

# THUMP



NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS JUNE 2011

## HEALTH, MEDICAL ISSUES

### Summer, Sun...and Heatstroke!

By Kerstin Aumann

Summer is here. After a long, cold winter, it's finally time to put away our winter coats for good. If only our rabbits could do this, too. Imagine wearing a fur coat in 80- or 90-degree weather. Sounds pretty miserable, right?

Summer is a time of fun in the sun, holidays and celebrations. But it is also a time of danger for our rabbits. Not only are they stuck with their fur coats for the summer; they are also unable to

reduce body heat through sweating (like humans) or panting (like dogs). The only way rabbits can dissipate excess body heat is through their ears, the only part of their body that's covered with just a light, peachy fuzz instead of fur. Not exactly the most powerful cooling system.

That's why we have to keep an eye out for our little buns and protect them from heat stress and – potentially fatal – heatstroke. Even temperatures in the mid- and upper 80s Fahrenheit are a red flag, especially when humidity is high. Keep in mind that each rabbit is an individual and some are less tolerant of heat than others. For example, older and disabled rabbits tend to be more heat sensitive than healthy, young rabbits.

Make sure the temperature in your bunny's room doesn't exceed 80 degrees F. Use a thermometer that tells you what the highest temperature was in your rabbit's room during the daytime. If you're away all day at work or school, you might not know how the room feels during the hottest time of day. Ideally, keep your bunny's room air-conditioned, at least during the hottest hours. An energy-efficient unit with a thermostat set to 78 degrees F. will help keep your rabbit safe and comfortable, while minimizing the impact on your wallet. Yes, you will have higher electric bills during the hot summer months – but the

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Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Dr. Anthony Pilny supports the abscessed mass on the left side of Asher's face.

### Asher's Severely Misshapen Face Posed Challenges

By Jane O'Wyatt

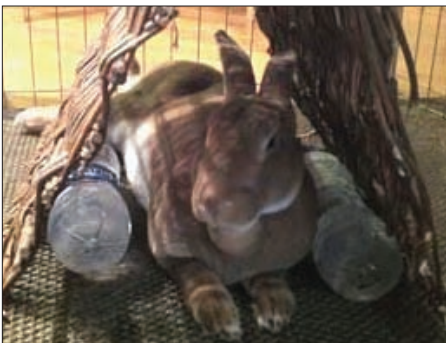
*"Hey, there's a red mini-lop at the shelter who looks like he needs urgent medical care. Eating and pooping just fine, but I can see 2 HUGE abscesses on the left side of his face and chin. And they are really awful. His left eye is oozing. His name is Asher. Will send pic to you and Cindy."*

– Brittnee Spence, text, 9:13 p.m., April 21

I go to the shelter early the next morning to see this bunny, hoping to get him to a rabbit-savvy veterinarian as soon as possible. Asher's cage card indicates he is a one-year-old intact male who was

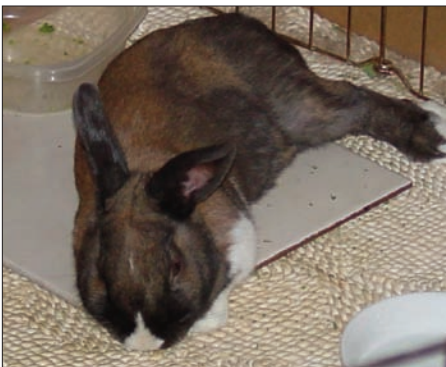
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Photo: Jane O'Wyatt

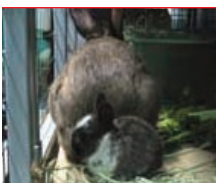


Alfalfa cools off between frozen water bottles.

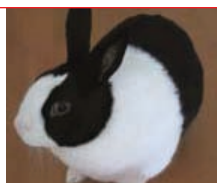
Photo: Robert Kulkka



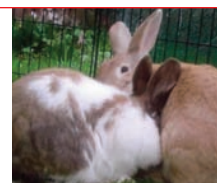
Skip uses his tile to stretch out, sleep and stay cool.



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**Dutch Bunny Named Domino Patiently Comforts Children, the Elderly**  
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# Ollie and Maya Cool Themselves Off With Frozen Water Bottles, a Pizza Stone

By Katelyn Belyus

I love the summer. A friend of mine once called heat “the great equalizer,” and I tend to agree. Everyone’s gnarly and sweaty, but we’re also elbow deep in watermelon slices, tans and Summer Fridays.

Maya and Ollie hate the summer. Each Memorial Day, I return from the beach to find them lounging around the apartment, their bodies literally wrapped around frozen water bottles. Seeing them dripping over the floor compels me to action: I clean my bedroom, set up the puppy pen around my bed so they don’t run beneath it, and import litter boxes and toys.

Maya is the first I scoop up. She’s normally a beast to handle, but she’s in such a stupor, she’s quite manageable. In fact, it’s a rare treat for the two of us – she, my teenaged menace always pulling from my arms in a race for independence, succumbs

Photo: Philip Forrest



Maya and Ollie.

to kisses with only a slight roll of her eyes. I pop her into the cool bedroom, close the door, and allow her to adjust.

Ollie barely fidgets, probably because he thinks we’re going to play the freezer game where I tuck him to my neck and we stand in front of the open freezer (fun, but not environmentally friendly).

But when I open the door to the bedroom and plunk him down, his demeanor changes. The bedroom is much smaller than the living room. And even though I set aside a “digging space” of blankets for Ollie and Maya to move and bite and dig into, it’s not the same.

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## Heatstroke! *(Continued from page 1)*

investment is well worth it, considering what an emergency trip to the vet might cost you if your bunny suffers a heat-related illness.

Below are some tips to keep your rabbit cool and safe this summer, especially if air-conditioning is not an option:

- Put some large marble or ceramic tiles on the floor for your bunny to sit on. The coolness of the tiles will feel good when the mercury rises. My bunny Joshua loved to snuggle up against the cool ceramic toilet on the marble bathroom floor.
- Move bunny to a cooler part of the house. This might be a bathroom with cool tiles, a basement or a room that doesn’t get direct sunlight.
- Provide some frozen water bottles for bunny to snuggle against. A large water bowl with some ice cubes also can be refreshing.
- Brush out any loose fur. We don’t want any extra layers in the summer!

- Keep in mind that bunnies don’t sweat, so they don’t benefit from fans in the same way as we do when perspiration evaporates from our skin with the help of a gentle breeze. Use a wet towel over your bunny’s pen or condo and have a fan blow through it to cool the air. Never have a fan blow directly on your bunny – and make sure the power cord is bunny-proofed!
- Mist the ears with cool water. Don’t use cold water, though, and be careful that no water gets into the ears.
- Provide plenty of cool water and veggies to help your bunny stay hydrated.
- Be especially careful about keeping your bunny cool when traveling with her during hot summer weather. Riding in a hot car or waiting on a hot train platform in a small carrier is not only miserable, but dangerous for your bunny.
- When using a frozen water bottle in a cage, you can place a large cardboard box or blanket over the cage to insulate the environment and keep it cooler. The bottle will cool the air in the cage; the

cover will keep the cool air in and the hot air out and allow a two-liter bottle to stay cold for six or more hours. It’s okay to leave an opening for fresh air and light. The larger the bottle, the more hours it will take to thaw out. A pair of two-liter bottles will make the space colder and thaw out more slowly. Owners should test the setup, monitoring the temperature inside the tent, before leaving their rabbits this way for a substantial amount of time (say, a whole day at work).

- Be on the lookout for any signs of heat stress, heat exhaustion or heatstroke: difficult or rapid breathing, flared nostrils, lethargic or slow movements, poor coordination, poor appetite, body temperature above 103 F, confusion, seizures.
- If you suspect your rabbit is suffering from heat stress or exhaustion, mist his ears and body with lukewarm – not cold – water. Do not submerge your bunny in water, as this might cause him to go into shock. Call your rabbit-savvy vet immediately!  
– Mary Ann Maier contributed to this article.



**Asher** (Continued from page 1)

surrendered by his owners because they couldn't afford veterinary care.

As I approach, Asher comes to the front of his cage to greet me. I open the cage door and stroke his forehead. What has happened to his left eye? I can't see it! Below where his eye should be, thick yellow pus has streamed down and congealed on inflamed red-pink skin and matted fur. I lift up a heavy, furred mass, and there it is – a normal-looking dark brown eye staring back at me. The weight of this lump has been pulling soft tissue over his left eye and tugging his lower eyelid downward. I rub Asher's forehead again. As he pushes into my hand, I see movement below his chin. Another big mass dangles from his lower jaw.

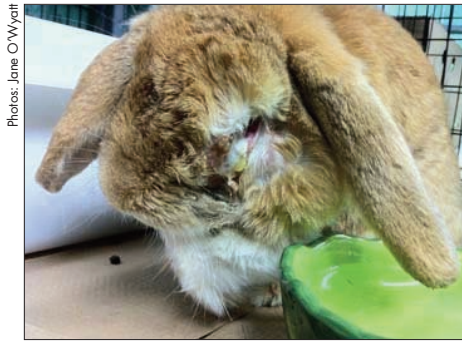
These masses couldn't have erupted overnight. They feel firm and irregular, as though they have been increasing in size and complexity for some time.

Asher's former owner may have been short of money and observational skills, but she seems to have given him some care. His body feels well-fleshed, and his pumpkin-and-white coat is clean, thick and soft. The bottoms of his feet are nicely furred, his lop ears are free of mites and his nails are not too long. His poops, plentiful and scattered around his cage, are perfect!

