

NYC Metro Rabbit News

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NICE DIGS

First Shelter Rabbits Take Up Residence at Petco

By Lisa Fresolone

Want to adopt a rabbit but can't make it up to the shelter? Check out the bunnies at Petco!

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, in conjunction with the New York Animal Care & Control Center, have recently put in place an adoption program at Petco's East 86th Street and Union Square locations. Two rabbits will be living at each location 24/7. Volunteers will visit the rabbits daily to make sure they have food, water, clean litter boxes and plenty of out-of-cage exercise time.

The in-house rabbits are the next step for the adoption program already in place on weekends. Volunteers and adoptable bunnies are at Petco Saturdays and Sundays. The volunteers screen potential adopters and educate the public about rabbits as pets, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Union Square, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at 86th Street and Lexington. The program is considered a success, as an average of three to four rabbits are adopted from each location every month.

The Petco adoption program has "increased the public's awareness of rabbits as an option for adoption, and as being an animal that can go into a New York City apartment," says Cindy



Cindy Stutts at Petco, Union Square

Stutts, a licensed educator for the House Rabbit Society and founding board member of New York Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. "A lot of people are clueless that you can have a house-trained rabbit in the home."

Marcie Frishberg is her right-hand person for the Petco program, organizing and training new volunteers and seeing that potential adopters are properly counseled.

Marcie takes her time—often several hours—making sure prospective adopters are told everything there is to know about having a rabbit in the home. She covers nutrition, rabbits' psychological and physical needs, rabbit-proofing the home, bunny-sitters and common health problems to look out for. She even demonstrates nail trimming, temperature-taking and grooming.

Petco announced that it would stop selling rabbits in all of its stores nationwide in December 2008, as part of its "think adoption first" philosophy. The company was already a major advocate of dog and cat adoptions, and over the past year it has stepped up its efforts at promoting rabbit adoptions, too.

There's always a need for volunteers, and even a novice can be a huge help. If you think you might be interested, please email Cindy Stutts at bygolyoly@att.net.

"Without the volunteers taking their time to help facilitate adoptions and fostering," Cindy says, "we wouldn't be able to save all these rabbits. Many would be euthanized." 🐰

—Lisa Fresolone is a rabbit volunteer in Manhattan who is reachable at lisa.fresolone@gmail.com.



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt

Meet **Houdini**, so named due to his extraordinary skill and determination as an escape artist! Houdini probably had a difficult life before coming to the shelter. Terrified and mad at the world, his philosophy was "bite first and ask questions later." It took months of TLC in foster care before he agreed to mend his ways. A ball of energy who loves attention but needs plenty of freedom, too, Houdini would love a home with an understanding caretaker who could overlook his checkered past and see him for the good boy he is today.

Contact: Amy Odum at amy@adoptabunny.info.



**SIZE DOESN'T
MATTER
PAGES 6-7**



**SHOP TILL
YOU FLOP
PAGE 5**



**GETTING OUT
OF REHAB
PAGE 9**

RIP: BEEZLE AND JESSICA MAIER



Beezle's picture appears in the House Rabbit Handbook. Jessie was photographed with Tammy Faye Bakker.



On Wednesday, Sept. 30, Mary Ann Maier lost her rabbits Beezle and Jessie. It is noteworthy not only because both died on the same day, but also because both were instrumental in creating the rabbit rescue organization we are today.

Beezle was Mary Ann's first rabbit, whom she rescued in 1998, thus beginning her association with Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. Beezle's story has appeared in Newsday, and his picture can be seen in the current edition of the House Rabbit Handbook, as well as with

Mary Ann's bonding article appearing on page 7 of this newsletter. Beezle also co-starred with Mary Cotter and Mary Ann in the famous RRR Nail Cutting Video.

Jessie was rescued from a Long Island shelter in 2001 and quickly demonstrated herself to be a bomb-proof ambassador of bunny education. She accompanied Mary Ann to pet expos in Manhattan and Long Island, and "taught" rabbit care at North Shore Animal League, the Center for Specialized Veterinary Care, LaGuardia Community College, Long Island Board of Cooperative Educational Services, and the Nassau County SPCA. She attended numerous RRR conferences as a "demo bun"—indeed, many rabbit owners in the New York area learned to take rabbit temperatures on Jessie.

