



PETER, BUGS, or ROGER?

Can You Tell a Cottontail from a Hare from a House Rabbit?

by Kate McGinley

Walk through a park or look out into your own backyard during the morning or evening in our area and you might be lucky enough to see a cottontail rabbit or two grazing on the grass. Many people are under the impression that these rabbits are the same species as our domestic companions and are just living wild. And so, many rabbits get dumped outside every year because people think they can survive and may even join a wild “warren.”

Our domestic rabbits are, in fact, descended from European wild rabbits—not our native cottontails. Centuries ago, European wild rabbits were domesticated and the many varieties we are all now familiar with were developed. Today’s domestic rabbit bears little resemblance to its wild cousin.

But let’s start at the beginning. The “family” of rabbits is called *Leporidae*. This family includes rabbits and hares. Within this family are currently 11 “genera,” including hares (also called jackrabbits): genus *Lepus*; cottontails: genus *Sylvilagus*; “true rabbits”: genus *Oryctolagus*; and a variety of rare beasts such as the volcano rabbit (genus *Romerolagus*) and the “African harsh-furred” hares (genus: *Poelagus*).

Let’s concentrate on the



Baby cottontails

ones we know: Hares (also called jackrabbits), cottontails, and European rabbits. Hares live in North America and virtually all of Africa and Eurasia. There are 30 currently recognized species. Cottontails live only in North and South America—nowhere else—and there are 13 currently recognized species, including our eastern cottontail and the marsh rabbit commonly found in the South. European rabbits naturally habitate only in western and southern Europe—from the Mediterranean to Morocco and northern Algeria.

They have, however, been introduced to some other areas like Australia with devastating results for the local fauna. European rabbits are comprised of only one species: *Oryctolagus cuniculus*.

“Cottontails and domestic rabbits... cannot interbreed.”

Warren’t You Like to Know?

So what the heck is the difference between hares, cotton-

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tails, and our rabbits? Hare babies are born fully furred, eyes open. Adult hares do not dig burrows and live a more or less solitary life. Cottontails are born naked, eyes closed. However, they develop much faster than their domestic cousins. They are weaned at 2 weeks and are ready to live on their own at 4 weeks. Like hares, adult cottontails do not dig burrows but build a rather loose nest out of grass and rabbit fur for their babies, and otherwise just take cover in bushes and such. They are solitary creatures—sometimes you might see several grazing near each other—but they do not live together. European rabbits dig elaborate burrows and form complex societies called warrens. A warren can include hundreds of individuals and have a complex social structure—one of the reasons it’s so difficult and touchy to match up our domestic rabbits. While they are happiest in the company of another rabbit, they need to go through social posturings for it to “feel right.”

How do you tell if a rabbit is wild or domestic? The natural, or “wild” coloring of hares, cottontails, and European rabbits is the same: known as “agouti” coloring. We still see this color often in our domestic rabbits (see Figure B). Sometimes people think this means their domestic rabbit is, in fact, a cross between a cottontail and a domestic rabbit—this is not the case. Cottontails and domestic (or European) rabbits are genetically isolated; they cannot interbreed. If a cottontail meets a domestic rabbit, they would probably not even recognize him as a rabbit. He just wouldn’t be “acting” right.

If the rabbit is not particularly afraid of you, he is domestic. Cottontails, even if raised in captivity, have a natural fear of humans when mature. If there are any patches of color (including white), he is domestic. Baby cottontails sometimes have a small spot of white on their foreheads, but that is it (see Figure A). Adult cottontails range from 2-4 lbs., averaging 3 lbs. tops. If the bunny is bigger than that, he could be a domestic rabbit. Cottontails have very long slender legs and a real “wedge” shaped head. Their ears are very thin at the tips—you can often see light right through—and narrow at the base. Domestic rabbits have a more dome-shaped “forehead” and more prominent cheekbones. No matter how much a domestic rabbit might resemble a cottontail from the side, if you look him straight in the face you will know he’s not a cottontail by his chubbier cheeks. 🐰



note

HELP! I rescued some baby rabbits from my yard!

After domestic cat attacks (keep your cats indoors!), one of the main hazards for baby cotton

tails in our area is well-meaning humans who think a nest of babies has been abandoned when most of the time it hasn’t been.

Mother cottontails only nurse their babies once or twice a day, and the rest of the time they stay away so as not to attract predators. If you want to test if the mother is around, carefully arrange some sticks in a pattern on top of the nest. Check back later. If the mother has come to nurse, the sticks will be disturbed. The babies and nest will be gone in just a few weeks.

Sometimes the babies, looking tiny and delicate, hop around the nest exploring their surroundings. They are very small—only “tennis ball” size when they actually leave the nest to start life on their own. They are independent at a much earlier age than domestic rabbits. If you see one not in immediate danger, just leave well enough alone.

If you do rescue cottontails truly in need, don’t try to care for them yourself. Keep them warm and quiet, and contact your nearest wildlife rehabilitator. Orphan baby rabbits are very difficult to raise, and cottontails do not do well in captivity. There is a list of wildlife rehabilitators at our web site www.houserabbit.org/BaltWashDC/wildlife.html 🐰

Gifts in Remembrance...

Nicole Roberts ... in honor of Sunshine’s 2nd birthday.

Yael Schloss ... in memory of Caffeen.

*Mary Sue McLaughlin ...
in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Ken Ders.*

Melody Traupel ... in memory of her dear Rum Bun.

Elizabeth Howard ... in memory of Mousse.

*Kathy Brooks and Robert Denny ...
in memory of Strawberry Mousse.*

Lois Weinstein ... in honor of Bonnee and Frank Korel.