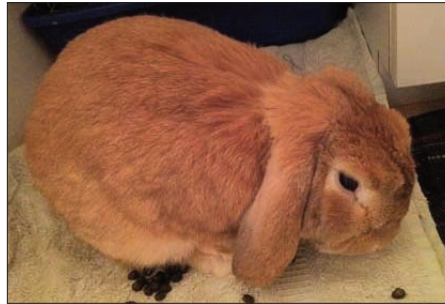
Asher is friendly and inquisitive. Although he is disfigured and smells bad, I find him lovable. Under my gaze, he tilts his head slightly to the right, as if he were trying to balance the heavy load on the left side of his face.

I call Cindy Stutts, who has seen the photo that Brittnee took the night before, and I tell her that this bunny looks young and healthy – except for these enormous masses. We arrange an immediate vet appointment for Asher.

I put the unprotesting Asher into a carrier and take him to Anthony Pilny's office, where we have an 11 a.m. appointment. Dr. Pilny seems like a good choice for Asher, having recently removed a large, heavy mass from the dewlap of a shelter bunny named Angela. Her mass, which



Asher at AC&C.



Seen from his right side.

Dr. Pilny excised "en bloc" (as a whole), was not all abscess (encapsulated pus: necrotic tissue, white blood cells, bacteria). It also included salivary gland tissue and its own blood supply. The latter, termed vascularization, made for a very delicate surgery because Dr. Pilny had to cut the mass away from Angela's jugular vein. Angela has recovered beautifully, and I hope that Dr. Pilny might be able to help Asher. Palpating Asher's body, Dr. Pilny says, "He doesn't seem to be in pain, but there are multiple lobulated abscesses, the worst I've seen." In rabbits, Dr. Pilny explains, certain kinds of bacteria are sequestered in abscess capsules, so infection doesn't spread throughout the body. The downside: few drugs can penetrate the thick walls of abscesses. Highly developed abscesses like Asher's are impossible to cure except by excision. At six-plus pounds, Asher isn't in bad physical shape, so he might do all right in surgery. Dr. Pilny holds Asher gently and expresses pale yellow pus from a blocked tear duct. He says, "You are a smelly bunny."

A radiograph shows that the bone of Asher's lower jaw is in good shape, although the root tips of a couple of molars on the left side look dark, abnormal. These molars are located where the abscesses may have begun to form, but Dr. Pilny is reluctant to declare them the cause of the infection. "I can't tell if these molars

are the cause or an effect," he says. Indicating the unclear root tips of incisors in the upper jaw, Dr. Pilny says that their moth-eaten appearance also indicates deterioration due to infection.

Asher's condition seems daunting, but Dr. Pilny does not mention euthanasia. He thinks this bunny deserves a chance.

The treatment plan begins with a reduction of Asher's bacterial burden with daily 0.5-cc subcutaneous injections of Penicillin G/Bicillin and ciprofloxacin eye drops. "That naso-lacrimal [tear] duct is too inflamed to be flushed today," Dr. Pilny says. "We'll see about a flush next time you bring him in." After a week or 10 days of foster care, Asher should be a stronger candidate for surgery. Dr. Pilny proposes to excise the bigger, heavier abscess under Asher's chin first. "This abscess," he says, weighing it in the palm of his hand, "is not closely attached to the head like the other, so it should be easier to take out. The bunny will definitely be more comfortable without it. Plus, surgery should give us an idea what we're up against. If all goes well, we can schedule a second surgery for the other abscess. And at some point, while he's under, we can neuter him, too."

At home, I place the carrier containing Asher in the bathtub and close the door to keep our cats Virginia and Amelia O'Feral out of the bathroom while I round up supplies. My partner and I live in a loft with no closed-off spaces except for the bathroom, so it has functioned as a guest room for an injured pigeon, various visiting cats and a couple of medical foster bunnies, Francis and Angela. Asher is our third and most compromised rabbit guest. I set up water and pellet bowls along with a Timothy hay-filled litter box, spread out an old bath towel and flannel sheet, and then I lift Asher out of his carrier. He does a brief reconnaissance – I'm sure he detects Angela's scent, but, with those sandbags stuck to his head, he doesn't try to re-chin her markings. As soon as he starts eating pellets, I rush out to buy greens.

I would like to think that our place is less stressful than the shelter, but our

(Continued on page 4)

**Asher** (Continued from page 3)

cats, stationed just outside the bathroom door, are curious about Asher and annoyed about the attention he's getting. While it's quiet here, the cats' vibes might be unnerving to a sick rabbit. But Asher, who has the option of crouching in the litter box under a shelf stacked with towels, doesn't hide. He drinks water from a bowl, submerging and soaking most of the abscess under his chin. Then, after wolfing down parsley, cilantro, dandelion and romaine, he flops on the floor between the toilet and the tub.

Asher is a stoic patient, settling quietly into the daily routine of injections and eye drops. He has no litter-box skills to speak of, but he doesn't circle or hump—he's not feeling well enough to act like a normal intact male bunny. Despite assiduous grooming, he can't clean the left side of his face. Relatively inactive for the first couple of days, he hops around slowly and shudders sometimes, but I don't see him binky. He responds gratefully but undemonstratively to verbal and physical caresses. He is always enthusiastic about food, though. He loves to eat. Each day he gets fresh hay, a half-cup of pellets and copious fresh greens.

I begin to feel that I am entering Asher's cage when I go into the bathroom. Although he avoids the bathtub, he has claimed the rest of this little pentagonal room with its window opening into the living area and its sliding barn door, on the other side of which Virginia and Amelia often sit. Perplexed by his dietary preferences, the cats never seem to tire of listening to Asher crunch on his salads.

Asher's medical condition doesn't appear to change, but within a few days he seems brighter. He jumps out of his litter box cheerfully when I give him pellets in the morning. He enjoys being petted whenever anyone enters his space. He often stretches out near the closed door, inches away from the cats.

Watching closely for any sign of improvement, I find solace in the likelihood that

gastrointestinal stasis, aka the silent killer, won't affect Asher any time soon. At the same time, I know that he is not like other rescued fixer-upper rabbits. Asher is a long shot; his recovery may require a miracle.

I read articles about abscesses by veterinarians Susan Brown and Carolynn Harvey, among others, which emphasize that the cause of a rabbit's abscess must be identified and dealt with. If, in Asher's case, the cause is the infected molars and/or incisors in Dr. Pilny's radiograph, extracting these teeth will be difficult. Removing the abscess on the left side of Asher's face will be tricky because this abscess appears to be anchored to underlying tissue, possibly impinging on the ear canal and other structures. Asher may be genetically predisposed to produce new abscesses. He may have to receive daily Pen G/Bicillin injections for months, or years. His treatment's monetary expense could be astronomical.

On the thirteenth morning of Asher's sojourn in the bathroom, I find a single perfect bunny poop on the closed toilet lid. Since there's only one way it could have gotten there, I laugh and tell Asher I found his signature. "Lucky for you the lid was down," I say, and he turns to look at me with his right eye. I interpret his leap up to the closed toilet lid as a good omen. At 10 a.m. he is due at Dr. Pilny's for surgery.

Dr. Pilny calls around noon. "Asher didn't make it. I removed the abscess under his chin. It was wrapped around the jugular vein. His heart stopped at the end of a 48-minute surgery. We brought him back and he arrested again. I'm so sorry. If we'd known any medical history...."

I manage to thank Dr. Pilny for all his help. For the rest of the day I cry about Asher's short, neglected life, the softness of his coat, his buried left eye, his love of dandelion greens, his half-handsome, half-horrific, burdened head. With the cats' help, I clean up the bathroom. They seem sympathetic, even sad. They, and I, were just getting to know Asher.

Photos: © Anthony Pilny, DVM 2011



Both of Asher's abscessed masses were shaved before surgery.



Dr. Pilny excised this cluster of abscesses en bloc.

## References

"You've Got Bunnies," 1:38 in length, shows right-side views of Asher at Animal Care & Control, Manhattan. Asher's "good" profile can be seen clearly on the video at points 00.13 and 00.22-25.

<http://video.aol.com/video/youve-got-bunnies/1993278205>

Susan Brown, DVM: Abscesses in Rabbits

<http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=503&S=5>

Carolynn Harvey, DVM: Abscesses in Rabbits

[http://therabbithaven.org/DrHarveyBunnyfestAbscessTalk\\_060410.html](http://therabbithaven.org/DrHarveyBunnyfestAbscessTalk_060410.html)

VCBE, Laurie Hess, DVM

[http://www.avianexoticvet.com/showItem.php?article\\_id=78&cm=y](http://www.avianexoticvet.com/showItem.php?article_id=78&cm=y)

<http://www.ontariorabbits.org/health/healthinfo1.1.htm>

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# Why Rabbits Are the Unluckiest of Animals

By Natalie L. Reeves

2011 is the “Year of the Rabbit” under the Chinese zodiac, and the Chinese believe that rabbits bring luck to the humans associated with them. The rabbits themselves, however, are far from lucky. Rabbits are one of the most popular pets in the U.S., yet they are also killed for fur, food, keychains, experiments and sport. This dichotomy would be unthinkable with other companion animals. Why are rabbits different?

Cindy Stutts, manager of the NYC AC&C Rabbit Program, and I discussed what makes rabbits special and the laws that permit rabbits to be eaten, worn or otherwise abused, at a program held at the New York City Bar Association on April 28. This was the first time, to my knowledge, that a legal association has sponsored a program relating to rabbits.

