. Spaying and neutering helps curb the intense destruction that can occur as rabbits go through adolescence, but rabbits will always need a way to exert their energy, a way to be a bunny. Bunny-proofing not only saves your home, but it also can save your rabbit from serious injury or even death. Covering cords and wires is essential to having a safe bunny habitat. There are many cord cover products available at home improvement stores, or you can block access to areas such as those behind entertainment centers where there are a lot of cords. Next, move plants up high and place books and other “chewable” items out of reach. Magazines and baskets lying around will be fair game for your rabbit, so remove them if you don’t want them chewed. Sometimes products like Bitter Apple will work to deter a rabbit from visiting an area, but you need to spray them daily. When redecorating, avoid wicker furniture—a bunny’s paradise!

What does your rabbit want?

Observe your rabbit. Is he a pusher/buncher or a chewer/shredder? Perhaps he just enjoys lying contentedly in a tunnel. Once you have an idea about your rabbit’s favorite behaviors, provide different toys and activities for him just as you would for a cat or dog. Rotate toys to keep him interested and try new toys every so often. Well-placed and interesting toys will keep your rabbit busy for hours. Unfinished

continued on page 14
# Rabbit Supplies Sold by Our Chapter

These items are available only by pickup. Prices include sales tax. Not all items are sold at all locations; please ask ahead of time about availability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hay</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local timothy bales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxbow Timothy, Orchard, 2.5 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxbow Timothy, Orchard &amp; Oat hay, 9 lb box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxbow Timothy and Orchard hay, 25 lb box</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxbow Timothy hay, 50 lb box</td>
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<tr>
<th>Pellets</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oxbow Bunny Basics/ Timothy Pellets, (5 lbs)</td>
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<td>Oxbow Bunny Basics/ Timothy Pellets, (10 lbs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harlan High fiber pellets, (33 lbs)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Special Oxbow Products</th>
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<td>Papaya Tablets 200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papaya Tablets 500</td>
<td>$12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critter Carrots (sugarfree snack)</td>
<td>$4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Care (for syringe-feeding)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Feeding Supplies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crock-Loc Bowl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceramic Crock</td>
<td>$6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Bottle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mini bottle</td>
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<td>24 inches tall</td>
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<td>30 inches tall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slicker Brush</td>
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<td>Metal Loop Brush</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detangler Comb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scissors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nail Clippers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brush</td>
<td>$7</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CareFresh, 50 quarts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eco-Straw (wheat-based), 20 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tek-Chip (pelleted paper), 40 lb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large</td>
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<tr>
<th>Toys</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass mats</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Rings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini chew rings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow bowls</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow balls small</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willow balls large</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basket of Sticks</td>
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<td>Basket with Handles</td>
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<td>Regular Basket</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deluxe Basket</td>
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<td>Grass Balls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willow Tent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cotton tail cottage</td>
<td>$16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critter Castle (Bunny Luv)</td>
<td>$25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunnel of Luv (Bunny Luv)</td>
<td>$10</td>
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</tbody>
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We are grateful to the people who have joined iGive.com and donated to the chapter through their online purchases. Our chapter has already earned more than $300 through iGive! For more information on iGive, see page 20.

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## Our Chapter’s Supply Volunteers

Thank you for supporting HRS by buying rabbit supplies from us. You will find our prices quite reasonable, and the profits go to help rabbits. Supplies are available to chapter members from the following supply volunteers:

### Virginia

- Alexandria: Karen Jones
  - Email: ksmvones@yahoo.com

- Annandale: Barbara Storck
  - Email: shekeinah@yahoo.com

- Centreville: Barbara Miller
  - Email: barbamill4@aol.com

### Maryland

- Annapolis: Cheryl Gregory
  - Email: urggregory@comcast.net

- Baltimore: Kathleen Wilsbach
  - Email: kathleen@rabbit.org

- Bel Air: Jordi Robertson
  - Email: laphanblanc@comcast.net

- Ellicott City: Connie Toumas
  - Email: connie.toumas@verizon.net

- Rockville: Marcus Silvestro
  - Email: rockvilleshed@hotmail.com

### Maryland/PA Border

- Hanover, PA: Lisa Mock
  - Email: lemock@sscom.net

We would still like to establish additional supply locations—especially near Arlington, Reisterstown and Frederick—please contact Kathleen Wilsbach at Kathleen@rabbit.org to discuss details.
Rabbits for Adoption!!!