All rabbits are to be adopted as HOUSE RABBITS only—no exceptions! \$50 donation per rabbit, plus \$18 membership for our non-members. Your other rabbits must be spayed or neutered. Pictures of all our foster rabbits can be viewed at our web site, www.house-rabbit.org/BaltWashDC/



ANDRE was found stray on a tennis court by a shelter employee! She knew right away that he is a special rabbit. He is a handsome dark brown, weighs about 6 lbs., and is SO sweet—he likes to give kisses! He would be a great choice for a family with children. (703) 241-0867

BARLEY is a stunning minilop boy who is the richest, darkest brown—almost black color. He loves a quiet cuddle. (410) 889-4104

CHERRY is a classic big New Zealand White girl. Some people don't like red-eyed rabbits, but they are missing out! These rabbits are well known among experienced rabbit lovers as the BEST. Cherry is smart, friendly and loving, and would be a wonderful choice for a family with children. She gets along well with nice cats and dogs too! (410) 889-4104

COLLETTE—charming, pretty, blue-eyed Collette has a personality to match her good looks. She loves to be petted and just sticks out her nose for a rub. She weighs about 6 lbs and is spayed. (301) 251-4428



DYLAN and MANDY are a pair of smaller bunnies. Dylan is a gorgeous wild-looking boy with a great, friendly, outgoing personality. The love of his life, Mandy, is a pretty little feisty dwarf. They are a great pair! (410) 889-4104

EVELYN and SAMANTHA are an adorable daughter/mother pair of minilops. Mother Samantha is the more outgoing and confident of the pair. They were in the shelter for a while and some of their family had to be euthanized. These two will really blossom in a home of their own with lots of quiet love. (301) 570-9152



FARLEY is a handsome, big black rabbit. He weighs about 8 lbs. Farley likes nice dogs and cats, and he is very outgoing and friendly. He does like to have things HIS way though, and will let you know it if you aren't cooperating! (703) 241-0867

FELICITY is a lovely black and white dutch bunny with a smart, outgoing personality. (410) 889-4104



GEENA—this gorgeous red-head is 9 lbs. of personality! She is about 2 yrs old and very sweet. Geena gets along fine with nice cats and dogs, and would be a great choice for an active family. (301) 251-4428

JACKSON is a young orange and black harlequin boy, who was turned into the shelter as a stray. He loves to explore and play with his toys but is never too busy for some pets and attention. Despite his previous neglect, he loves people. (410) 889-4104

JACOB is a 2 year old dutch mix. The "J" shaped mark on his shoulder is what earned him his name. He was a favorite with the shelter staff at the Anne Arundel SPCA and they urged us to rescue him. He is a bit of a curmudgeon but does like to be petted; he just doesn't want to admit it. He is very tidy in his litterbox habits and likes to take his afternoon snooze under the diningroom table. (410) 889-4104

JAVA has a lovely deep brown colored coat that is so very soft. She is an outgoing bunny who isn't afraid of much. She is a young adult spayed female about 5 lbs. (410) 889-4104



JOEY is white with ethereal blue eyes, VERY STUNNING. He is medium sized, probably 4-5 pounds. He's cuddly and loves to be petted but doesn't like being picked up. He is enraptured with dogs and tries to snuggle with them. We don't know his age but he acts like a young guy; he's very peppy and likes to explore and dig in his litterbox. (301) 251-4428

TYRA is a sweet, small black dwarf bunny. She is a bit shy at first, but is rapidly learning to dance in her foster home. (301) 251-4428

STEVEN—What is it about little himalayan dwarf bunnies? They are always such charmers! Steven is no exception. This smart little guy loves attention and problem-solving. He can leap tall buildings with a single bound, and likes nothing more than to figure out how to open doors. He is just so handsome and yummy with his cherry colored eyes, vanilla colored fur with fudgey points on his nose, ears and feet. Steven was found by police when they were investigating the murder of his owner. The police turned him over to animal control and the HRS took him in. We don't know how old he is but we guess he is about a year old at the most. He was obviously well loved and cared for. (703) 241-0867



WINSTON is a dapper, siamese colored minilop. He was caught in the middle of a domestic dispute in his first home and thrown down some stairs. He was uninjured, and luckily was confiscated by animal control where this gentle, sweet boy made his way to HRS foster care. He would love a nice, quite, loving home to call his own. (703) 241-0867 🐰



Adoption

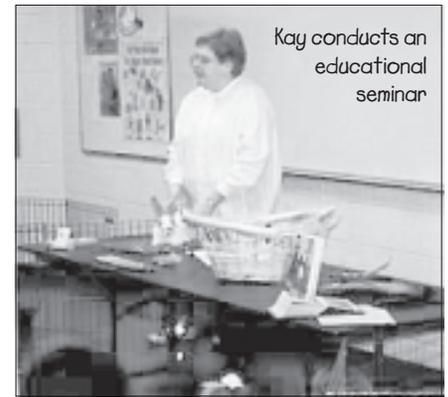


Making a Difference by Kay Bannon

I know there are many HRS members who shy away from their local shelter. It's sad to see the homeless rabbits and know not all will be adopted to loving homes.

I began stopping by my local shelter about two years ago. They had very few rabbits at that time. Sometimes I would stop in and find no rabbits, other times there

would be one or two. Often those would be located in one of the back rooms kept off limits to the general public. People interested in rabbits, guinea pigs, and other small animals were supposed to know that they should ask at the front desk. If rabbits were out in the viewing area, they were placed in whatever small cage the shelter had available, pushed off in a corner somewhere and cedar was often lining the floor of the cage. No profiles were ever filled out by the



Kay conducts an educational seminar



New rabbit housing at the Frederick shelter.