Jessie made educational TV appearances on Martha Stewart's "Petkeeping with Marc Morrone" program and on News 12. In 2003, she was a cover model, along with Tammy Faye Bakker, for Peta's "Shopping Guide for Caring Consumers" (<http://www.peta.org/mc/NewsItem.asp?id=1453>), and was photographed with rap star MCA of the Beastie Boys in 2004.

Rest in peace, Beezle, who taught Mary Ann so much in those early days, and Jessie, who helped to teach everybody else. We'll see you both on the Other Side. 🐰

BEHAVIOR

Desperately Seeking a Bunny Shrink

By Natalie Reeves

Perplexed companion to four wacky lagomorphs is seeking psychiatric advice. Candidates must resist all manner of charm exuded by the lop-eared fuzzy weirdos. Before applying for the job, consider the prospective patients:

Queenie is a long-haired white lop girl who is suffering from an identity crisis... it's either that or I adopted a strange kitty-cat with long ears and a cottontail. Queenie loves to jump on everything. She will perch precariously on the top edge of my chair and then take a flying leap to my desk. I've seen her perched on top of my sewing machine and on top of my printer.

Her favorite game is throwing everything off my desk. As soon as I pick something up, it ends up on the floor. I tell Queenie that she is a bunny who is supposed to like running on the ground and playing in her hideys, but she prefers being Queenie the flying kitty-cat bunny.

Perhaps because her sister thinks she is a cat, Goldie, a golden-haired beauty, has forsaken the peaceful nature of a bunny



Mopsy and Robin eating.

and instead stalks and hunts defenseless animals. While I was otherwise occupied, Goldie ripped the innards from my beloved Annalee Christmas reindeer. When I returned to the room, I witnessed the carnage of poor Rudolph torn to bits like confetti as Goldie beamed with pride over her conquest.

Compared to furry monsters Goldie and Queenie, my other bunnies, Mopsy and Robin, are perfect angels. Nevertheless, they could benefit from couples' counseling. Mopsy and Robin have been in love for more than a year, but there are some signs that they are taking each other for granted. For example, Mopsy was stretched out recently, resting with her adorable feet behind her. Robin approached,

seemingly to groom her. He appeared to be ready to groom her feet, which I had never witnessed. Then he nudged her, so she woke from her nap and got up. I thought that Robin must want to play. Nope! Instead, as soon as Mopsy got up, Robin stretched himself out for a nap in the place where Mopsy had just been sleeping. Shockingly, Mopsy let Robin get away with waking her up and then taking her place.

Mopsy also allows Robin to steal food right from her mouth. At salad time, Mopsy must find the tastiest sprigs of parsley because instead of choosing one of the other sprigs still on the plate, Robin often chooses to munch on the piece that is coming out of Mopsy's mouth. Mopsy adores Robin so that she allows him to do it. But, for this couple to last, some intervention may be needed.

Mopsy, Robin, Goldie and Queenie are willing to submit to sessions with a professional, so long as he or she brings 'nanas or other suitable snacks. 🐰

—Natalie Reeves is an AC&C rabbit volunteer in Manhattan. Email her at NatalieLReeves@yahoo.com.

The Bittersweet Joys of Bringing Home, And Then Letting Go, a Rabbit Who Needs a Home

By Erin McElhinney

All bunny people experience the moment at which they realize: I am a bunny person. As a lifelong dog person, I fought this label probably longer than I should have. The bunnies made me pay dearly for this, and my turning point came at work in front of a large group of people. One very early morning, when I was trying to finish up a big project before my boss came in, my colleague gave me the up and down and coolly asked, "So, which of your bunnies ate your pants?" I looked down and sure enough, all up and down the side of one pant leg, one little dwarf rabbit, angry at having to share her apartment with yet another foster bun, had shredded my suit pants. I had just enough time to staple some of the more egregious holes together and continue on with my project. Hand-delivering my report later on in the day, my boss told me he liked the way my staples sparkled in the fluorescent lighting. I stammered something about my bunnies and got out of there as soon as I could! It was already too late, though: I was a bunny person in the eyes of non-bunny people and there was no turning back.

There is something magical about bringing home a new foster bun—the way the cardboard carrier containing a little life shakes and wiggles and occasionally emits a thumping sound from the floor while I prep its new home. In between cleaning and adding hay, I take the time to explain to my three other rabbits, in my most soothing voice possible, that so-and-so has had a tough time finding a home and just needs a place to stay until things get a little better for him or her. I offer up some papaya tablets to sweeten the deal for them.