All rabbits are to be adopted as HOUSE RABBITS only—no exceptions! $60 donation per rabbit or $100 for a pair, plus $18 HRS membership for non-members. Your other rabbits must be spayed or neutered. Pictures of all our foster rabbits can be viewed at our Website www.rabbitsinthehouse.org and at www.petfinder.org.

Families/ Bonded Pairs

**JJADA AND GRAY WILLOW**—Jada is a gorgeous dark brown and white spotted mini-rex girl. She is very busy and friendly. Gray Willows, her daughter, is a sweet grey, silver marten mini-rex. We would like to see them adopted together or as a friend for another rabbit.

**JULIET AND DAISY MAE**—These two girls are both very sweet. Juliet is a little more outgoing than Daisy, but when Daisy gets comfortable with you she really comes out of her shell. Both the girls like to be petted and are friendly. They really want a permanent home this time around.

**MINA AND CHARLIE** are a extremely sweet, very bonded pair. They are shy at first, but once they feel comfortable they love to snuggle. Crazy Charlie is the explorer of the pair and has to check out every nook and cranny of his space. Sweet little Mina is happy to sit back and let her brave man inspect everything. However, once she knows it is safe, she quickly joins Charlie in the all the fun.

**TOMMY AND MARIA** are a very handsome lop pair. Maria is blind in one eye but that does not slow her down. She is a gorgeous larger white lop and Tommy is a beautiful steel grey. While Maria is shy, Tommy loves to be petted and a treat or two are always welcome.

**Males**

**JEREMY** More info: Kathleen Wilsbach

Lazlo is a shy bunny but once he is sure of his surroundings and everything looks safe, he is quite the explorer. He may have been around cats because he does not run when a cat walks by his play area. Lazlo has great litter box habits and would love a home with a bunny friend to show him how great living with a family can be.

**MARTY GRAS**, a white himalayan boy, was rescued in a Petsmart parking lot. He is a party in and of himself. Marty loves people, giving bunny kisses, attention and dancing. What a perfect name for a fun loving bunny!

**McTAVISH** is a big friendly boy. He loves petting and veggies, and will settle in for as long as you care to pet him, or follow you around the room seeking attention. He also has excellent litter box habits. He was adopted a year ago, but sadly had to return to foster care when his owner passed away.

**TORY** had been a stray before he was first brought into foster care, and he was very afraid of people. After several months of rehabilitation, Tory has become friendly. Now he readily lays down to enjoy petting and soft talk. He is sure to become the floortime snuggle rabbit to the person who can give him time, attention, and lots of love.

**TYLER** is a sweet comical dutch boy. He is all about run time, exploring, nose sniffing. He’ll clown around with his toys, just to make you smile.

**Females**

**JUNEBUG**, a white with gray spot hotot, is as cute as a button with a personality to match. One minute she is lounging with happy outstretched feet and the next she is zipping around, checking things out. Junebug looks like she is always humming a happy tune in her head.

**KATRINA** is a very sweet and mellow grey minilop who was surrendered to the shelter. She is quite tolerant of gentle handling. She would be a good choice for a family with gentle children.

**LOUISE**, a large himalayan girl, is affectionate and very, very social. She enjoys cuddle time and pushes her nose through the pen for pets. She loves nothing more than being the center of attention.

**MISSY**, a siamese lop girl, has wonderful litter box habits and is a great hay eater. She is quite the decorator with shredded newspaper and loves snuggle time. She fell asleep in my arms while we were watching football on TV....ok I fell asleep too!

**PEACOCK**

**PEAVY** is a small lop-eared bundle of energy. Her ears did not fall all the way down, so as she runs around the room, her ears stick straight out and she looks like she is ready to take off. She likes to play hide and seek and running in and out of her play boxes, twitching her tail to get you to play along.

**Pebbles** is a small bunny girl with a beautiful chinchilla coat. She lived with people before but a couple of months ago they brought her into an animal shelter. She is still a little on the shy side but does love to be petted. Her litter box habits are good.
Happy Adoption Letters

Pixie...