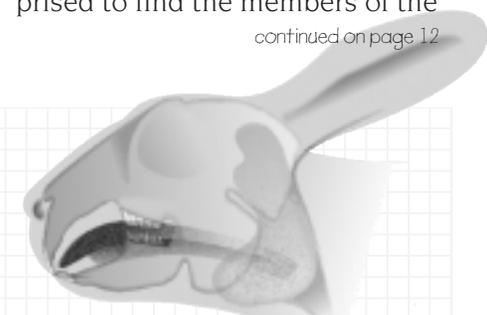
surrendering family and the adopters signed no contract. I had often mentioned my concerns to a passing staff member but either I wasn't being taken seriously or someone else was taking care of the rabbits and my concerns didn't reach their ears. Finally, I asked someone what I needed to do to affect some changes in the lives of these rabbits and was told to

write a letter to the board of directors.

With my letter typed and submitted, I anxiously awaited an answer from the board. I was surprised a few weeks later to be asked to present my letter personally at the next board meeting. I expected to meet with some resistance but was surprised to find the members of the

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Rabbit Dental Disease



by Dr. David Handel, Kentlands Veterinary Hospital

Rabbits often suffer from dental disease. While regular dental cleaning is an important part of maintaining oral health in people, cats, and dogs, it is not as necessary in the rabbit. Instead, the teeth should be checked for malocclusion—an improper alignment of the teeth—which can cause serious, even life-threatening, problems.

Malocclusion is especially serious due to the dental anatomy of the rabbit. Their teeth have long roots and grow about four to five inches per year. When the teeth of a rabbit are aligned

properly they are worn down by food consumption. However, when teeth are not aligned they will continue to grow and may inhibit the rabbit's ability to eat. The inability to eat can result in life-threatening anorexia.

Malocclusion of the incisors (front teeth) is most common. This can be genetic. A routine exam by a veterinarian will often reveal this problem.



Severely Maloccluded Incisors.

Treatment is usually accomplished by trimming

the teeth. This should be done with a special dental drill or burr. Nail trimmers shouldn't be used for this as they may fracture the teeth. Trimming should be done every 6 to 8 weeks in an afflicted rabbit. In some cases, tooth removal is an appropriate. General anesthesia, as well as post-operative pain medication and antibiotics, will be necessary.

Malocclusion of the cheek teeth is less common but still life-threatening. Cheek teeth that do not wear evenly can develop sharp spike-like edges. These spikes can cut into the tongue or

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Games Rabbits Play

by Susan Easton

Anyone lucky enough to live with a house rabbit knows they do *much* more than just sit in a cage. Their interaction with their humans runs the gamut from snuggling to manipulating, from kissing to nipping, and from posing like a model calendar bunny to foiling our best laid plans. They play games with their humans, devising rules and strategies, and not surprisingly, usually come out the winners. Such games are common, based on the number of HRS members who responded to my email inquiry; unfortunately, there were too many to mention them all, but here are a few.

Human/rabbit games fall into several categories and themes, one of the more popular being the reenactment of a house rabbit's archetypal battle to vanquish their evil archenemy, the broom. Christine notes her Jigglypuff plays "Swept Away," where she pretends to sweep and Jigglypuff boldly attacks the broom with all her might, "barking and quacking for all she's worth." Liz' rabbits play "Help With Sweeping," involving getting in the way of the broom or sitting in the dust pan.

Games that involve undoing the work of humans appear to bring special joy to our long-eared friends. Pam places Cammie and Phillip's toys neatly on the top level of their condo at bedtime and throughout the night, they play "Roll the Toys Down the Ramp." The "Unroll the Towel" game was reported by Melodye, who rolls up a towel for her Rum Bun to happily take apart. Anna

makes her Lucky a tunnel of boxes to run through, and then Lucky rips apart the boxes.

In general, flinging objects around is just good fun, according to our house rabbits. Lisa notes her Harvey and Remy play "Toss the Mason Jar Lid," and "Jerk the Slinky into Submission." Lara's Panda-Pal and Beatrix play with her son's toy cars, throwing them around the room. The "Tackle the TP Tube" game is appreciated by Joanne and her rabbit Baby, in which Joanne holds a cardboard TP tube above Baby's head, Baby knocks it down, and then hikes it between her legs.

Games involving treats always garner an enthusiastic response.

Winnie notes her Sir Galahad plays "Get The Papaya Tablet," and Timothy enjoys "Hide The Baytril In The Banana" with his furred friend. Natalie likes to play "Find The Apple" with her Diego, where she and her husband hide a treat

and he finds it by doing a passable impersonation of a bloodhound, nose to ground, sniffing.

Games that we humans played as children are popular among the furry set as well. Linda says her rabbit Christopher enjoys a good game of "Horsie" by riding around on her back, and he plays "Hide And Seek" with one of her cats, nicely taking turns. Shari tells of her bunny Sand-box' game, "Hide in the Hay." Several people reported playing "Catch" with their rabbits. Jane says her Bernard, like any human child, appreciates a good bedtime story. When she reads in bed, he hops up and



The "Help With Sweeping" game

sits on her stomach facing the broom, the only problem being that she then can't see the book!

Not surprisingly, only one HRS member reported bunny games with a sci-fi theme. Marion notes her Amity often goes "Spacehopping," where she disappears at feeding time, only to suddenly reappear when her human calls out, "Where's our Great Invisible Houserabbit? Beam her down, Scotty."