The April program was the culmination of years of research into rabbits following my 2007 adoption of Mopsy from New York City’s public shelter. Before and after adopting my adorable black fuzzy

lop, I read everything I could find on the care of rabbits. Because Mopsy has long hair that mats easily, I thought it would be a good idea to review advice provided by breeders on grooming. So I registered for every Yahoo Groups list I could find relating to rabbits, particularly angoras and long-haired rabbits. It was on these breeder lists that I learned for the first time in great detail the horrors endemic to rabbit breeding.

The never-ending cruelties I read about led me to start a Facebook group, Big Apple Bunnies, which is meant to help rabbits by showing pictures of adoptable rabbits, educating as to various cruelties inflicted on rabbits, and posting lighter stories relating to rabbits. As a member of the Committee on Legal Issues Pertaining to Animals of the New York City Bar Association, I proposed that we sponsor a program relating to rabbits, and the committee gave its full support.

Cindy showed a powerful video created by the Monaco House Rabbit Society that highlighted some of the living

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Natalie Reeves and Cindy Stutts at the New York City Bar Association.

conditions of rabbits being raised by breeders. She talked about the success of the New York rabbit-rescue program due to partnerships among Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, Animal Care & Control, Petco, volunteers, veterinarians who volunteer or provide services at discounted rates, adopters, fosterers, the Mayor’s Alliance for NYC’s Animals and others.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Ollie and Maya Cool Off

*(Continued from page 2)*

I leave to get the water bottles. Early on, I realized that frozen water bottles were the key to summer with bunnies. I keep eight one-liter bottles in my freezer, with the labels peeled off. Each day before I leave for work, I wrap four of the bottles in pillowcases, and place them sporadically around their room. They bite and move them, but in the end, they always lie next to them, pushing their ears into the cool condensation. When I come home from work, I swap them out for another set in the freezer, and another set of pillowcases to allow the morning ones to dry.

One day I had a revelation on how to cool them off: a pizza stone. I happened to have two different pizza stones, so I took one, tossed it in the freezer, then laid it out for the buns. They lay next to it

until it lost some of its freezer bite, and then flopped right onto it. Bonus: when they dig at the stone, it acts as a giant nail file. However, I must admit: it is jarring to see your rabbit lying in the center of a platter usually bound for the oven.

I’ve also repeated the trick with extra or discounted ceramic tiles, bought for about ten bucks each.

When I open the door to the bedroom, Ollie bolts out through my legs. He tells me in a tiny, yet assertive, voice that he prefers the extra space over the coolness. I plead for him to return. I try bargaining with frozen banana chunks. Nothing works. Then I tell him the story of terrible people who make coats out of bunnies to keep themselves warm –“Ollie coats,” I say.

“And do you know when they wear these Ollie coats?” I ask.

He shakes his head, wide-eyed.

“They don’t wear them in the summer because it’s too hot. They wear them in the winter. Since you have a built-in Ollie coat, you need to be extra careful to stay cool.”

He is too stunned to even twitch his nose, so I scoop him up, kiss his head, and return him to the cool bedroom, where he lays next to Maya and repeats what I said in a hushed whisper in her ear. She sighs in response.

When I return with a final gift (ice cubes for their water dish), he doesn’t run away. Instead, he dances around my legs, digs at a frozen piece of ceramic tile, and then flops in a curve next to a water bottle where he’ll stay until Labor Day.

# Nine Reasons to Adopt a Rabbit From a Rescue Group or Shelter Instead of Purchasing One

By Mary E. Cotter

1. You save a bunny who might otherwise be euthanized.
2. You free up cage space so another rabbit can come into the shelter and have a second chance at a home.
3. Rescued buns have already been spayed or neutered, so you do not have to deal with hormonally driven behavior.
4. You save money: adoption fees are substantially lower than spay/neuter costs at private veterinary clinics.
5. When you buy a rabbit in a pet store, the breeder and pet store both profit from the sale of a “commodity,” and the pet store immediately replaces the rabbit you bought with another rabbit (often acquired from a “rabbit mill”); then

- more rabbits are bred to meet the “demand” that you helped to create. By adopting instead of buying, you can be sure your money is not going to support this exploitative system.
6. A bunny from a shelter or a rescue typically has had a health check. Bunnies from pet stores are often kept in crowded, unsanitary conditions and carry intestinal (and other) parasites; many die shortly after purchase.
7. Adopting is an educational act: you model a life-saving behavior that others will emulate. People who see that you adopted a rabbit rather than buying one are more inclined to do the same, so your adoption could result in several other adoptions – all supporting shelters or rescue groups.



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt  
Volunteer Joanna Ung with Webster at Petco store.

8. When you adopt a spayed/neutered rabbit from a rescue group, what you see is what you get. When you buy a baby rabbit in a pet store, you don't know what you are getting. The rabbit isn't yet sexually mature, and you have no idea what the adult personality will be like.
9. You will get excellent and very useful adoption counseling and education from a rescue group, something that pet stores typically are not able to offer, and you will be affiliating yourself with people who care about the long-term well-being of your rabbit, instead of short-term profit.

## The Unluckiest of Animals

*(Continued from page 5)*

When an audience member asked about ways to stop restaurants from serving rabbits, Cindy related a method that had been successful for her. She and her husband, Bill, have known many chefs through their involvement with the James Beard Foundation. Cindy and Bill would invite chefs who had previously served rabbit in their restaurants to meet the Stutts' pet rabbits. Cindy said that chefs who visited her home and met her rabbits said they would never again include them on their menus.

In my talk, I highlighted the ways that rabbits “fall through the cracks.” For example, while there are countless American nonprofits involved in pet advocacy, most of these organizations focus on dogs and cats. And while there are many advocacy organizations that are devoted to the protection of farm animals, rabbits usually are not one of the animals those organizations speak out on behalf of. Most of the nonprofit groups devoted to rabbits are focused on

the rescue, shelter and well-being of pet rabbits and generally do not get involved in rabbit activism. As a result, rabbits receive minimal protection.

The American Rabbit Breeders' Association is the largest organization representing rabbit breeders in this country. Think of ARBA as the rabbit version of the American Kennel Club (the dog breeders' organization). But unlike the American Kennel Club, ARBA advocates the killing of the animals its members breed. Rabbit breeders who sell rabbits to the public directly or through pet stores usually are willing to sell excess rabbits as food to people or other animals. In fact, their own organization trumpets its belief that rabbits are mere commodities. You can read more about ARBA's views on its website ([www.arba.net](http://www.arba.net)), where among other things you can find a list of rabbit processors to kill rabbits.

What can you do? First, talk about your rabbits and show their pictures to non-rabbit people. People who think of rabbits as pets are less likely to eat and wear

them. If rabbit is served in a restaurant, contact the manager and let him or her know that you will not eat there as long as rabbit is served. It is best to do this nicely as people in the restaurant industry do not distinguish between rabbits and cows and chickens – these animals are all food to them. Never buy a rabbit from a pet store or from a breeder and tell managers at pet stores that you will not buy their products as long as rabbits are sold there.

Changing the laws is not easy. There are a few existing laws that can be used to protect rabbits, such as the laws prohibiting animal cruelty and nuisance laws. If you are interested in learning more about rabbit activism issues, please contact me at: [NatalieLReeves@yahoo.com](mailto:NatalieLReeves@yahoo.com). I'd be happy to send you a copy of the slide presentation I gave and then answer any questions you may have. Please “like” Big Apple Bunnies on Facebook, where I'll post issues as I become aware of them. There is also an excellent overview of these issues in the book “Stories Rabbits Tell” by Susan Davis and Margo DeMello.



## A Furry Family in Need Arrives Without Warning

By Will Leung

On that Friday, March 25, it was my second day helping out as a volunteer at the shelter, which was a lot different from my usual volunteer work at the Petco stores. Jane O'Wyatt was there to officially show me the ropes, and everything seemed to be going smoothly.

Just before we were about to leave, Jane taught me something very important: Always ask the front desk if there are any new rabbits that have come in.

Sure enough, there were two adults, a male and female, along with their three babies, back in the medical area.

Jane and I made phone calls to get some guidance from other members of our group. We took the rabbits out of medical and brought them into the rabbit room on the second floor. The dad was placed in a separate cage, with the babies and their mom put together – with a small litter box for the babies and a larger one for the mom. The newborns were small; one had black patches and the two others were entirely pink. We examined the cage they had arrived in and noticed a fourth kit who had died.

The cage itself was one of those typical store-type setups, cramped and dirty. The bottom of the cage was soaked, and the bedding seemed to be perhaps a combination of soil and wood shavings or wood dust.

We tried to pluck out fur from the dirty cage to create a nest for the babies. But much of the fur from the mother, now named Cecilia, was unusable because it was mixed into the soiled bedding.

Of the three kits, the patchy black one was the biggest and seemed most active. One of the pink babies barely moved, while the other pink one had a bit more strength.

Cecilia and the kits' dad, Tobias, were ravenous and we fed them extras of veggies and pellets. Then we put paper up around the mom's cage to help the

newborns feel secure, without too much distraction.

We left them that night hoping all would be well for the babies.

As volunteers posted messages over the next few days, we learned that only one baby survived. We named her Jinx, and when I finally saw her the next Friday, she was already wandering around in the cage. By her coloring, I guessed that she was the patchy black kit, but I wasn't certain. As days went on, we all marveled at this cute baby girl growing up at the shelter.

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Top, Jinx with her mother Cecilia at AC&C.