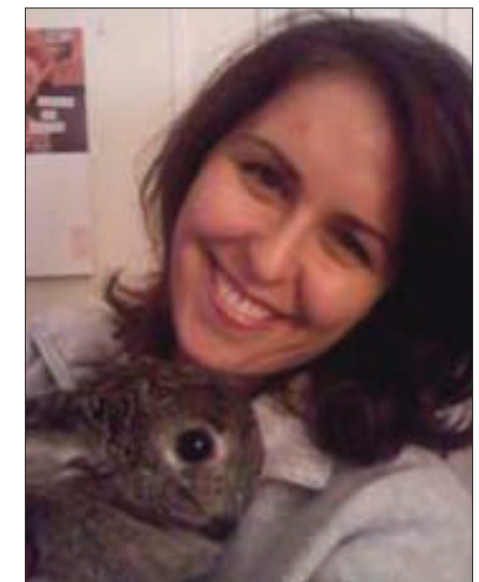
Once the foster cage has been prepped and extra toys, food and water bowls have been dug up from my chest of assorted rabbit things, next comes the best part—the opening of the cardboard carrier. The anticipation is more intense than

opening a present, and no matter how many little scared faces I look in at, I never know what to expect. Curiosity always gets the best of even the most timid of rabbits, and after glancing at me and determining me to not be a threat, they will leap right out of their carrier and begin exploring my studio apartment. Sometimes I get Thumpapalooza with five upturned cottontails and beady, angry eyes aimed at the "new guy," but mostly my buns are just endlessly fascinated—staring while pretending not to notice.

Living in a New York City studio apartment will challenge even the most organized people to keep their sanity. Add five buns to the mix and you will develop a sense of humor and strength you didn't even know you had. When I brought home my first foster rabbit, I was scared to leave her alone. A million what-ifs ran through my mind and I couldn't believe that she could survive without me watching over her. I spent the first weekend rarely leaving her side, and in doing so discovered the hardest part that foster-bun parents grapple with: guilt.

People expect that space and my lack of it would be the main issue with managing my two foster rabbits, but the main issue for me, and a lot of other fosterers I know, is the simple and unchangeable fact that there is only one of us and more than one bun in the household. Time spent nurturing, socializing and playing with my foster bun is time not spent with my own rabbits. But, much like a new mom, I drink a little more coffee in the morning, a little more Red Bull in the afternoon, and I stay up with "the kids" as late as I can.

Having foster rabbits also has taught me the bittersweet beauty of letting go. We all have our foster buns whom we just love as much as we've loved anything or even anyone else. We do our due diligence on the new owners and pack up their favorite toys and kiss them goodbye and have to trust our hearts, no matter how sad we



From top, Bryce, Erin's former foster, now adopted; Bonnie Sue, Erin's current foster; Erin with Ginger Madeleine, who inspired her to get involved with other buns.

may be. A lot of foster parents fill that newly empty cage with another needy bun; it feels too much like the rabbit has died for me to go home and clean out the cage and not have a new little soul to take its place.

(Continued on page 4)

Maya, the Punk-Rock Princess with Attitude

By Katelyn Belyus

Maya is hungry.

I know because she peeked out of her box, held her black floppy ears slightly aloft, scanned the empty plate and retreated. Moments later, she comes out all the way and saunters over to her plate and pellet dish, both still empty.

"I know!" I say as I hurriedly try to grab the plate. I reach into the cage, and she grunts.

"I don't like eating this late," she whines. When I return with the plate, brimming with wet greens, she stands up, puts both hands on the plate, and drags it to the floor. I use the word "hands" because I often think Maya is more human than rabbit.

I imagine Maya surfing, snarling lead rock vocals, or golfing in funny pants. In my mind, she's always doing fun "people" things, because she's got a feisty spirit, and if she were able to do those fun things, she absolutely would.

She'd be an angry gypsy punk-rock princess if she were human, some sort of cross between Patti Smith and Whitney Houston and Sharon Stone.

I first went to AC&C—where I volunteer—to adopt a big, playful lop. I wanted a bun who would binky and do tricks at parties—like juggling plates or pulling himself out of a hat. But the shelter was



Maya

crowded, and there were four black lops. Their personalities varied, as did their physical conditions. Maya wasn't the worst in her aggression, but she was defensive and angry.