Finally, my favorite games are those that would get the humans committed if an outsider were to see. Toni describes "The Bunny Game" with Noodle, where Toni and her husband crawl along the hallway as fast as they can shouting "Bunny game! Bunny game!" and Noodle gives chase, "honking and bellowing noisily like a little moose." Once she catches her humans, she "chomps triumphantly on our sweatpants and butts at us with her little head," Toni notes. Katherine says: "My bunny has a rubber rabbit head that has 'hair' sticking up. He likes to fling the rabbit head and I go fetch. He loves to keep me busy." Gretta notes she and Mr. Bun would play "Football," where Mr. Bun would charge at her and she'd hold her foot out and fling him into the air! He'd fly back a few feet, land and then come charging at her again, "looking like I was punting him," Gretta says, adding quickly, "But not." 🐰

"In general, flinging objects around is just good fun."

Spring sprang and it was a very busy time for all the HRS volunteers. Extra binkies all around. Our **Easter Campaign** (headed by our **Director of Special Projects, Susan Wong**), was a huge success, as was our Easter candy sale. **Our adoption count for 1999 ended at 94, and we've had a great start to this year already - 68 adoptions from January to June, with an amazing 15 in February and a spectacular 19 in June!**

EASTER CAMPAIGN

Susan Wong, Christine Nevius, and several other volunteers outdid themselves this year. HRS got great press coverage – our most prominent spots were in the front page of the **Baltimore Sun Today** section the Thursday before Easter and several spots starring our own **Susan Wong** and **DC Animal Control's Jim Monsma**, on **Fox Morning News!** The real stars however, were the rabbits. **Samantha** and **Evelyn** did wonderfully in their first TV appearance but they haven't let the fame go to their heads. We were very pleased with the response, and there were several adoption inquiries from all of our great press! We have also gotten many calls in response to our "Thinking About A Rabbit?" flyer that HRS members have posted on many bulletin boards. Thanks for your help in getting the word out.

CANDY SALE

Our annual Easter candy sale brought in around **\$1,800** in profit for our chapter this year! Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped with this effort: **Judi Robertson** and **Michelle Thomas** stuffed envelopes; **Jean Hillstrom** and **Diane Neumeyer** tallied forms; **Jean Hillstrom, Connie Tjoumas, Phyllis** and **Ted Buff** and **Laurie Kuhn** were candy drop-off/pick-up sites; and **Diane Ray, Jamie Johnston, Liz DiNorma, Ted** and **Phyllis Buff, Barbara Storch, Judi Lainer, Deb McLaughlin, Christiane Weiss, Nicole Roberts, Katrina Remer, Toni Gallo, Connie Tjoumas, Kimberly Lengerhuis, Wendy Martino, Leslie Paugh, Robin Cronkite, Jodi Robertson, Michelle Thomas, Jean Hillstrom, Kathy Forthman, Kim McGuire, Pat Helfrich, Kathleen Wilsbach, Liz Bertha, Paul** and **Sherry Yutzy, Diane** and **Bill Neumeyer, Shirley Rowley, Stacey Waynick,**

Darlene Saudarg, Tricia Benner and **Mary Boblis** sold candy. (Whew! What a list!) And of course, kudos to **Laurie Kuhn** for organizing this big and very successful fund raising project.

HRS Spring Fling 2000 was held April 30th at the home of **Susan Wong** in Olney, MD. We had a great turnout, and everyone enjoyed the potluck vegetarian fare and showing off their rabbit pictures to other bunny lovers. We earned almost \$600

Chapter

from the sale of rabbit supplies and rabbit knick-knacks. Special thanks to **Neva Davis** for the donation of some beautiful, miniature handmade, clay sculptures. We will have more available at future events.

EDUCATION

Our educational efforts have been very exciting – the response that we've gotten from local area shelters is very encouraging! **Educator Kay Bannon** volunteers at the **Frederick County Humane Society** and has seen a radical change in the way that rabbits are viewed by the shelter staff. Spay/neuter procedures are now considered for rabbits that exhibit spraying or other hormonal behavior, and Kay's educational rabbit talks have gained in popularity. On March 29, Kay did a rabbit talk at the shelter that drew 52 people (standing room only!), and was assisted by **Chris Brannon** to help answer questions. There was even a photographer present from a local newspaper! Kay has also been featured on the **Humane Society's** cable TV show giving tips on rabbits as companion animals.

Educator Laurie Kuhn has been working with the **Humane Society of Harford County**. She gave a basic rabbit and guinea pig talk to the employees in December, and did one for the general public in the beginning of April.

We've been busy this spring – we've participated in an adoption fair at **Crosspointe Animal Hospital** in Fairfax, VA, and have had education tables at dog-walk fundraising events for the **Animal Welfare League of Arlington** and the

Anne Arundel County SPCA. There are more scheduled for this summer, too.

Our volunteers have also been working with the various shelters at events – many of our local area shelters invite HRS to attend events that they sponsor or participate in. We are very grateful for the wonderful response we've gotten from our local area shelters in our efforts to get rabbit care information out to the public. We've also recently begun working with the Fredericksburg, VA shelter thanks to the help of HRS member **Melodye Traupel**, and have our first HRS foster rabbit from there.