**letter from Tonya Penkrot**

Thank you again so very much for delivering Pixie!! The poor baby was so frightened... I was beginning to think I wouldn't be able to get her out of the carrier! I put her right into her cage litter box, and she was too afraid to even step out of it before I went to bed. She did manage to very gingerly take a papaya tablet from my fingers, but that's about all the interaction she could manage last night. She must have come out of the litter box during the night, though, and ate her veggies (much to my delight, she is also apparently fond of fresh cilantro!). This morning she is lounging in her litter box still, but is obviously much more at ease. Even though she didn't eat any of it yet, I got a friendly nose-nudge to my wrist when I brought her breakfast pellets!

Thank you again so very much (from Pixie, too)!

[Six days later] The rugs made a huge difference in the sunroom. Not only has she been exploring freely, but I saw her dance (several times!) for the first time. Thanks so much for lending them!

Duchess and Corbett...

**letter from Kelly Miller**

Mike and I actually moved to Saint Louis so that I could enroll in the Grad program in School of Social Work at Washington University. We have a beautiful apartment with tons of spaceso the bunnies have their own room to 'make their own'. Dutchess is doing incredibly wellshe's grown into a relaxed, loving rabbit who is quick to give bunny kisses and even quicker to jump onto the couch to visit us in search of papaya tablets. She still hates to be picked up and will fight her hardest to avoid the inevitable nail trims but we like to think that these “struggles” just add to her character.

Corbett is, in our opinion, the most laid-back rabbit. He loves head rubs and relaxing in the corner of the room and is completely open to pets—even when he's lying down! He's none too fond of being picked up—but, luckily, he's more calm with vet appointments and nail trims than Dutchess. He's also the more curious of the two—when the bunny gate is open, he's the first to hop around, explore, and find the

perfect book to chew on.

We were lucky to find a House Rabbit Society chapter in Saint Louis. It was a great resource for finding vets, cheaper food, and, of course, hay. They're not quite as active as the DC chapter—but they've been a tremendous help for us new Missourians. Mike is currently applying to grad school in Renewable Energy Policy, so it's very likely that we'll be moving yet again in August or so. Hopefully, it will be to a city with another House Rabbit Society chapter! 🐰

Jack (aka Kiefer) and Callie...

**letter from Nicole Cieslick**

Jack and Callie (adopted from the Arlington shelter) are fantastic. The travel freeze we had in place worked wonders for our relationship and I'm now officially part of the “in” crowd. They are still running around like mad playing chase, but unfortunately this activity take place early in the morning... a little too early for me sometimes as they make quite a racket. Also, not sure if you ever saw him do it, but on a rare day not too long ago... Jack did a slightly acrobatic jump in the air... just out of the blue! Had I blinked I would've missed it, but that was definitely a first for me... as far as he's concerned. He's really taken up the role of the “responsible one” and is quite serious although he now regularly waits for me at the gate for his head pats. I love these guys! Callie's great too—she seems to be calming down and when I work from home, we have group petting breaks midafternoon. They both hold still for a good five minutes. Will wonders never cease?!?! 🐰
Rabbits That Can Detect Seizures

by Deborah Miles-Hayt

I had my first inkling that rabbits could detect seizures almost five years ago when a mini lop we named Snickers came to live with us. He was a precious little fellow and he became very attached to me. I soon noticed that, whenever I would experience seizures all day, Snickers would follow me around and not leave me. He’d sit across from me and stare intently at me the whole time, like he was fascinated by the show.

He would even refuse to go play with his playmate Tristan when this would happen. If I lay down, he would jump up on me, give me a good nose-to-nose sniff, hop off, and go lie down nearby, watching me very closely.

It’s rare for me to lose consciousness during a seizure, and I just keep doing whatever I’m doing right through them. Usually when I would have a series of seizures that lasted for more than twenty-four hours, it was due to exposure to fragrance like someone’s perfume or aftershave, but even strong-smelling cleaning products can bring these on. The seizures would begin gradually, say a few hours apart, but then they would start to come closer together until they were seven to ten minutes apart. Then they would gradually get further apart again until they stopped. This whole process usually lasted from twenty-four to thirty-six hours and left me feeling like a limp washcloth. Snickers stayed with me the whole time.