She was terrified when I brought her home. I know this because she peed the moment she entered my room. (Maya knows how to use a litter box; her cage is immaculate. She doesn't drop pellets outside the box; she pees in it too, though sometimes she'll wet the bed just to spite me, as if to say, "I do what I want.")

What can I say? I am charmed by her.

Maya is clever and funny, yet moody. She'll binky and kick out her feet, yet

more than once she has bitten someone's arm or leg and held onto it with her teeth. One month into the foster, I told my friend Philip, "I can't keep her. Her attitude stinks!"

"An independent bunny who attacks her cage and wants to be free? Sounds perfect for you," he replied.

He was right. She's a diva, my own miniature Cher. Because, as much as she lunges and bites and growls, she also loves my kisses. She lets me wash her eyes. We sing lullaby versions of '80s metal songs. We have a special bond, one where she does what she wants, and I let her, because I remember what crappy shape she was in when she was surrendered.

Our progress has been a challenge, but it's yielded amazing results. Sure, she has anger issues. At times, she reminds me of Lindsay Lohan on a bender, but at least Maya's honest about it. She's dealing. She even earned the nickname "Shark" because of her tendency to lurk beneath the futon and attack people's ankles.

But when you come right down to it, Maya Papaya is fantastically entertaining. "Difficult, but not unmanageable," I think to myself, and I know that both our lives are better because of each other. 🐰

—Katelyn Belyus, a rabbit volunteer in Manhattan, lives in Jersey City. Feel free to contact her at kbelyus@yahoo.com to share bunny stories and swap recipes.

Bittersweet Joys

(Continued from page 3)

And sometimes these bunnies that I took to weekend adoption events, talked about at parties, stayed up late on midsummer nights listening to NPR with, come back into the shelter. These are the moments when you can only stretch and reach deep inside and open your heart up even bigger, and trust that the next person will be the right person. You hope and wish that the forever home that this innocent spirit deserves—that everyone and everybun deserves—is

right around the corner. You give up a few more weekends for adoption events, continue to talk about her to everyone at parties, and stay up late on winter nights listening to NPR with her. You see the expressions on her face, her upturned tail as she binkies and darts around the apartment. You remember all the times you burst out laughing, just thinking about things she has done (landing in a box of hay that she couldn't get out of, eating a report written for work, stealing a potato chip right out of your hand!) and just like that, your studio apartment doesn't feel so small. Her story doesn't

seem so sad; your own rabbits now are comfortable with her.

I foster because there is a desperate need for homes for these animals and even the most neglected, abused and timid rabbit can hop away with your sock in its mouth and turn its head with a coy expression and you just forget about everything and burst out laughing. When you see the expression on their faces, you know they are laughing, too. 🐰

—Erin McElhinney, a rabbit volunteer in Manhattan, can be reached at erinalanna@gmail.com.

Not a Shopaholic? These Web Sites, Local Stores, May Make You One

By Nancy Schreiber and Natalie Reeves

We've done a lot of shopping for pet supplies on the Web. Though shipping and handling charges add up, there's often no sales tax, and the net cost can end up being less than what you would pay in a local store. Many Internet retailers offer free shipping. Per-item shipping charges often decrease as you order more items, so it often pays to order multiples or find a friend or two to combine orders with you.

For good prices on crates and Xpens (even with added-in shipping charges), try www.kennelvet.com/store-supplies/category-1_51/dog-supplies-dog-exercise-pens.html. Kennelvet.com has the Midwest gold 36-inch Xpen, with door, for an unbeatable price, and reasonable shipping and handling charges. Also recommended are www.bargainpetstuff.com and www.jefferspet.com. For bunny furniture, try www.petwerks.com, which sells bunny abode condos, or www.rabbitshouses.net.

Nice bunny toys are found at: www.forotheotherlivingthings.com, www.busybunny.com, www.bunnybytes.com, www.catsandrabbitsandmore.com, www.rabbitshop.com, www.bunnybunchboutique.com and www.funnybunnytoyco.com.

Bargain toys are available at <http://factorydirectcraft.com/index.php>. Search for baskets, straw hats and grapevine products, and make sure that whatever you buy is natural, unpainted, unstained and unvarnished. Avoid bamboo products because they have sharp edges.

You can get natural-fiber mats at <https://whiteharvesttradingco.com>. Shipping and handling charges can be steep here, so order multiples, or call the store to see if it can maximize value in how a box is packed.