SUPER PET EXPO

HRS had a booth at the **Super Pet Expo** held in Chantilly, VA in February. What an incredible time! We had such a positive response from people, and several adoptions came out of this two-day event. Our booth was packed both days. **Educator Liz DiNorma** did a half-hour rabbit care presentation on Sunday to a small group. Financially, we came out just about even between the cost of the booth and the amount of things that we sold, but from an educational standpoint this event was priceless! Many thanks to all of the volunteers who helped with set-up, tear-down and manning the booth through the two-day event. It was grueling, but very worth it! Thanks to **Barbara Miller, Jennifer Benjamin, Kathy Brooks-Denny, Liz DiNorma, Susan Easton,**



Nancy Boyd of National Geographic at a Passport Friday Education Table

Liz DiNorma and Dickens McGinley hostess the booth at the Arlington shelter Wag'n Walk



Shari Feldman, Liz Howard, Moira Howard-Jeweler, Nicole Idzi, Jamie Johnston, Carol-Ann Koplik, Leesa Kuo, Judi Lainer, Natalie Medina, Nicky Roberts, Winnie Roberts, Tracy Shapiro, Michelle Thomas, and Kathleen Wilsbach for making this event possible by volunteering.

Our second **Super Pet Expo** was May 20-21 in Timonium, MD. This was another big success for us. Although

Update

attendance seemed lower—perhaps because the organizers made the mistake of scheduling it for Preakness weekend—we earned twice as much money as in Chantilly, and that doesn't include an extremely generous \$200 anonymous donation—almost completely offsetting the cost of our booth. We talked to many people about bringing their rabbits indoors and spaying/neutering. And there were some inquiries about our adorable foster rabbits. For this event, many thanks go to **Irma Arispe, Carolyn Bublitz, Liz DiNorma, Debbie Hollern, Anne Imboden, Jamie Johnston** (who also brought her fiancé), **Laurie Kuhn, Faye Levine, Diane Neumeyer** (who also brought her mom and aunt), **Bill Neumeyer, Nicky Roberts** (who also brought her mom), **Jodi Robertson, Michelle Thomas, Bobbie Vach, and Kathleen Wilsbach**. These events are exhausting (but rewarding!), and we truly could not do them without your help.

If you're looking for another opportunity to join us at one of these events, there's just one left this year—September 9-10 at the **Montgomery County Fairgrounds** in Gaithersburg, MD. As

you can guess, we really count on the help of our volunteers at these events, so if you're interested in participating in September, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, **Laurie Kuhn** by email at laurie_kuhn@yahoo.com, or by phone at 410-893-6506.

BOOK GRANT

We've been approved and received the second half of the grant from the **Snyder Foundation for Animals** to send copies of the **House Rabbit Handbook** to the rest of the libraries in Maryland. We are still looking into possible grants that would allow us to do the same for libraries in Northern Virginia and DC.

HRS ONLINE

As you may know, many of our adoptions come from folks who have found out about the HRS while looking for information on the internet. **Educator and Fosterer Kate McGinley** is the **webmaster** for our local Web site, and

has added some great features including; access to back issues of *The Clover Leaf*, a new online volunteering form, and a membership information page.

In other cyber news, our chapter now has an **email list** for updates, and a chat list for local HRS members to exchange information and share bunny stories. You can sign up for either list at the chapter Web site (www.house-rabbit.org/baltwashdc), or contact **Educator Liz DiNorma**, who is the owner of the lists, at hrsliz@yahoo.com.

The national HRS Web site (www.rabbit.org) has some new features, too... including updated veterinary and health resource sections. If you haven't visited lately, check out what's new. Also new—you can now use **PayPal** to make a donation to the national **House Rabbit Society** online. Set up an account with PayPal (a free, secure service) and charge a donation from a credit card or bank account. There's a link from the national home page to sign up for an account—if you follow the link, national HRS will receive a \$10 referral bonus. You can also sign up at the national site to receive email updates on what's new at their Web site.

FOSTERING UPDATE

Our rank of fosterers had been growing by leaps and bounds! We now have 7 foster homes in Virginia, 8 in Maryland and 2 in Washington DC! We are happy to report adding the **Fredericksburg SPCA** and **Glen Burnie Animal Control** to the list of shelters that we have been able to help with rabbits this year. We also send many of our adoption applicants straight to the shelters to meet the bunnies that we have no room for. The list of shelters that we are currently working with by fostering rabbits currently includes **Washington Humane Society, DC Animal Control, the Fairfax County shelter, the Fredericksburg SPCA, the Montgomery County Humane Society, the SPCA of Anne Arundel County, the Humane Society of Baltimore County, the Humane Society of Harford County, the Frederick County Humane Society, Glen Burnie Animal Control, and Howard County Animal Control**.

LOOKING AHEAD...

We've got a full schedule of events coming up over the next few months. HRS will be setting up booths (or doing talks) at all of these events. For a complete list, visit www.houserabbit.org/BaltWashDC. Please stop by and say hello, or, if you're interested in helping out, please contact our **Volunteer Coordinator, Laurie Kuhn** by email at laurie_kuhn@yahoo.com, or by phone at 410-893-6506. ➔

Dental from page 4

gums causing pain and the inability to eat. Due to the narrow oral cavity of the rabbit, this diagnosis is more challenging. A sedated oral exam is necessary for diagnosis. Treatment involves filing or trimming the teeth.

Dental abscesses are also a common problem. Trauma and/or food impaction can be the culprit. Treatment involves antibiotic therapy and possibly surgery.

Regular veterinary care and can help assure a rabbit's good health. Dental health is an important part of overall health. Signs of dental disease to watch for include difficulty eating or not eating at all. ➔

Sherman

by Neva Davis



One cold night in New York City, standing outside with some friends, I noticed a shabby looking man pushing a grocery cart toward us from across the street. Almost immediately, I saw the head of an albino rabbit protruding from a jacket in the grocery cart. The rabbit was so still I thought he must be a stuffed toy. But when the man got closer, I could see this was a real rabbit—although tired and weak.