I’m not really sure what Snickers sensed, whether it was visual or an odor or even something else like behavioral clues, but he always knew and he always made sure that he was right there with me throughout. Snickers was never caged because his litter pan habits were so good and he never chewed anything due to severe malocclusion. At night he slept under our bed, but, because I usually go to bed much later than my husband, Snickers would generally go up with him. Not when I was having seizures. He’d stay right with me and go up to bed when I did, no matter how late that was.

Now you might be thinking that this was a fluke, but a couple of years ago, a French lop named Hobbes came to stay with us, and, after a rather rough start, he also became very attached to me. And just like Snickers, he not only noticed when I had seizures, he also followed me around to be with me while I was having them—even following me to the bathroom and staying with me.

What is it that these animals detect that alerts them to the seizure?

Apparently, there has been some debate about this. Though many anecdotal stories about dogs suggest that they can alert their owners before a seizure, there has been little research on how dogs or other animals might detect seizures before or even while they are happening. Some theorize that the dogs may smell a chemical or other scent that is released just prior to a seizure. Others believe the dog’s attachment to his or her owner helps in detecting subtle scent and behavioral changes before a seizure, and still others hypothesize that dogs pick up on electrical cues.

One ongoing study (reported in the January 1999 and January 2001 issues of Seizure) found that dogs could be trained to detect seizures 15 to 45 minutes before an episode began. In most of the reported cases, however, it still seems that this skill is due more to a dog’s personality than it is to something that can be taught.

Dr. Roger Reep, a physiological sciences professor at the University of Florida, and Ms. Deb Dalziel worked together on the study of seizure-alert dogs for the veterinary school there. Dr. Reep said that, of all the theories, the most plausible one is that some dogs can smell a seizure coming.

“Dogs are incredibly better at olfactory detection than we are, and in some [anecdotal] reports, the olfactory odor [of a seizure] rises to the threshold of human detection,” Dr. Reep said. This was completely new information to me because I had never read or heard anything about other people being able to detect an odor change in a person having a seizure.

He added that patients with epilepsy have reported that their dogs were able to detect seizures from other rooms in the house—behavior that could not, of course, depend upon visual or electrical cues.

As it turns out, the ability to alert humans that a seizure is about to occur may have less to do with sense and more to do with attachment. Although no relationship was identified between breed, sex, or age, Dr. Reep and Ms. Dalziel’s study found two factors to be consistent in all the dogs reported to have alerting behavior: a close bond with the owner and an “alert” disposition.

These two characteristics could definitely apply to the two rabbits that could detect my seizures. The first, a close bond with the owner, was definitely there in both of these rabbits. So much so in the case of Hobbes that one occasion when I moaned as my husband rubbed my shoulders, Hobbes came running into the room where we were and climbed up my leg to make sure that I was okay. Once I assured him that I was not being hurt, he settled back down, but he did not leave my side until my husband had left the room. No one was gonna hurt his mama! The second characteristic, having an “alert” disposition, is probably something that is inherent in most rabbits due to their historical position in the food chain.

In short, the real reason or reasons that some animals may be able to detect seizures in people are still unclear, but some of them do. For me, I suspect that odor and closeness are the two most likely reasons for this extraordinary ability.
If your bunny has an infection of any kind—from an upper respiratory infection to a jaw abscess to a urinary tract infection—it’s critical to know which antibiotics will be effective against the particular pathogen (i.e., disease-causing agent) causing the problem. This means that (1) the species (and strain) of bacteria (or other pathogen) must be identified and (2) the drugs most effective at inhibiting their growth must be determined. The only reliable way this can be done is a culture and sensitivity test.

How is a Culture and Sensitivity Test Done?

Your rabbit-experienced vet will take a sample of infected tissue or discharge from the infected area (the capsule of an abscess is the best location from which to take a sample, as the internal pus often contains only dead bacteria that will not grow in culture) and send it in a special culture tube to a licensed laboratory for testing. In the lab, technicians will spread a sample of the infective material onto a plate of nutrient substance (usually agar, a type of gel made from algae) and allow to grow whatever species of bacteria were in the bunny’s infected area.