Despite the convenience of the Web, toy bargains abound in local stores. IKEA carries unfinished willow and seagrass baskets, willow balls, palm-leaf placemats and cotton mats. You can get unfinished baskets, grapevine wreaths and straw hats (doll section) in local craft stores such as Michaels or AC Moore, and many 99-cent stores carry mats and baskets.

Petco is a good source for supplies, including hay and pellets.

For Oxbow supplies, try stores that deliver like Whiskers, <http://1800whiskers.com/V2/template2.php?CHAPITRE=100>, in the East Village at 235 East Ninth St., and now in Astoria at 19-25 Ditmars Blvd.; R and T Holistic Pet Supply, <http://randtpetsupply.net/>, in College Point at 14-17 College Point Blvd.; and Pet Menu, <http://www.petmenu.com>, in Flushing at 191-15 Northern Blvd.

Additional hay suppliers are FarmerDave's, www.farmerdave.biz, in upstate New York; Sweet Meadow Farm, www.sweetmeadowfarm.com, in Massachusetts (some rabbits go crazy for this farm's Timothy-with-herbs mix); and BunnyLuv, www.bunnyluv.com, in California (many buns enjoy their oat-blend hay).

Happy, hoppy shopping! 🐰

—Nancy Schreiber, a House Rabbit Society educator and volunteer with the Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, is reachable at nshreibmd@aol.com.

—Contact Natalie Reeves at NatalieLReeves@yahoo.com.



Petco and Whiskers products

Have We Got a Girl (or Boy) for You!

By Amy Odum

So, Bun-bun has it all, or nearly—a happy home, the run of the place (mostly), plenty of yummy veggies, the odd box or phonebook to demolish if he’s feeling feisty, and the unconditional devotion of his human companions. The only thing lacking is a little bunny honey to share it all with. What do you do next?

The worst possible thing you can do is pick out a rabbit for your bunny, bring him or her home, put them together and expect love to bloom. Most likely the fur will fly! There is a much better chance of eventually having a happily bonded pair if Bun gets to choose his own new friend. When we’re contacted by people who are interested in finding a partner bunny, we schedule what we like to call “bunny speed-dating” sessions. They bring their rabbit to the shelter for one-on-one introductions in neutral space with several potential partners.

THE BIG DAY

It’s not always possible to guess your bunny’s “type,” no matter how well you know him. A mellow, laid-back bunny may decide to assert himself when presented with another rabbit, or a bossy bunny may become uncharacteristically shy. The best thing to do is try several candidates and see what happens.

The bunnies must be introduced in a safe, neutral area. At the shelter, we use two puppy exercise pens linked together to form a big “corral” for the bunnies. It’s small enough for the humans supervising the action to keep an eye on the participants, but large enough for the rabbits to put a little distance between them if they feel stressed.

Each bunny is put in the enclosure and given a few minutes to explore and get used to the space. Once they’ve each had a chance to do this, they’re put in the pen at the same time, at opposite ends of the enclosure. Joining them in the space is one of the volunteers, standing by to intervene if either becomes aggressive.

WHAT TO EXPECT

A lot can be revealed in just the first few seconds, especially if the reaction is negative. Instant aggression by one or both parties is obvious and calls for swift intervention—the bunnies are immediately scooped up out of harm’s way and that particular candidate is checked off the list.

Sometimes, if we’re very, very lucky, it’s instant attraction: no aggression or fear, beyond a little excited apprehension, and both bunnies seem to hit it off right away. There may even be a little tentative grooming on the very first “date.” These pairs are meant to be, and usually just one or two bonding sessions at home—just to make sure a little territorialism by the resident bunny doesn’t surface, once back on his or her own turf—are all that is needed before the happy couple can live together full-time.

Most reactions are between the two extremes, and reading the signs is a lesson in bunny body language. The rabbits are attempting to work out their dominance issues—who’s going to be the “alpha bunny” and who’ll be the follower. (It’s worth noting that age, gender and size are usually irrelevant as far as the bunnies are concerned.)

Keeping their distance. It may look like they’re ignoring each other, but each is very much aware of the other. This seemingly neutral reaction is actually positive—if they wanted to fight, they would. It may not be love at first sight, but it’s peaceful.

Chasing. A question of degree. Truly relentless pursuit may mean an unworkable match, but there’s chasing and then there’s chasing. Are the ears back, flattened against the body, or raised? Is the chaser truly aggressive, or is he just trying to keep up, to get closer to a reluctant or more cautious partner? Sometimes it’s the “chasee” who’s actually in control—keeping a comfortable distance, a little space between himself and a slightly too ardent admirer. Does the pursuer chase just enough to make the other bunny run away, and then stop pursuit? He’s making a statement, just showing who’s boss.