“Is that a live rabbit?” my friend asked. But I already knew the answer. The bunny lifted his head slightly as I rubbed his ears. “Is he your rabbit?” I asked the man, “where did he come from?” The man explained he’d found the bunny in a park early that morning and put him in the cart to keep him safe. Because the bunny was cold, he’d taken off his own jacket and wrapped the bunny up in it. “Now, some of them,” he said, pointing to the homeless people watching us from across the road, “they’re saying they’re going to kill him and eat him...I saw the stickers” — he gestured to the back of my friend’s car, plastered with animal rights messages — “and I was hoping one of you would help him out.”

I picked up the bunny and felt his stomach, very thin, but no lumps or tender spots. His mouth and eyes looked healthy. I don’t think any of us doubted for a second that we would save this rabbit. Luckily, I had rabbit supplies at home because my be-

loved, elderly rabbit, Ivan, was still living at that time.

I decided to get this rescued bunny home to Brooklyn. When I tucked him inside my coat, the homeless man grabbed my shoulder, “Just promise that no harm will come to him, that he will be OK.” I promised him and set off on the subway, smuggling the rabbit, who was content at that moment just to rest against me, inside my coat.

At the end of our long ride, it occurred to me the bunny might need to relieve himself so I started to gently set him down in the dirt around one tree. He scrambled and struggled to stay inside my coat. His heart was pounding so hard that I could feel it against my chest! He’s scared of being left behind, I suddenly realized. I rushed him home to my tiny apartment.

Because Ivan had the run of the apartment, I set this bunny up in the bathroom, with a litter box, food, water, hay, and fresh veggies and herbs. The next morning, everything I had given him to eat was gone! He was skittish, but seemed grateful for the food. When I wanted him to have a chance to run around, I had to confine Ivan, as these two were hostile from the first second they smelled each other.

We went on with this routine for about a month while the rescued rabbit, now named Sherman, put on weight and got stronger. I didn’t get him neutered right away, fearing he was too weak to survive the surgery.

I knew I was going to have him for the rest of his life when nobody else could appreciate what a sweet bunny he was despite all his problems. I was ready to return to Brooklyn with him and try to make it work, even though I was concerned about trying to introduce him to Ivan.

However, then my boyfriend Sean, who lived in DC, offered to take him.

He set up a large, fenced enclosure for Sherman and gave him all the amenities and lots of love. Sherman still compulsively shook the bars of his enclosure and had such a love for chewing that he couldn’t be let out without supervision. He would also become disoriented when left in open places. If we left the door to his enclosure open he would wander out and then be unable to find his way back. If we didn’t help him right away he’d panic. We started to think he’d probably spent most of his life shut inside a tiny cage.

I finished my masters and returned to DC. Sean and I moved into a larger apartment where Sean built Sherman a wooden bunny palace. Now Sherman seems content. He has no bars to shake but has a very nice window seat, several hiding places, and four levels to run on, sit on, and flop over on when he’s tired. He also has baskets to chew on and toss—the only toy he’s ever really seemed to enjoy.

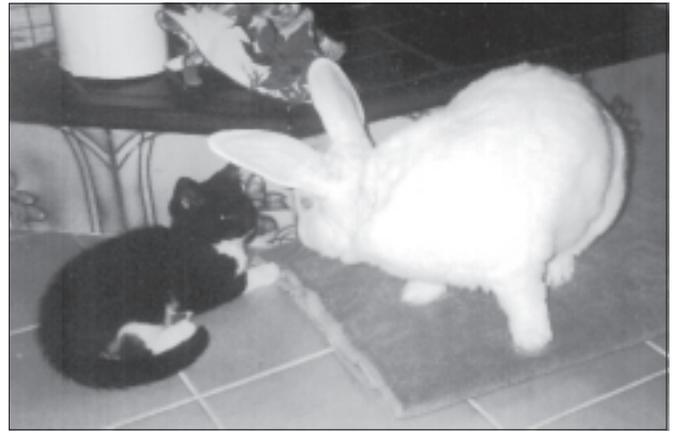
Over the past few years, Sherman has really come out of his shell and is recovering from the abuse he suffered as a baby. He is very affectionate, and will even occasionally sit on my lap although he prefers to sit on the floor next to me while I rub him. If I clean his area and fail to give him all the attention he deserves, he’ll nudge me to remind me. He loves fresh vegetables and apples and if I am cutting up

a carrot for myself, he'll come over and beg for little pieces and take them directly from my hand. This is a rabbit who used to be scared of human hands and feet!

Because Sherman was a full-grown rabbit when the homeless man found him, I suspect as a baby he was given as an Easter gift. He then probably spent six months locked inside a cramped cage, only to be abandoned in a park when he reached his adult size. It breaks my heart to think that this sort of thing happens to countless rabbits every year, and most abandoned rabbits are not

as lucky as Sherman. I also sometimes wonder about the homeless man who cared so much about the rabbit he found that he took off his own coat in cold weather to warm the bunny up. I hope that he has also found the help that he needs.

Editor's note: Neva recently adopted Juniper and she and Sherman are a hot item! We would like to have a regular feature spotlighting the stories of how our members came to be living



with a rabbit. Please send your stories by email to inksword@aol.com, fax to 301-528-0284, or mail to HRS, PO Box 50311, Baltimore, MD 21211. 🐰

Happy Adoption Letters

Hop! Hop! Hooray!

Thank you so much to everyone who made this possible!

These are the friendliest, happiest rabbits I've ever seen! I'm elated! Kudos to all their fosterers - they obviously provided VERY loving homes!