With a sufficient population of bacteria grown on the plate in the form of a “lawn,” the technicians will perform two main operations:

1. Identify the species of bacteria.

   This is done with various techniques, including examination of lawn characteristics (color, texture, growth pattern, etc.) gram-staining, microscopic examination, metabolic requirement “footprints”, and even DNA sequencing.

   Bacterial species commonly isolated from rabbit infections include Pasteurella multocida, Pseudomonas aeruginosa, Bordetella bronchiseptica, Staphylococcus aureus, and several others, though just about anything might turn up, depending on the location and cause of the infection.

2. Determine the bacterial population’s sensitivity to a range of antibiotics.

   This can be done by placing small disks of filter paper or agar impregnated with various types of antibiotics onto the bacterial lawn. The bacteria are allowed to incubate for a day or two, and then the plate is examined to see whether the bacterial growth is inhibited (or not) by the antibiotics on each disk.

   **Sensitive:** In this case, a clear, circular “halo” (technically known as a “plaque,” or zone of inhibition) will appear around the antibiotic disk, indicating an absence of bacteria. The antibiotic has inhibited their growth and/or killed them, meaning that this particular antibiotic should be effective against the infection your rabbit has.

   **Intermediate:** A somewhat cloudy plaque indicates that not all the bacteria in the area around the disk have been killed. This means that there are some members of the bacterial population that are sensitive to this particular antibiotic, but others that are genetically immune to its effects. If an antibiotic to which the bacteria show “intermediate” sensitivity is used, it is likely that the sensitive members of the bacterial population will be killed, and the resistant ones will survive, resulting in the selection of a population resistant to that particular antibiotic.

   **Resistant:** In this case, the filter paper will have no discernable plaque around it, meaning that the bacteria are growing normally, even in the presence of the antibiotic. An antibiotic producing no plaque will most likely be ineffective against the bacteria causing your bunny’s infection.

   In three to seven days after the sample is taken, your vet will receive the results from the lab, including the species of bacteria and the range of antibiotics to which the bacteria are sensitive (S), resistant (R), and intermediate (I). Again, “sensitive” means that the bacteria were inhibited or killed by that particular antibiotic, and this is what you want to hear.

Choosing and Using the Appropriate Antibiotic

   Note that not all antibiotics are safe for rabbits! Any *oral* penicillins (e.g., amoxicillin, ampicillin, penicillin) or lincosamines (e.g., clindamycin) should be avoided, as they can cause fatal cecal dysbiosis by killing normal, beneficial intestinal microorganisms and allowing dangerous ones to proliferate. Be sure your bunny is seen by a veterinarian who is familiar with the special medical needs of rabbits. If you don’t already have such a vet, you can find one via the list linked at the MD/DC/NoVA House Rabbit Society’s Web page www.rabbitsinthehouse.org.

   Commonly used antibiotics that are safe for rabbits include the fluoroquinolones (e.g., Baytril and ciprofloxacin), sulfas of various types, chloramphenicol, aminoglycosides (e.g., gentamycin, tobramycin, amikacin)—though these are not a first choice as they can be toxic to the kidneys), and injectible Penicillin-G Procaine. It’s critical that the appropriate rabbit-safe antibiotic for the particular infection be prescribed and administered for a course long enough to allow the bunny’s immune system to conquer the infection (with a little bit of help from the antibiotics).

   It can take several weeks of antibiotics (sometimes a combination of two different ones) to get the prob-
tibiotics will likely make the problem worse, not better. Hence, it’s very important to check for fungal species if the culture and sensitivity test comes back negative for bacteria. Completely different medications are needed to control infections caused by fungi.

**Followup: Backtracking to the Cause**

Once an infection is under control, it’s wise to do a bit of detective work and seek possible causes, especially if the condition is chronic. For example, runny eyes and nose or jaw abscesses can be caused by dental problems such as molar spurrs or molar roots extending into the sinuses. This is much more common in older rabbits, but all rabbits should routinely have their molars checked for spurrs, which are not only painful, but potentially dangerous. A tear duct flush will sometimes temporarily stop runny eye problems, but ultimately it is best to do a complete check for molar problems including visual inspection for spurrs and even radiographs to detect molar root infections.