Middle, Jinx in Loraine's bathroom.

Bottom, Jinx's father Tobias at AC&C.

The last day I saw Jinx, she was running around grooming herself, munching on greens and doing little popcorn binkies!

Cecilia and Jinx were fostered by Loraine Kopf, who said, "Cecilia, having been spayed a couple days before I brought her and her baby home, continued nursing Jinx for two weeks. What a good mom!" Loraine said Cecilia had become an escape artist, "getting over the screen in my bathroom doorway and finding the darkest places to hide!" Loraine added, "I think she was the one who did in my Internet connection because one place she was hiding was behind my computer, and I found that the wire connecting the modem to the phone line was chewed."

Loraine said the two rabbits "are both sharing my bathroom with me, and I have to be careful because Cecilia, a very clever bun (she nibbles on my bare heels to get my attention)," still tries to escape when she can. "And I have to chase her all over the apartment to catch her. I'm convinced that she enjoys getting out and having me chase after her!"

Meanwhile little Jinx, who unlike her mother is fuzzy, "has doubled in size and having stopped nursing, now is gobbling up her pellets and hay, and is relishing all kinds of greens," Loraine said in early May. She said Jinx was "eating everything that's not nailed down," and added, "She is very outgoing, coming up to me and putting her head up to be petted, and is not afraid at all of Annabell, my cocker spaniel."

As for Jinx's appearance, Loraine said, "the baby is jumping around like crazy. She is eating everything plus still nursing from her mom, and is simply adorable. For those of you who volunteer at 86th Street, she looks just like the bunny on the key chain, just a little bigger."

Tobias was put up for adoption at Fauna, previously known as Uptown Birds, and Cecilia arrived at the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine in mid-May to take up residence in the display window.

– Loraine Kopf contributed to this article.

## Sugar Survived on Birdseed and Cat Food But Then Joined Binky to Live Indoors

Photo: Chloe Moreno



Sugar and Timmy the cat getting impatient and pawing at the back door.

By Nancy Carbone

We weren't looking to adopt another rabbit when we received the email from Vivian Barna. You see, just six weeks earlier we had adopted our first bun from the AC&C shelter and Vivian was the volunteer who assisted us. But when I read the message that said she had recently rescued an English lop mix from a Maspeth backyard, I was all ears. I live in Maspeth!

Vivian sent me a few pictures of this girl she called Lacey. Although Lacey was cute, we still weren't ready to add another bun to the household. I guess you could say we were still getting our feet wet with our boy bun, Binky (formerly Taran). But we couldn't stop thinking about the poor bun from our neighborhood.

And then we learned Lacey's story. Vivian had provided me with the name of the woman who had initially found her. Chloe lived at the opposite end of

Maspeth from me. She told me how she had spotted this thin, little bunny in her backyard along with a stray cat and her kittens. It was December 2009; there was snow on the ground, and it was *cold*.

Chloe was worried about this bunny. The cats had been around for awhile and Chloe was putting food out for them daily. She also had a birdfeeder. She tried several times to catch the rabbit, but the bunny would always run away and hide. Yet the little bunny would show up in her backyard every day, lured by the birdseed that fell from the birdfeeder, the company of her cat friends and the cat food.

Chloe did some research and learned that the birdseed and cat food were not good for bunnies. She would entice the rabbit with all sorts of organic fruits, greens and veggies, hoping to gain her trust and bring her inside.

After a month, Chloe finally had success. The bunny was waiting at the back door to partake in a meal of dry cat food. Chloe was able to coerce her into the house, but she quickly ran out. Luckily the bunny knew where to find more food and when she showed up at the back door again, Chloe was able to get her inside and called on Vivian to make the rescue.

A few weeks later we agreed to bring Binky over to Vivian's to meet Lacey. My husband and I were immediately impressed with Lacey's curiosity and how comfortable she was around us.

She came hopping over to sniff and inspect us. She had a very sweet demeanor and we began referring to her as "Sugar Bun." Hmm...this bun had potential. While it wasn't love at first sight, we thought the two buns – Sugar and our recently adopted Binky – could eventually live together. We offered to foster her so that Vivian could make room for two new rabbits she was taking on. It wasn't

Photo: Nancy Carbone



Photo: Chloe Moreno



Top, Binky and Sugar, happily ever after. Bottom, Sugar with Chloe Moreno's husband, Elias.

long before we fell in love with Sugar and made the decision to adopt her. I made a call to Cindy Stutts for advice on how to proceed.

Cindy was understandably concerned; we were new bunny parents and our Binky didn't have the opportunity to "speed date" and choose his mate. We had chosen Sugar for him. There was a chance this might not work out.

We told Cindy we would keep Sugar, even if she and Binky didn't successfully bond. But bond they did. It was a long and arduous process that my husband boldly took on. But all his hard work paid off in the form of our "luvbugs," Binky and Sugar, happy in their forever home.



## Single White Bunny Seeks Forever Home

By Kirsten Ott

Since about a year ago, I've been writing "blurbs" to promote our adoptable furry rock stars. I took over from the incomparable Jane O'Wyatt, who taught me everything I know and who still supplies artful photos of our bunnies. I post the bunnies with their photos and blurbs on Petfinder – you can see the current crop by searching on rabbits in NYC.

A good blurb conveys all the essential info on a given rabbit (or bonded pair) in a compelling and entertaining way. Of course, the objective is to "sell" a given rabbit, but we certainly don't want to place our rabbits with the wrong people. Some rabbits shouldn't be in homes with small children; some need more play space than others; some would work better than others as partner bunnies, and so on.

Each blurb includes the basics: recent history, size, breed (if known), appearance, personality, any medical conditions or special needs, spay/neuter status, litter-box skills and our email address. Depending on the individual bunny, some of these elements may be emphasized more than others.

If a bunny has a very outgoing personality, I shine a spotlight on that. To illustrate,

here are a few excerpts, along with pictures:

**Tucker** (*adopted*) is a medium-sized, caramel-colored bunny who was found on a street in Queens. This boy is very high-spirited, outgoing and active. He'll do his utmost to make friends with you! He makes cute little grunting noises while he's playing or ripping paper. His coloring and lean athleticism bring to mind a miniature fawn! Tucker will need lots of space for exercise and lots of stimulating playthings.

**Abigail** (*adopted*) is a highly entertaining, medium-sized black-and-white lop. Having a bad day? This fun girl is guaranteed to cheer you up. She has giant white feet and long black ribbon-y ears that brush along the floor as she hops around. Abigail is playful, bright, enthusiastic and sociable. And she has an appetite to match her energy!

**Jiminy and Geppetto** (*adopted*) are a bonded pair of large boys, but more aptly described as the latest comedy sensation to hit New York! These guys, found on the street, are so much fun to watch; they have great personalities, amusing behaviors and funny facial expressions. Jiminy, the dominant bun, has a super fluffy white and gray coat. His partner, Geppetto, is a mostly white bunny with brown helicopter ears.

**Kelsey** (*adopted*) is a small, super-cute silver marten boy who was surrendered by his owner for "landlord reasons." This guy is a little monkey: he'll crawl up on your lap,



Photos: Jane O'Wyatt

Top to bottom: Tucker, Abigail, Jiminy and Geppetto, Kelsey, Giselle

then quickly decide to venture even further – onto your chest, or up onto your shoulder! He'll need a home with lots of opportunities to climb and play, and would make a good partner for another bunny. He is also very affectionate: he loves petting, and he'll kiss you any chance he gets. Kelsey has a very shiny black coat with typical silver-marten accents, in light gray.

On the other hand, if a bunny is particularly shy, I try to put that across:

**Giselle** (*adopted*) is a stunning, medium-large harlequin. Her tan, black and gray coat will certainly turn many heads! Though Giselle is beautiful, she is no narcissist; she's actually somewhat tentative

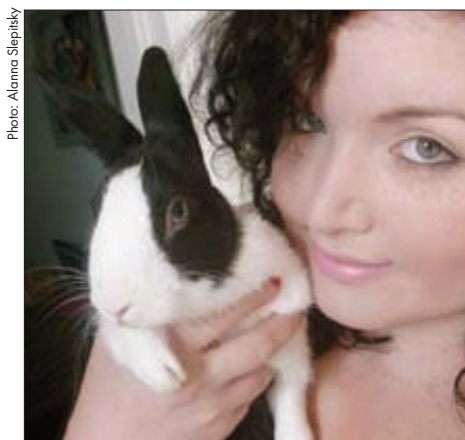
(Continued on page 10)

## Benny Inspired Me to Volunteer

By Alanna Slepitsky

After adopting Benny (formerly known as "Homer") last summer, I knew that I wanted to pay it forward by volunteering for the shelter. Along with Benny, I have another rabbit, Queen Bea, and they are always a source of amusement.

As soon as there was an opening in my schedule, I decided to buckle down and sign up for a volunteer position at the Union Square Petco, which was a convenient subway ride from my apartment in Brooklyn.



Benny and Alanna.

Although I'm only assisting with the rabbits who live there once a week, my being there for a few hours is all that it takes to make them binky, and me smile. I take pleasure in knowing that I am shaping these buns to be amazing pets and wonderful additions to forever homes.

It's because of the caring volunteers who nurtured Benny until I was able to take over that I can happily say I have him in my life, and I can't wait for others to say the same about the rabbits they adopt from us.

## Single White Bunny

(Continued from page 9)

and unassuming. She was found on the street, and now she needs a calm home with a loving human who will earn her trust and give her a lot of gentle attention. A partner bun might help her come out of her shell a bit.