They were really pretty quiet the first night, I was surprised. But when the alarm went off this morning at 4:30, someone didn't like it and thumped for awhile. There was a commotion later so I ran upstairs and 3 innocent faces peered up at me, interrupted in their playing, as if to say, "Did you hear that? I wonder what THAT was?"

We're one big happy family!

Debbie O'Day

I-sa Luv-sa You-sa!!! Yes-sa!

Many thanks to the HRS for making it possible for Jar Jar Binks to find his dream girl, Jenni Binks. Jar Jar and Jenni had an unforgettable first meeting at the bunny matchup. I'd noticed how Jenni had been aggressive to the other males she met, pushing them around and oinking at them, but when she came out of the carrier and saw Jar Jar, he took over.

I'll never forget the way she went up to him to bully him and he (I swear he was grinning) just sat on her head! Jar Jar followed her into the carrier right away and they've been two peas in a pod ever since.

Patti Henningsen

Cocoa and Dahlia

Thanks so much for the pictures of me and the bunnies. They are doing great. We

have moved into a two bedroom and have them set up in the spare bedroom. They have a brand new Bunny Abode cage from Leith Petwerks which they love. Cocoa is very possessive of Dahlia. Whenever someone starts petting her he rushes over and cuddles up next to her just to make sure they know whose rabbit she really is. Most of the time they sit in their favorite position cuddled alongside each other with their heads at opposite ends. My boyfriend calls it the "yin yang" position.

Julie Kizer



Olivia and Fu Fu

Fu Fu and Olivia are doing very well. They really enjoy grooming each other and cuddling. Olivia has a great personality. She is interested in everything including assisting in cleaning the cage. Olivia enjoys hopping on me and is great with "people" contact (in this area, Fu Fu can be shy). I guess opposites DO attract. Above is a cute picture of the two together.

I want to thank you for helping me find a friend for Fu Fu. He doesn't look so lonely anymore. Thanks for all the great advice. It

is nice to know that there are other "bunny people" out there.

Tracy Hill

Elvis and Katie

I spent an hour before work watching Elvis and Katie dancing nonstop throughout the family room. After a while, they would both go back to the cage for a break, catch their breath, and then begin again. It was wonderful! He still spends most of the time (when he is in the cage) in the litter box, but he is spending more and more time outside it and near her. So far, things seem very good.

Becky Bafford

Loeffel and Watson

I just wanted to let you know, that Loeffel and Watson are doing great. After they'd kept us up for a night, we decided to give them a head start on their new territory: the kitchen. I watched them very closely in the beginning and it was just too cute! Loeffel was showing Watson the way around. She would go into her cage and then turn around and see, where he was! Today I saw them licking each other and seemed to be very happy together! I am so thankful, that this bunny has been rescued at the 11th hour!

Heike Blum 🐰

We get many lovely letters and emails from our adopters. Unfortunately, we don't have the space to print them all, but keep them coming! We LOVE to read them; it's what keeps us going.

Thank you to the following Special Friends who donated \$25 or more to help the rabbits:

ANONYMOUS
ARISTOTLE
(through Wendy MARTINO and Martin HOBBS)
Shelley BARBER
BASILE Family
Liz and Kevin BERTHA
John BISHOP
Laura BLAIR
Laura Brooks SMITH
Kathy BROOKS
BUNNYHEAVEN
Victoria CLEMENTS
Colleen COUGHLIN
Vicky CRAM
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Kristen STEVENSON
Connie TJOUMAS
Melody TRAUPEL
Patricia TRENNER
Lois WEINSTEIN
Marie WHITNEY
Mark and Michele WILSON
Catherine YANG

\$pecial thanks to the following vets who provided discount services, making it possible for us to rescue many needy rabbits:

BLUERIDGE VETERINARY ASSOCIATES
BROOKEVILLE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
FALLS ROAD ANIMAL HOSPITAL—
24 HR EMERGENCY
KENTLANDS VETERINARY HOSPITAL
KINGSBROOKE ANIMAL HOSPITAL
MUDDY BRANCH VETERINARY CENTER
RIDGE LAKE ANIMAL HOSPITAL



TIPS from our members

To keep a rabbit confined to a particular room in an appealing way, try this.



Purchase cafe doors from Home Depot. Cut the bottom scrollwork off leaving a straight edge. Mount the doors low in the doorjamb so the bottom is almost flush with the floor. Notch the outside bottom edges of the door to accommodate the baseboard trim. I painted a farm scene on mine. To prevent rabbits from chewing on them, cut thin pieces of wood and nail them on the doors, making a fence in front of the painted scene. Occasionally, my Bruno will bite into the fence.

The doors stay closed with the help of a hook/eye latch. The doors swing open and close for easy "human-use".

Barbara Miller

I found that my rabbits, Diego and Rose, love to eat the corners of walls. So at Home Depot, I found Corner Protectors for wallpaper for \$1.48. They have attach with adhesive. They're great! You don't have put any nails in the walls! My Diego has tried chewing on them but failed. They are easy to remove. You can even put them on furniture corners!

Natalie Medina

We've found Plexiglas can be cut, glued, drilled, and magnetized for a variety of bunny-proofing uses. It comes in various thicknesses. Stores such as Lowe's and Home Depot will cut it once for you at no charge but there is a minimal charge for additional cuts.

To protect our hutch, we cut a 4' x 8' sheet of Plexiglas in half. Since our bunnies are dwarves, we determined a 24" height would provide protection from nibbling teeth. We cut three pieces; one about as wide as the front of the hutch then two pieces the depth of the hutch and attached them together with hinges. This created three sides of a square that we placed in front of the hutch. The beauty of this method is that the barrier is relatively light, easily moved for cleaning, and can be folded up for storage when non-bunnies visit.