Good care, healthy diet, a happy, calm environment, and your constant vigilance for problems are your bunny’s best bets for a long, healthy, infection-free life. But when even those things fail, it’s good to know there are medications that can help, as long as they’re used wisely, appropriately, and always under the supervision of a good, rabbit-savvy veterinarian.

**Location, Location, Location!**

If your rabbit likes to dig in a specific corner, either block off that area to discourage the behavior altogether or place a digging box or grass mat there so it’s okay for him to dig, dig, dig. Try placing toss toys and a few chewable toys in the areas where he likes to hang out. Also, place a few toys in his cage or run area so, when he is confined, he learns to chew these items. Don’t forget to provide lots of fresh hay. Hay will allow your rabbit plenty of chewing pleasure and will help promote good dental care.

Training your rabbit can be fun for both you and him. You will see new behaviors you never knew existed, and you will get to know him better. He, in turn, will be trained to do what pleases him, in a way that pleases you.

Great rabbit toys and ideas can be found at:

- www.bunnybytes.com
- www.busybunny.com
- www.catsandrabbitsandmore.com/products
- www.forotherlivingthings.com
- www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/behavior/toys.html
- www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/behavior/bunnyproofing.html

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**Why Bother with a Culture and Sensitivity Test?**

One cautionary note. Some veterinarians who are not as experienced with rabbits as they are with cats and dogs will take one look at a rabbit with “snuffles” or other infection and proclaim that the problem is caused by *Pasteurella multocida*. Although this bacterial species is not uncommonly carried by rabbits, please do not let anyone convince you that your rabbit’s problem is caused by *Pasteurella* unless that diagnosis is confirmed via culture and sensitivity test! Not only are some strains of *Pasteurella* resistant to commonly prescribed antibiotics such as Trimethoprim sulfa, Baytril (enrofloxacin) and even ciprofloxacin, but infections in rabbits can also be caused by even more resilient strains of bacteria, such as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and others. Without a culture and sensitivity test to positively I.D. the pathogen, you could not only delay your rabbit’s return to good health, but also be throwing away good money by treating with an antibiotic that is not effective against the particular strain of bacteria your bunny has.

If no bacteria grow at all, then it’s possible that the bunny has a funga! infection. If this is the case, an-
Although no direct scientific link between dietary calcium and an excess amount of calcium excreted in the urine has been proven, many veterinarians are advising clients whose rabbits have urinary/bladder problems to decrease the amount of calcium in their rabbit’s diet.

Calcium is an important mineral for bone growth and maintenance, nerve and muscle function, and blood clotting. However, the minimum daily requirement for calcium of a medium-sized rabbit is about 510 milligrams. This amount of calcium is contained in less than two ounces of commercial pellets or one cup of turnip greens. The percentage of calcium in alfalfa and clover hay is two to five times the amount needed for an adult non-breeding rabbit. Grass hay has a much lower amount of calcium, less than half the amount found in alfalfa and clover hay. Commercial pellets provide more than enough calcium for the average house rabbit and could cause a persistently elevated (“high normal”) level of calcium in the blood. If the amount of calcium excreted in the urine becomes too high, problems may develop.

Calcium metabolism appears to be less complex in rabbits than in many mammals. For rabbits, choosing a lower calcium diet can be as simple as knowing the amount of calcium contained in each food item to determine if it should be restricted or eliminated.

Alfalfa hay is extremely high in calcium and should be replaced with lower calcium hay such as timothy or oat hay. Fruits are low in calcium but high in sugar and should make up a very small part of the diet. Root vegetables such as carrots and radishes are low in calcium. Most greens are comparatively high in calcium, but they are also a very important component of a healthy rabbit diet and should not be eliminated. Broccoli flowers and stem, cilantro, dark leaf lettuce, watercress, Brussels sprouts, celery leaves, cabbage, and endive are good choices when trying to reduce dietary calcium. Turnip greens, broccoli leaves, mustard greens, kale, and collard greens should be restricted or eliminated, depending on the severity of the problem.