**Dale** (*adopted*) is a large, very sensitive Californian bunny who was found on a street in the Bronx. This poor guy was extremely traumatized when he arrived at the shelter; it has taken him a while to acclimate and start to relax. He is by nature a very sweet and cuddly bunny, but because of his recent life experience, he needs a very quiet and predictable home where he can finish coming out of his shell. Dale has a creamy coat, soft, light brown feet, and a big Hershey's kiss for a nose. He has beautiful, small pinkish-red eyes.

Sometimes a bunny has particularly striking physical features, and my blurb will call those out:

**Clark** (*adopted*) is a small-medium-sized black and white bunny with some remarkable physical features. First, he has striking blue-grey eyes – very unusual for a bunny – and he'll stare right at you with those eyes while he enjoys your nose scratches. Second, he has a raccoon-like eye mask, and on one side of his face, the black eye patch morphs into a sideburn. Finally, he has a white back – but a mostly black rump! Clark was surrendered by his prior family because a child was failing to care for him. He needs a fresh start with a patient, loving human who will earn his trust and give him a chance to come out of his shell.

**Nicholas** (*adopted*) is an absolutely stunning small lionhead gentleman who was abandoned at a Petco store with his two young lionhead sons. This handsome guy has a light-brown torso and a chocolate-brown, velvety muzzle, feet and ears. Most strikingly, from some angles his eyes glow a deep burgundy red! Nicholas is well-mannered, unassuming and easy to handle. He is now ready for a new home without his kids – though he would make a good partner for another adult bunny.

**Orlando** (*adopted*) is a large lop who was surrendered (along with his identical twin brother) by his owner. This boy is distinguished by his very amusing helicopter ears: one tends to stick straight up or bend to the opposite side, and the other hangs down, giving him a permanent “comb-over” look!

His personality is just as fun: he's an active explorer and chinner, and is very outgoing.

Unfortunately, some of our bunnies arrive in poor physical condition as a result of neglect, abuse or homelessness. Our volunteers, fosterers and vets work hard to clean up and rehabilitate these poor souls, and sometimes I choose to showcase their “before and after” stories in their blurbs:

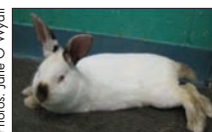
**Jessy** (*adopted*) is a truly remarkable large white bunny who was found on a street in the Bronx. She was in quite a sorry state when she arrived at the shelter – she had dirty hindquarters and hocks, was missing fur, and her back was covered with an oily substance. Fortunately, she's now on the mend. Despite her sad recent circumstances, Jessy is a very happy, sociable, trusting and intelligent girl! She runs and binkies, eats like a horse, and is a total snuggle bunny. She's assertive, too – she'll hop right up to you and lay her head on your lap. Jessy would make a great family bunny and/or partner for another bunny.

**Gracie** (*adopted*) is a big miracle of a girl. This giant angora mix was in bad shape when she was surrendered at the shelter. She was neglected emotionally, and had severely matted fur; thankfully, she was fostered back to health. Now Gracie is in good shape: her coat is healthy and beautiful, and she's beginning to trust people again. She will need a very calm, quiet home where humans are predictable and loving. Once Gracie trusts you, she'll adore petting and grooming. Because she's so big, she must have lots of room – a puppy pen or bunny-proofed room. She'll also need cool temperatures – air conditioning when necessary – because of her thick coat.

Finally, it's important to describe any special needs or medical history warranting ongoing attention:

**Ace** (*adopted*) is a delightful dwarf hotot boy. This little guy arrived at the shelter with severe malocclusion, so he had to have his incisors removed. That means that he'll need his daily veggies finely chopped before serving! He has no trouble with hay and pellets. Ace got his name from the cool black fighter-pilot goggles around his eyes. But he's really a lover more than a fighter; he is very friendly, and would make a great partner for another bunny.

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Top to bottom: Dale, Clark, Nicholas, Orlando, Jessy, Gracie, Ace, Gerta, Webster

**Gerta** (*adopted*) is a wonderful special-needs bunny who was surrendered by her owner. Gerta has a mild congenital problem with her front shoulder or collarbone sockets, and as a result her front legs do not fit securely into her joints. This causes her front legs to splay, making her movements similar to a baby seal's! Gerta's condition doesn't seem to bother her at all: she's very active, outgoing, curious and funny. She's also very cute: she's a warm brown color, has some lionhead/woolly features, and you'll love her kissable round cheeks. Gerta will need a home with plenty of good floor covering to give her good traction.

**Webster** (*adopted*) is an adorable little hotot guy who was found on the street. At some point in the past, Webster broke his shin bone; clearly, he was not seen by a vet, because the two sections of broken bone fused together at a right angle. Miraculously, this guy is able to shuffle around on his bum leg pretty well! Webster has recently been examined by a knowledgeable bunny vet, who determined that the leg has vascular function and does not appear to be causing Webster any pain. However, Webster's adopter will have to be

(Continued on page 11)



# Some New Arrivals and Their Stories

By Kirsten Ott

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



**Eloise** is a large, absolutely stunning Himalayan bunny who was returned to the shelter by her adopter after just a few months. If anybun ever merited a forever home, it's Eloise. She's smart, beautiful, healthy, and has a lovely personality. This girl has aristocratic looks: a perfect cream coat, giant deep-brown ears, and light-brown gloves on her pretty feet. Perhaps because she's been abandoned more than once, Eloise is understandably wary: she needs to check you out carefully, looking thoughtfully into your eyes, before she decides to fully trust you. Once she decides you're okay, though, she'll stretch out right by your side and ask for petting. Eloise would make a good family bunny or partner for another rabbit.



**Pegasus** is a medium-sized cream-colored boy. He was discovered with his pregnant "wife," who promptly gave birth to a litter of seven! He was separated from them, of course, and is now looking for the next chapter in his already busy life. Pegasus is named for the winged horse of myth, because this guy can fly! He loves to launch himself into the air, and he can easily clear most puppy pens; therefore, his new people will need to make sure his habitat has high walls. Pegasus will charm you with his outgoing, confident, high-energy personality; this guy is ready for anything! He would make a good family bunny or partner for another (spayed) bunny.



**Simon** is a striking young Dutch bunny who was surrendered by someone who claimed they had "no time" for him. This guy has a perfect Dutch coat of the brightest white and blackest black. His black rear legs and white back feet make him look like he's wearing spats! Simon is a very enthusiastic guy and extremely active: he'll spend his days motoring around like a race car driver and doing all manner of binkies. He'll need a home with lots of running room. When he's not dashing around, he's quite easy to handle.

## Forever Homes Found!

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Angela, Polito, Ollie, Mandy, Tippiie, Tula, Webster, Dale, Snoopy, Snuggy, Mickey, Nonnie and Patty.

## VOLUNTEERS

### Single White Bunny *(Continued from page 10)*

especially attentive to his comfort: his home must have soft surfaces with good traction, i.e., no slippery or grid flooring. Despite his leg condition, Webster is a very happy and friendly boy! He will approach you to ask for attention and petting. And you won't be able to resist: Webster is as cute as a button, with dark-gray markings and symmetrical gray under-eye dots.

I don't have the opportunity to meet every single bunny, because some go straight into foster care. Once fostered bunnies are ready for adoption, however, I encourage their fosterers to send me blurb "ingredients" or even fully-drafted blurbs that I can edit and use for posting. For me, this job has been a lot of fun.



**Otto** is a funny, spunky little Himalayan guy with a real lust for the playing life. This young bunny absolutely loves to dig, run, jump, and explore, and he needs a home that will give him plenty of opportunities (and tunnels) to exercise his eager little self. Otto sports classic Himmy looks, with soft brown ears, a slightly irregular brown patch on his nose, shiny red eyes, and a particularly cute pinkish-brown cottontail.

## Domino Patiently Comforts Children, the Elderly

Photo: Natalie L. Reeves



Nora Beard and Domino.

By Nora Beard

In 2009 I had owned my Dutch rabbit Domino for about a year. It seemed that everyone who met him – either when I

had guests over or took him places – commented on how calm he was. This was especially true for parents of small children as young as one to two years old.

Kids loved petting Domino, and every time they did he would sit there and just look very relaxed. More often than not, parents would be shocked that he didn't try to bite or scratch their child.

I noticed his calm disposition, and I decided to see if I could get him certified to become a therapy bunny. I took him to a soldiers' home for retired veterans in Edison, N.J.

It was there that I met a woman from an organization called Therapet. The woman, Donna, took Domino into a quiet room and I sat down on the floor nearby. She picked him up and lightly stroked his feet and his mouth, and then patted him.

He just sat there as if what was happening to him was normal. Donna told me that

Domino had passed the test, saying he was the calmest rabbit she had seen in her 20 years of certifying animals as therapy pets. I took him around the soldiers' home and allowed the residents to pet him.

I walked out of the nursing home almost in tears because I was so proud of Domino. This summer he will become certified by the READ program, which will allow him to go to public libraries in New York City and sit quietly while kids read to him.

I think the most rewarding part of all this is that it brings a smile to the faces of elderly people who may have had a rough life, or children who cannot have pets at home, or kids who may be too shy to read out loud at school. Domino's personality amazes me because he is friendly and calm with all strangers. I hope that he continues to help people as a wonderful therapy rabbit.