Skip Rogers and Mariellen Whalen

The litter I buy through HRS comes in a large double-thick paper bag. When empty, I roll down the edge 8-10 inches from the bottom. Because the bag is so deep, the edge becomes fairly rigid. I then put the bag on its side for the bunnies to use as a cave. They love hiding in it and ripping it apart from inside! The litter bag works better than a regular grocery bag because it's thicker and firmer to better stand up to an enthusiastic bunny.

Shelley Barber

SEND IN YOUR TIPS! We love hearing great ideas from our members. We can't publish them all, but we will be featuring a few in every issue of *The Clover Leaf*.



RABBIT VIRAL HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE ALERT

On April 10, 2000, an outbreak of **Rabbit Viral Hemorrhagic Disease (VHD)** was reported by the USDA. The affected rabbits lived on a farm in Crawford County, Iowa. Of the 27 rabbits in the rabbitry, 25 died. The remaining two were purchased and euthanized by the state. Don't panic, though. The Iowa cases are the *only* VHD cases that have been confirmed in the U.S.

VHD is, in essence, rabbit Ebola disease. Highly contagious, the disease kills within

24-48 hours and has few clinical symptoms, which may include loss of appetite, lethargy, high fever, spasms and sudden death. It affects only rabbits of the *Oryctolagus cuniculus* species, including wild and domesticated European rabbits and our own domesticated house rabbits. It has not been known to affect native North American wild rabbits or hares.

There is no known cure for VHD. Vaccinations, produced in laboratory rabbits, are available in countries where the disease is endemic, such as England and Australia, but there is no vaccine approved by the FDA for use in the U.S. Preventing infection is the only

means of protecting your rabbits.

To prevent rabbits from getting VHD, the key is disinfection and protection. House your rabbits indoors. Rabbits who live or exercise outdoors are more at risk for contracting this disease. Wash your hands thoroughly before handling your rabbits, particularly when you come home from places where other rabbits may have been, or where people who have been in contact with rabbits may have been. This would include places such as feed stores, pet stores, fair grounds, humane societies, etc. Quarantine any new rabbit for 5 days. Always handle quarantined rabbits last, and keep all supplies

for them separate from your other rabbit's supplies.

Educating yourself and others about VHD is one of the best ways to help protect your rabbits. Don't panic, but get involved on spreading the word to others in the rabbit community. Keep yourself informed as to where any new outbreaks occur. To keep informed of any new outbreaks, you can subscribe to the VHD in the US Coalition's e-mail notification system at www.kindplanet.org/vhd/vhdsubscribe.html.

For information on VHD, check the Web sites: www.kindplanet.org/vhd/vhd.html (or call 800-906-2445); www.aphis.usda.gov; and www.vhdinfo.com.



House Rabbit Society
NEEDS YOU!

Please clip or copy this volunteer/donation coupon and mail to:

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

or apply online at
<http://www.rabbit.org/BaltWashDC/>



A CALL TO ACTION!

VOLUNTEER!

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER:

- Public events (staffing education tables)
- Rabbit bondings
- Classes
- Seminars
- Working with shelters
- Fund raising events
- Distributing literature
- Driving rabbits from Maryland to Northern Virginia
- Hosting rabbit matches

I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE MONEY:

- To pay for vet care of rabbits with special needs
- To pay for routine vet care of foster rabbits
- To pay for litter, food, and other supplies
- To help pay for advertising in the PawPrint Post
- To help with the cost of copying and mailing rabbit care info
- Please use my donation wherever it is needed most

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

- Local and National HRS membership \$26
- National HRS membership \$18. Members receive quarterly issues of the House Rabbit Journal
- Local HRS membership is \$8. Support our local rabbit rescue efforts and receive local newsletter 2 times per year Must also be a national member

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board simply didn't realize these animals were not being given proper care. I was asked to provide written standards for the care of rabbits in shelters, which I did after much research. When one of our chapter educators, Liz DiNorma, began giving lectures on rabbits as companion animals, I asked her to come and address the staff and volunteers of our shelter. Although few people came to the initial talk, they were influential in helping to motivate further changes.

Over the past two years, the lives of our shelter rabbits have changed dramatically. A profile sheet was created to be filled out on each rabbit, guinea pig, hamster, mouse, etc. surrendered at the shelter, an adoption application must be filled out by each adopter and a contract signed that is kept on file. All rabbits are adopted to indoor homes only. The rabbits

were moved out into the viewing area, in a bank of six wildlife cages. Those cages recently have been replaced with six larger, light-filled, polyethylene cages that provide room for even the larger buns and a litter box. There is now an adoption fee for small animals. The fee for the rabbits includes a free initial vet exam and a copy of the *House Rabbit Handbook*. Prior to the implementation of the fee, a packet of HRS literature was given to each rabbit adopter. The idea for this packet came from another HRS member, Robin Cronkite. The shelter has even started spaying or neutering at least one rabbit a month. They are

finding that these spayed/neutered rabbits are appealing to the public and get adopted very quickly after their surgery. The staff is also coming to appreciate the uniqueness of these animals and can share more information with the people interested in rabbits. In addition, the manager of the HRS chapter Web site, Kate McGinley, has created a site featuring pictures of our shelter buns. Although I have been the primary point of contact for the shelter, the successes here at our shelter represent a major achievement by the entire HRS chapter and not just that of one person.

Change is continuous and ongoing but someone needs to start the process. It takes a great deal of diplomacy, patience, and diligence to bring about major changes in the lives of shelter rabbits, but it's definitely worth it. 🐰



BUY A BUNNY A LITTLE TIME