Reference


Calcium Content of Raw Vegetables
(per 1 cup serving, unless otherwise noted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Calcium (mg)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peppers, sweet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfalfa sprouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pumpkin leaves</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coriander (cilantro)</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chard, Swiss</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radish seed sprouts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lettuce, Romaine (per 100-g)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squash, zucchini</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem artichoke</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endive</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squash, summer</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asparagus</td>
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<td>Cauliflower</td>
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<td>Purslane</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radishes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eggplant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arugula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand spinach</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohlrabi</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lettuce, looseleaf</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnips</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cress, garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watercress</td>
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<td>Broccoli</td>
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<td>Celery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beet greens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mustard greens</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peas, edible pod</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rutabagas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Celeriac</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese cabbage</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>Parsley</td>
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<td>Borage</td>
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<td>Kale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dandelion greens</td>
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<td>Turnip greens</td>
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<td>Kale, Scotch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chicory greens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collards</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamb’s-quarter</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard spinach</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Volunteer Coordinator. Looking for a people person or persons with good organizational skills. Must like to talk on the phone with other rabbit people. Duties include but are not limited to organizing schedules for large events like Pet Expos, maintaining the volunteer database, contacting volunteers, and matching volunteer talent with chapter needs.

Party Planner. Sound like a fun job? This volunteer would plan and recruit other volunteers to assist with the planning and execution of social/fundraising events for the chapter.

Financial Assistant/Bookkeeping. Assist treasurer Jenifer Hicks with entering and updating chapter financial records. Knowledge of Quickbooks a plus. Software will be provided.

Tax Preparation. Annual preparation of chapter 990 form from data provided by our treasurer. Knowledge of corporate and/or nonprofit tax code a plus. This year for the first time we have hired a professional firm to prepare our taxes but we would much rather be spending that money directly on the rabbits. Also, annual preparation of Maryland State Property Tax form and eventual application for exemption.

Litterbox and Exercise Pen Cleaner—Baltimore City. Assist in the care of Sanctuary rabbits by sweeping up hay and poop, mopping vinyl floors, scooping dirty litterboxes, and then scrubbing and hosing them in the backyard. Additional duties include petting heads and distributing ear...
Rabbit Catalog

Bunny Greetings!

It’s time to start thinking of holiday shopping, and we hope the Rabbit Catalog will help. The items on these pages include some that are familiar and others that are new. Drollery Press, the publisher of the House Rabbit Handbook, is offering new video CDs, and we have license plate holders from the Wisconsin chapter. National HRS is not producing a calendar with Browntrout this year (the publisher doesn’t like to use the same photographer more than two years in a row), but we offer a calendar assembled by the Missouri chapter and sold exclusively by HRS. All purchases from the Rabbit Catalog will help our chapter to continue rescuing and rehabilitating shelter rabbits and placing them into carefully screened homes. 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.

Kathleen Wilsbach, Chapter Manager

Encouraging Your Rabbit to Exercise
Activities That Promote A Bunny’s Fitness
By Marinell Harriman
Beginning with choices of an exercise area, this video explores ways of bringing out rabbits’ natural play behaviors and improving their health through exercise. Video CD; run-time: 10 minutes.
CDs playable on most DVDs. ....................... $14

Planning Your Bunny’s Assisted Living
Ways to Give Special Care to Special-Needs Bunnies
By Marinell Harriman
How to ensure ease of care and quality of life to rabbits with conditions such as a slight limp, splay legs, head tilt, recumbency, limb weakness, paraplegia, etc. on a day-to-day basis.
Video CD; run-time: 10 minutes.
CDs playable on most DVDs. ........................................ $14

Shaping Your Rabbit’s Space: THE FINE ART OF INTEGRATING LIFESTYLES
Indicate Video, Video CD, or CD for Mac, 10 min. ................ $14

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

Stories Rabbits Tell: A Natural and Cultural History of a Misunderstood Creature
A comprehensive look at the rabbit as a wild animal, ancient symbol, pop culture icon, commercial “product” and domesticated pet. By Susan E. Davis and Margo DeMello...........$23


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

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

Knowing Your Rabbit’s Routines: WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHEN TO WORRY. Indicate Video, Video CD, or CD for Mac, 10 min. ........ $14

Your First House Rabbit
A vital resource for immediate and continuing reference. VHS Video by Marinell Harriman, 40 min. ............................................... $20