## Bunny Talk: It's All About Body Language

By Diana Kronenberg

The first step to any relationship is introductions, but that can be a bit tough when you don't speak the same language. When I brought home my first bun, Charlie, I had to contend with an entire species barrier between us. Rabbits are prey animals and a human could certainly appear like a predator to one. I did my best to let Charlie have some space and take the lead in our greeting. He's a feisty little guy who's not afraid to make the first move when he's ready. As much as I wanted to jump right in and play with him, I didn't want to scare him. At times it was frustrating when I couldn't get him to understand me, as it still is today occasionally. The best thing I could do was wait. Time helped us to understand one another and learn from each other, too.

By the time our second rabbit joined the family, I certainly had learned a lot about how rabbits communicate. I felt confident that I could connect with our new girl, Bella. I didn't just stick my hand out to pet her; I knelt down and let her sniff my face. It definitely made a difference to understand what her little head flicks and heel kicks meant from the beginning. One thing I was not quite ready for were the differences between Charlie and Bella. He was aloof and a simple nudge could mean, "hello," "move it," or "feed me!" Bella, on the other hand, liked to bite when she wanted attention. "Pet me" and "Don't stop petting me" were this needy girl's main concerns.

Body language is key with bunnies, especially their ears. Charlie's ears move around like two radar dishes, tuning to

every sound and indicating his next movements. Nearly every time I look at him, I can guess what he wants or is trying to do. His posture and stance can tell me if he's relaxed or ready to pounce. His nose wiggling quickly can signal danger or just curiosity. From the very beginning, my bunny established a hierarchy, and he was at the top. He would tell us when it was okay for us to pet him and would demand to be fed. When Bella came into the picture, Charlie was no longer the boss. Oh, he still ruled over us humans, but Bella was the new queen. She demanded to be groomed constantly, to which Charlie would oblige, but she only occasionally groomed him. It didn't seem to bother him. He understood better than we did.

*(Continued on page 13)*



## U.K. Rabbit Group Marks 15-Year Milestone

By Dr. Linda Dykes

Founder, British Houserabbit Association/  
Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund

Just a few years ago, it wasn't uncommon for rabbit medicine to resemble something from the James Herriot era.

Remember the tales of sick animals being treated with multivitamin injections? Fast forward to the mid-1990s, and that's exactly how some vets would have treated your rabbit if he stopped eating.

Fifteen years later, many British rabbit owners are knowledgeable about GI stasis. They know about the impact of dental disease, and the benefits of neutering. And the fact that they and their vets

know these things is in no small part due to the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund, which has worked to change the lives of Britain's bunnies for the better.

### How We Began

Our group, formerly known as the British Houserabbit Association, began when four rabbit lovers decided to start a club for people who were keen to bring their rabbits indoors, aiming to "raise the status of the domestic rabbit to that of a cat or dog."

By 2000, the British Houserabbit Association had become much more than a club for house-rabbit owners. It

was time to become a charity, and also to rebrand the association to reflect the work we were doing to promote rabbit welfare. The result was the Rabbit Welfare Association (the club) and the Rabbit Welfare Fund (the charity). Charitable registration was completed in 2001, following which the British Houserabbit Association was relaunched as the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund.

This year, the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund celebrates its 15th birthday. The association is now the U.K.'s largest charity dedicated to improving the lives of pet rabbits.

*(Continued on page 14)*

## BEHAVIOR

### Bunny Talk *(Continued from page 12)*

Rabbits supposedly are mostly silent creatures, but my first bunny did not seem satisfied with that constraint. Rabbits can make several kinds of noises, and Charlie's favorite was a low, short grunt. Many things would elicit a grunt from my little guy: an intruder in the room, petting his fur the wrong way, touching his food and messing with his litter box; that last one was a big no-no. The grunts usually meant he was angry, but sometimes they just seemed more like his way of expressing himself the only way he knew how. Bella grunts, too, but not at the same things that provoke Charlie. I've come to appreciate the grunts as their way of talking back to us, and even find them sneaking into my own vocabulary. My entire family "grunts" now when we get annoyed.

As much as I had hoped to train my rabbits, it seems that they have actually trained me. I change my own behavior to make them happy and react to the communications they send to me. It may

be easier for us to learn to understand them than vice versa, but they do seem pretty aware of what goes on in our world. Charlie can tell when I'm upset and goes on alert to protect me from harm. They've figured out our routines, knowing when they get fed and when to go to bed, and they have learned these things a lot faster than some humans do.

The connections my rabbits make in their bunny minds often seem human-like, but I know they must have their own logic. Somehow they're able to understand me as well. They come when I call them, turn an ear in my direction when I talk to them and know a head rub means I love them. It's astounding how quickly they pick things up. When I want them to follow me, I crawl on my knees and turn my head over my shoulder and they come flying. It took me almost a year to realize that's what Charlie wanted when he did that to me. Sometimes I even think I can communicate better with my rabbits than with other humans. With a little learning on both sides, amazing communication can be achieved.

Photo: Diana Kronenberg



Charlie, at rear, with Bella.

## U.K. Rabbit Group

(Continued from page 13)

### Educating Owners

The association's first leaflet was titled, "Hey, Look at me. I'm a House Rabbit," and featured information on neutering, diet and behavior. That leaflet was followed by the first incarnation of our magazine, *Rabbiting On*, which was photocopied and stapled by hand.

Members were hungry for knowledge, and bearing in mind that fewer than 10% of the U.K. population used the Internet in those early years (no Facebook; no online forums), the association started a helpline and set up a network of advisers to give advice over the phone.

### Outreach

The association relied on the traditional media to spread the word, as well as educational leaflets, which remain a vital tool. Even with the rise in Internet usage, the association still produces more than 100,000 leaflets (14 titles) every year at a cost of about \$11,000.

Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund representatives also attend as many public events as possible. These outreach efforts occasionally attract criticism from those who think we should have nothing to do with other facets of the pet-rabbit industry, but the association has always believed that it is more important to seize opportunities to educate and, when necessary dispel myths, than to pretend that pet shops and rabbit shows (which many members find disturbing) do not exist.

If you want a benchmark for how far things have come, consider this: 15 years ago, you couldn't buy a six-foot hutch from a mainstream retailer in the U.K., and rabbits were rarely kept in pairs.

### Educating Vets

Although the initial emphasis of the association was providing an entertaining, informative network for members, we quickly realized that U.K. vets needed to catch up with their American counterparts.

A rabbit's quality of life is inextricably linked to better medical care. This includes basics such as safe neutering, which enables rabbits to be kept in pairs.

The handful of vets who were particularly rabbit-savvy (indeed, there were some international experts in rabbit medicine in Britain even then) were recognized on our "rabbit-friendly vet list," a service that still exists today. For the rest, the association launched an ambitious educational program.

In 2002, the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund organized our first "Rabbit Health Matters" conference. The event was a sellout, and has taken place annually ever since.

The next phase in influencing the U.K. veterinary profession was more ambitious: targeting vets still in training. Back in 1996, veterinary students typically only spent five days training in rabbit medicine. So, when the opportunity arose to half-fund a residency at Bristol Vet School (shared with Bristol Zoo), we jumped at the chance. To date, more than 2,000 veterinary and veterinary nursing students have been trained in Bristol's state-of-the-art rabbit clinic, creating a generation of rabbit-savvy professionals in practice throughout the U.K.

### Funding for Research

Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund grants have enabled research into topics such as E. cuniculi (it was an RWAFF-funded project that revealed that 50% of British pet rabbits have been exposed to EC), myxomatosis vectors, heart disease in rabbits, environmental enrichment and coccidiosis. Many pet rabbits benefited from this research.

### Supporting Rescue Efforts

From the early days, the association has supported rabbit rescue – but decided not to take a hands-on role.

The reason is simple: rabbit rescue provides an essential service to pick up the pieces when things have gone wrong. But education is essential to make sure things don't go wrong as often. As I

once said, "£100 (\$160) will pay for one or two rabbits to be neutered – or for 1,000 educational leaflets, which would hopefully result in at least 10 times as many rabbits actually being neutered."

As well as providing educational literature free of charge for rescue centers to distribute, we've always encouraged rabbit adoptions. A directory of rescues is available via our helpline. In 2006 we launched "Sponsor a Rescue," and to date, this program has raised almost \$19,400, benefiting 18 rescue centers so far.

### Campaigning on the National Stage

Prior to the creation of the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund, there was no single national body in Britain offering expert advice on companion rabbit issues. We were first approached by the government for advice in 2002 when the Animal Welfare Act was still on the drawing board, and we are now undoubtedly Britain's leading rabbit-welfare organization, serving on committees alongside other major animal welfare groups such as the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. We are part of the government's Companion Animal Sector Council and are currently working on rabbit health and welfare standards.

One of the reasons we are established as *the* authority for U.K. rabbit-welfare issues is our politically moderate approach: building bridges, not barriers, and working with organizations that have a different philosophy, as long as we can improve rabbit welfare.

You can read more about our successes in the quarterly magazine *Rabbiting On*, (sample articles and information are available at a link on our website, <http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk>). The most notable success recently has undoubtedly been influencing British retailers to stop selling completely inadequate hutches.

We have continually improved our website, which we believe is one of the

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## Here's Thumping at You From Jolly Old England

By Ros Lamb

*Ros Lamb, a committee member of the Rabbit Welfare Association & Fund in the U.K., initially contacted Mary Ann Maier of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab in late April. Thanks to the efforts of Ros, Thump received permission to run the article by Dr. Linda Dykes about the U.K. group that starts on page 13. We asked Ros to tell us about her own rabbits, Nutmeg and Betty.*

I have two rabbits. Nutmeg, cream and white, is seven years old and is husbun to Betty, who's only four. Their full names are Nutmeg Varmint and Kween Betty Winzer. Yes, I am eccentric!

Both are rescues. Nutmeg came from a small local rescue when he was two. He had spent the early part of his life alone in a cramped hutch. His sister lived alone in an equally cramped hutch next door to him. She was adopted out before I met Nutmeg, and he came to be husbun to my widowed Cinnamon Varmint. It was a wonderful love match from the moment they met up until Cinnamon died two years ago from cancer.

Betty arrived soon after. I adopted her from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. That group had rescued Betty when her family had moved

Photos: Ros Lamb



Nutmeg Varmint and Kween Betty Winzer.

away and left her behind to starve. Neighbors reported that she was there. The RSPCA informed the police, who have the legal right to break into properties if they believe animals are at risk. She was found in her cage with nothing to eat or drink and extremely nervous. It's taken a long time and a lot of patience to give her the confidence to be the bossy boots she is today – the bun who nose-bumps me every time she passes and will run over to have her head scratched.

Initially, I couldn't get near her, and she would lunge and growl. Now Betty's a little softy. She is still very protective of food, though, and it has been a problem between the pair of them from time to time, but mostly they are great friends.



Betty and Nutmeg rarely argue, except occasionally about food.

### U.K. Rabbit Group

*(Continued from page 13)*

most up-to-date and informative rabbit-specific websites in the world. Rabbiting On has featured articles about choosing veterinarians, about poisons to avoid, and about the rabbit digestive system, among many other topics.

### Moving On

What happens next is largely up to our members, who are encouraged to help by donating time and money, however small the donation. For ideas on how our

members and others can help, we include a "Get Involved" section on our website.

Rabbit Welfare Association members love to "talk rabbit," and we've always facilitated this. We initially set up local "Hopper Groups," where members would meet up and share rabbit stories and photos. Later, we organized annual events such as the "House Rabbit House Party," owner conferences and, more recently, fund-raising galas. This is in addition to the helpline, vet list, bunnyboarding list and, more recently, the free vet referral service offered in conjunction with the vet residency program.



Did I just hear the refrigerator door open?

## The Brave Bunnies of New Zealand

By Natalie L. Reeves

This past winter was a particularly hard one in the metro New York area. As several snowfalls paralyzed public transportation and rendered roads impassable, rabbit guardians with sick bunnies had to do their best to care for their rabbits until they could find a way to get to a vet.

But imagine if you lived in a place where your city was decimated by a natural disaster, with vets' offices and pet stores caught up in the devastation. This was the experience of Kei Rivers, a resident of Christchurch, New Zealand. Her story underscores the importance of being prepared for unforeseen disasters.

On Feb. 22, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake hit Christchurch. More than 180 people were killed and the area was devastated. A large number of pets were killed or lost. Countless structures were demolished, and up to one-third of the city's buildings were deemed structurally unsound.

Kei has two young bunnies, a boy named Holly and a girl named Nellie, who live outside but get a lot of attention from their doting mom. When an earlier earthquake hit at 4:35 a.m. on Sept. 4, 2010, Kei immediately ran outside to check on her bunnies. They seemed more confused by her presence in the middle of the night than they were by the shaking ground.

From September until the huge quake in February, residents of New Zealand became accustomed to regular earthquakes. Likewise, Kei's bunnies seemed to take them in stride. During one of the minor quakes, Kei was hand-feeding Holly, yet Holly didn't stop eating his snack even as the ground shook.

The day of the quake that obliterated Christchurch's way of life was a warm and sunny Tuesday. Around lunchtime, everything started shaking. The power went



Holly and Nellie.

off and furniture moved. The chimney on Kei's home snapped off, fell onto the driveway and cracked in two. During this terrifying time, Kei held onto her desk because she couldn't stand up. As soon as the quake stopped, she ran out of her house to check on the bunnies. Thankfully the bunnies were fine. In fact, Kei thinks that the only change in them was that they were more affectionate than usual. She believes that perhaps they sensed how upset she was and were trying to calm her.

The days following the February quake were confusing and terrifying. There was little news of who had lived or died or how extensive the damage was since there was no power, no clean water and no way to treat sewage. Kei's family used their outside barbecue and gas stove to boil rainwater for themselves and for their rabbits. They could not readily get supplies because the roads had actually liquefied and the winds blew dust around, which residents feared was contaminated. The two pet stores closest to Kei's home were badly damaged and had been forced to close.

A few weeks after the quake, Kei's bunny Holly got sick with a nose discharge and head tilt. In the past, Kei had always been able to get her bunnies in to see their vet on the same day that she called. Since so many area vets had closed after the quake,

her own vet was handling a far greater caseload and she had trouble getting an appointment. When she finally was able to see the vet several days later, Holly was diagnosed with a respiratory infection, most likely due to the silt dust in the air. To be safe, Kei used bottled water to clean Holly's face rather than boiled rainwater. Thankfully, despite the poor air quality and other challenges, Holly has gotten much better.

More than three months after the quake, things have improved for Kei and her neighbors, but they still face many challenges. They finally have drinkable water so that they don't have to boil rainwater anymore, but there is limited sewage capacity. The roads are still often in very poor condition and many area businesses (such as Kei's local grocery and pet stores) remain closed. After-shocks continue.

Kei's life has changed in other, more subtle ways. Her bag always contains a dust mask and a bottle of water. She will only wear comfortable sneakers and she has her rabbit supplies (such as Metacam) readily accessible so she can grab them if she needs to evacuate.

Even though Kei dreams of having her rabbits one day live inside with her, she fears that they would be in danger because of all of the falling objects during a quake. Since her area has few natural predators, she believes the rabbits are safer outside. She is proud of their resilience. While neighborhood cats have "freaked out," her rabbits have remained calm and brave.

Kei says, "I also don't know how I would have handled things myself without [my rabbits]. They've given me something to focus on, and keeping busy making sure they have all their needs attended to has kept me from dwelling on other things, things I can't control."



# RIP: Beautiful Bella

By Kerstin Aumann

Bella joined our home in February of 2005. We adopted her because she reminded my husband of the two Siamese cats that were his childhood pets. Bella was exceptionally beautiful both in looks and in spirit. Her trademark was a white spot on her nose that constantly wriggled...sometimes slow and relaxed, sometimes alert and curious. Bella was known for a vigorous routine of daily Bunny 500 laps around our living room. She was also known for “pancaking” anywhere and everywhere to enjoy a good, long head rub. A social butterfly, Bella especially loved a good party where she could get attention – and head rubs – from strangers. Bella was a friendly and gentle soul who gave and received much love from her humans and mates.

Bella’s claim to fame is her starring role on the CBS “Early Show” in a segment on why chocolate rabbits are better Easter gifts than real rabbits (aired on Easter Sunday, March 22, 2008):

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch?id=3959921n>

Bella’s adoption signified the transformation of our single-bunny home to a multibunny warren. Within three days of

Photo: Kerstin Aumann



Bella the Beautiful has just finished a round of binkies in this photo, taken on Labor Day weekend 2009 in Kerstin’s garden in Rockaway.

her arrival, beautiful Bella had charmed our resident little black dwarf, Schnucki, and the two became inseparable for the rest of Schnucki’s life. Schnucki was an elderbun already and Bella made his “golden years” truly golden. After Schnucki passed on, Bella bonded with a young buck named Jerry. The two shared true love and lots of affection –

I’ve always felt inspired watching these two love buns. Jerry misses Bella, who died on June 2, but he is carrying on bravely as Bella would have wanted him to...maybe he knows that she’ll be waiting for him at the other end of the rainbow, just like Schnucki had been waiting for Bella.

## NYC Metro Rabbits At Petco Stores in Manhattan

Near right, Hin-Sung.  
Far right, Naomi.

Photos: David Mohney



# HAY

Sincere thanks to all of  
our generous hay donors!

# Letters

Photo: Andrea McManus



Newton.

## Newton

*Newton was adopted in December by Andrea and her family. She introduced him to her three cats and sent this letter in early May.*

Newton is doing great. I think he may be a genius and he loves cats. But he is also very particular. He likes to chew on unpeeled willow and yucca toys but no apple branches. He is enjoying a new exercise pen and shares his Cottontail Cottage with the cats. Thank you!

Andrea

Photo: Jared Danielson



Ulysses and his new friend, the kitty Buster.

## Ulysses

*Jared and Natalie adopted Ulysses, who has a new BFF, the kitty Buster. Amy Odum received this letter in early April.*

Hi Amy,

This is Jared Danielson, one half of Natalie and Jared. :) We adopted Ulysses from you a couple of weeks ago and he has been a perfect little member of our family. He and the kitty snuggle on occasion and Ulysses loves roaming the house. I built him a little house for himself and when we're home we let him happily hop all around the rest of our place. We will take him to the exotics vet next week. We're happy to have him in our lives.

Ulysses is a ham and a lovely little bunny. We're so glad to have him.

Best,  
Jared

Photo: Anna Kwon



Frankie snuggles with Trix.

## Frankie and Trix

*Frankie was adopted last year by Anna Kwon, who later adopted Trix as a partner bun. Anna sent us this update in mid-April.*

Thank you so much for asking about Frankie and Trix! I'm sorry I couldn't give you many updates before. The initial bonding sessions went very poorly and it's taken awhile for both bunnies to settle in and be reintroduced to one another.