License Plate Frame ........... $7

Calendar
Rabbit Rescue 2007
Produced by the Missouri HRS chapter........................................ $12

HRS Maryland/Washington DC/Northern Virginia Chapter 17
Order Form

If you are not currently a member of HRS, we invite you to join!
See Membership Area below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price Each</th>
<th>Total Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buy a Bunny a Little Time Bumper Sticker</td>
<td></td>
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<td>$1</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Rabbit’s Place Is in the House Bumper Sticker</td>
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<td>A Rabbit’s Place Is in the House Magnet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make Mine Chocolate Pin</td>
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<td>$2</td>
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<td>Rabbit Activist T-shirt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster 1’ x 3’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bunny in the Moon T-shirt</td>
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<td>$15</td>
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<tr>
<td>House Rabbit Society</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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
National HRS membership $18
Members receive the House Rabbit Journal.

Local HRS membership $8
Must also be a national member

Total Remittance for Rabbit Catalog and Membership $ Make check or money order payable to House Rabbit Society

Subtotal $ Shipping $ Rabbit Catalog Total $
Auction work and money. Experience preferred.

**Executive Assistant—Baltimore City.** Assist Chapter Manager with paperwork and organization, including sorting, filing, copying, etc. This position is flexible and has a lot of growth potential.

**Phone Line and E-mail Response and Education.** Check voicemail, preferably daily, passing on any calls that need a more experienced volunteers attention. Mailing out information to people who want to find a new home for their rabbit or have found a stray (majority of calls) and providing other written information by post or e-mail on a variety of rabbit care topics. Long-distance phone card can be provided if necessary.

**Bunny Sitting and Special-Needs Bunny Sitting.** Provide temporary foster space for one or two foster rabbits when their foster parent needs to be out of town. Exercise pen housing provided. This is usually for one- to two-week duration. Also need those with experience giving medication and other special care for sitting of sanctuary rabbits.

**Fostering.** Foster homes are always needed for rabbits. Some experience caring for rabbits preferred. Must be able to house foster rabbits separate from own rabbits and provide 30 hours of exercise time/week in a space at least 3’ x 8’. Litter, local hay, and pellets provided. Fresh vegetables do need to be provided by fosterer. Attendance of rabbit at monthly adoption days necessary.

**Shelter Volunteers.** We need shelter liaisons to keep us abreast of what rabbits are in what shelters and to be advocates with the shelter staff, bringing the rabbits veggies, helping with cleaning and exercising, and educating shelter adopters. Some area shelters like Baltimore, Harford County, and Arlington have experienced volunteers who can train and assist you. For other shelters, you will need to be a self-starter.

**eBay Sales Coordinator.** Sell items donated to the chapter through eBay. Will need to take photos, post ads, monitor auctions, handle shipping and money. Experience preferred.

---

**Hop to It!**

You can become more active in the 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 with chapter volunteers. Volunteer duties include community outreach, newsletter production, and other untie Coordinator Nicole Koller at bunerabbit@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,

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

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

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

THANKS!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>I would also like to make a donation of $</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Make check payable to House Rabbit Society</td>
</tr>
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</table>

| MAIL TO: HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 50311, BALTIMORE, MD 21211 |
How can your everyday shopping benefit the House Rabbit Society?

Who hasn’t uttered the words “I wish there was something I could do to help”? Now you can help. Start shopping! At www.iGive.com/HRS-MDDC-VA, you can buy your holiday gifts or everyday items and help rabbits at the same time.

Joining iGive is FREE—no invisible costs or tricky obligations. Shop at the more than 550 stores at the Mall at iGive—such as Barnes & Noble, Eddie Bauer, Lands’ End, Brookstone, Adidas, and Expedia.com—and a percentage of each purchase is donated to our HRS chapter.

With so many choices at iGive, there is something for everyone!

Join now at www.iGive.com/HRS-MDDCVA

Information is subject to change. Visit www.iGive.com for current details.
iGive.com Holdings, LLC

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

INSIDE
Growing a Bunny Garden
Rabbits for Adoption
Happy Adoption Letters
Babies and Bunnies
Lowering Blood Calcium
Rabbit Catalog