I think there were several factors behind the rough bonding, in retrospect. Frankie had pretty much claimed the entire basement, so every spot was his territory – even the areas I didn't think he had visited. He also seemed a little melancholy and not really in the mood for Trix; perhaps he missed his mother and sister, with whom he had been bonded before being adopted separately by me...not to mention that Trix was recently spayed and too overeager to meet Frankie. His aloof "ladies' man" attitude and her sweet, affectionate demeanor couldn't be more different (doesn't it sound like the premise of a romantic comedy?), and the first few sessions were dispiriting, to say the least.

But after keeping the bunnies separate, but close, and then moving bonding sessions one floor up to the kitchen and bathroom areas (with a lot of maneuvering and shifting of our other pets upstairs), I'm happy to report that there have been a lot of breakthroughs! Frankie and Trix are comfortable with their faces smushed up against one another.

*(Continued on page 19)*



## Letters *(Continued from page 18)*

This past weekend, Frankie groomed Trix. Granted, it was only for two seconds – and then Frankie proceeded to use Trix's face as a prop to groom his hind foot – but it was a breathtaking two seconds.

I think this is starting to become something really wonderful, so I hope to let you know soon when the two can be finally together :)

Take care.

Anna



Bonnie and Clyde.

### Bonnie and Clyde

*Bonnie and Clyde were adopted by Sisi, who sent this email to Cindy Stutts and Cathy Zelonis in late April.*

Hi Cindy and Cathy,

Greetings from Bonnie and Clyde. Both have gotten chubbier since I adopted them, but I'm watching their weight now by limiting the pellets and switching to Oxbow. I was using Kaytee Forti-Diet Pro, which had less protein but included a bit of alfalfa, so hopefully the switch to Oxbow helps.

They are very spoiled in their big pen, complete with a fort, cooling ceramic tiles and lots of chew toys. They also get some exploring time everyday in my room, where they do binkies on the rug and climb on a few pieces of furniture.

Bonnie is quite a climber. She somehow managed to find a way to get on top of my desk the other night. Clyde responded by hopping into the trash can by accident. Hehe. It is evident who is the smarter of the two!

Loving my two bun kids, however, I still haven't picked them up. Cindy, you made it look so easy at the shelter. In reality, they never stay still long enough for me to wrap an arm around them, much less pick up their back feet. So now I just feed them by hand and give them kisses as they are eating.

They are also shedding up a storm (Clyde especially) and don't like to stay still for grooming. Clyde really hates the fur comb and will try to attack it. Again, I take advantage of when they are eating and run my hands through their fur as much as possible. I hope the molting phase passes after this month!

Cheerio,  
Sisi



Indignant Rhys disapproves of the nail clipper.

### Rhys

*Rhys was adopted by Megan and Bob, who sent this email to Cindy Stutts in early May.*

Hi Cindy,

Hope you and your bunny friends are well. Rhys is great and seems happy.

We were thrilled to see the picture of you and Rhys with Martha Stewart in the last bunny newsletter.

We have had a bit of trouble with his nails. We are just cutting them for his comfort; Rhys doesn't scratch. We were wondering if you had any advice. For one, his nails are black and we can't seem to find anything on the Internet about how to avoid cutting the quick. One website said to try a flashlight but that didn't help. Another said you just have to guess. How long should his nails be?

Rhys doesn't like to have his nails clipped. He will let me hold his front feet and pretty much just cut one nail, but then he will run away. I do it in a small room, so he runs two feet and then I pet him and he'll let me do another one. He doesn't seem too stressed out or upset and will lay down and relax right after I cut one.

I am not sure how far down to cut and wonder if I'm doing any good at all. The Web has advised us that cutting the quick is common and not a big deal but that you must treat it to stop bleeding before letting the bunny go free again. I am worried about that since he's skittish about letting us touch his feet even when they are NOT injured.

I pretty much haven't been able to get at his back feet at all. He pulls them under his body. We have tried holding him as you did when you showed us how to take his temperature but haven't had much success with that. I can hold him for a little while – less than a minute – but not long enough to get at the nails.

We're thinking about just having the vet do it – at least once, so we can see someone skilled do it – and maybe permanently, depending on what kind of headway we make with doing it ourselves and how much it costs.

Hope everything is great with the bunnies.

Thanks for your time and attention,  
Megan and Bob and sweet Rhys

**P.S. After receiving this email, Cindy invited Megan and Rhys to her home and she gave Megan a hands-on nail-clipping lesson.**

## Rabbit-Savvy Veterinarians

Here's our recommended vet list for the New York metropolitan area. Please note that many clinics have multiple veterinarians, and our recommendations are for specific veterinarians in those clinics. If you can't get an appointment with a recommended vet at one clinic, don't assume (no matter what you are told by the clinic) that other vets in the same clinic can help your rabbit. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the vets on this list, please contact Mary Cotter at (914) 337-6146. When you make an appointment with any of these vets, please tell them you were referred by us.

### Long Island:

Jennifer Saver, DVM

Laura George, DVM

Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital  
2221 Hillside Ave., New Hyde Park, NY 11040  
(516) 877-7080

Heidi Hoefler, DVM

Island Exotic Vet Care  
591 East Jericho Turnpike  
Huntington Station, NY 11746  
(631) 424-0300

Jeff Rose, DVM

Jefferson Animal Hospital  
606 Patchogue Rd. (Route 112)  
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776  
(631) 473-0415

### Manhattan:

Becky Campbell, DVM

Deborah Levison, DVM

Symphony Veterinary Center  
170 West 96th Street, New York, NY 10025  
(212) 866-8000

Katherine Quesenberry, DVM

The Animal Medical Center  
510 East 62nd St., New York, NY 10065  
(212) 838-7053, (212) 329-8622

### Manhattan (continued):

Alexandra Wilson, DVM

The Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine  
568 Columbus Ave., New York, NY 10024  
(212) 501-8750

Anthony Pilny, DVM

Veterinary Internal Medicine  
and Allergy Specialists  
207 East 84th St., New York, NY 10028  
(212) 988-4650

Shachar Malka, DVM

Humane Society of New York  
306 East 59th St.  
New York, NY 10022  
(212) 752-4842

### Westchester County:

Gil Stanzione, DVM

381 Dobbs Ferry Road, White Plains, NY 10607  
(914) 421-0020

Laurie Hess, DVM

Veterinary Center for Birds and Exotics  
709 Bedford Road, Bedford Hills, NY 10507  
(914) 864-1414

## Licensed HRS Representatives

Mary Cotter, HRS Licensed Educator,  
Chapter Manager, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab,  
mcc@cloud9.net, (914) 337-6146, rabbitcare.org

Nancy Schreiber, HRS Licensed Educator,  
Co-Chapter Manager-in-Training, Rabbit  
Rescue & Rehab, Long Island Rabbit Rescue  
Group Volunteer, nschreibmd@aol.com,  
(516) 510-3637, LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

Cindy Stutts, HRS Licensed Educator,  
Manager NYC/AC&C Rabbit Program,  
bygolyoly@yahoo.com, (646) 319-4766,  
nycacc.org

Mary Ann Maier, HRS Licensed Educator,  
Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group Volunteer,  
altitude8@yahoo.com, (516) 671-6654,  
LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

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LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

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NYC/AC&C Volunteer,  
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Gabrielle LaManna, HRS Educator-in-  
training at large, New Fairfield, CT,  
gabbysbunnies@yahoo.com, (203) 746-7548

Jennifer Saver, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

## THUMP June 2011

Newsletter of RRR/NYC HRS  
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[www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org)

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Rabbit Rescue & Rehab is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation in New York State. Our purpose is to rescue, rehabilitate and find permanent homes for abandoned, abused and neglected rabbits, and to educate the general public on rabbit care through publications, telephone consultations, home visits and public presentations. This newsletter is published by RRR/NYC HRS, which is solely responsible for its content. Letters, photographs and other submissions to the newsletter become the property of the NYC Chapter and cannot be returned. We retain the right to edit submissions for publication.

All donations go directly to caring for our foster rabbits and are tax-deductible. Please help us help them. Checks should be made out to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab and mailed to: Nancy Schreiber, 12 Grace Court North, Great Neck, NY 11021.

## ADOPTABLE RABBITS

There are lots of adoptable rabbits available in Manhattan, Long Island and Westchester.

To adopt a rabbit in **New York City**, contact Cindy Stutts at [bygolyoly@yahoo.com](mailto:bygolyoly@yahoo.com) or call her at 646-319-4766. On **Long Island**, contact Nancy Schreiber at [nschreibmd@aol.com](mailto:nschreibmd@aol.com) or at 516-510-3637 ([www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org)), and in **Westchester** contact Mary Cotter at [mec@cloud9.net](mailto:mec@cloud9.net) or 914-337-6146 ([www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org)).

AC&C rabbit volunteers' email address in New York City is [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

You can visit the **New York Animal Care & Control Center** at 326 East 110th St., between First and Second avenues. Volunteers are there every weekday evening and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but it is best to arrange an appointment first.

Adoptable AC&C rabbits are also at **Petco's** Lexington Avenue (86-87th) and Union Square locations; rabbit volunteers are present at both stores on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to answer questions. There are two rabbits living at each of those stores.

Many of our rabbits are living in foster homes and you can meet them as well. You also can arrange to foster a rabbit until he or she finds a permanent home. Contact Mary Cotter at [mec@cloud9.net](mailto:mec@cloud9.net) or Amy Odum at either [amy@adoptabunny.info](mailto:amy@adoptabunny.info) or [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

For basic information about rabbits as pets, go to [www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org), [www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org) and the House Rabbit Society main site, [www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org).