Mounting. First-time owners of single rabbits are often surprised to see altered rabbits mount each other, especially if it’s the female doing the mounting. This, too, is about dominance, not about making baby bunnies. Like chasing, it’s a question of degree. If both rabbits are fairly tolerant of the activity and there’s no dispute about who’s on top, figuratively as well as literally, this may be a match that will work.

Sniff and run. One or both bunnies may get close enough for a quick nose-to-nose sniff and then retreat. This is a clear sign of interest, especially if it’s well received by the other rabbit (no nose nips!).

Ignoring each other. Sometimes the two will sit within a few feet, even inches, of each other and appear to be completely oblivious. One or both may even turn their back on the other. This is a very good sign. They’re definitely interested, but not quite ready to try a more direct approach. Still sorting out those pesky dominance issues!

What we’re looking for is consistency. If there’s a pattern to their interactions—if there’s already an indication of how the dominance roles are likely to play out—then it’s likely that with time and patience the two will successfully and happily bond.

We love our bunnies, but for most creatures there’s nothing quite like the companionship of their own species. Anyone who’s ever lived with a bonded pair knows first-hand how intensely attached these little couples become, and once you’ve lived with a happily bonded pair, you’ll find yourself reluctant to ever keep a bunny as a single again.

If you have a bachelor (or bachelorette) bunny and would like to meet potential partners, please contact Cindy Stutts (bygolyoly@att.net) in NYC or Nancy Schreiber (nschreibmd@aol.com) on Long Island. 🐰

—Amy Odum, a fosterer and a volunteer at Manhattan AC&C, can be reached at amy@adoptabunny.info.

BONDING

Bunny Has Picked Out a Mate: Now What?



Austin and Confetti Castellano demonstrate that when it comes to bonding, size doesn't matter.

By Mary Ann Maier

Rabbits are social creatures and they can benefit from living in pairs. Despite this desire for companionship, however, you can't simply put them together and expect them to get along. There is a recommended process, called "bonding."

Bonding can be difficult, so it is best to allow rabbits to choose their mates. We arrange for rabbits to meet potential companions at the Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group or at the Manhattan AC&C shelter. We assess how they get along and guide adopters through the process. (Please see "Looking for Love" on the facing page for what happens during these introductions.)

You'll need to have your bonding area prepared when you bring your bunny and her new pal home. Set up side-by-side cages with precisely three inches of space between—no touching. Never allow them to touch noses through the bars before they are bonded. Don't allow one to exercise in the room where the other is confined. Fights may break out, and damage (physical and emotional) can occur.

Conduct one or two bonding "sessions" daily in a neutral area where neither bunny spends time. Block off furniture they might hide (or fight) under. Provide a rug for traction, plus two litter pans filled with hay. Don't use their regular litter pans; get new ones.

Place the bunnies in this bonding area. Put sneakers on your hands because you may have to plunge in to stop a fight. Now observe. Watch body language for dominance, fear or indifference.

Look for positive signs, too: eating or washing in one another's presence, lying down, or turning one's back. These all are indications they are getting comfortable with each other.

These bonding sessions are conducted for two minutes—and only two minutes—for at least the first week. Have patience. The object is to build up many peaceful, short sessions rather than to push too fast for longer sessions.

We help bunny parents identify certain behaviors that may be a prelude to fighting. Knowing when to intervene, and when not to, is key because it allows the bunnies to safely perform courtship behaviors, demonstrating to each other that they can be trusted.

When not in these sessions, the rabbits continue bonding in their respective cages. Don't feel bad about confining them. They are highly interested in being near their new neighbor, and aren't bored. You can help further by switching their litter pans, or even switching the rabbits themselves into each other's cage.

It's a joy to watch two bonded rabbits snuggling together, and it's comforting to know they have each other when we're at work. However, bonding is challenging. It's not for everybody, and it's not for every bunny. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us. If you are interested in instant gratification, also contact us: to adopt an already-bonded pair! 🐰

—Mary Ann Maier, a House Rabbit Society educator who works with the Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, can be reached at altitude8@yahoo.com.



From top, Snoopy and Radish on a speed date; pen setup; Bella and Jerry touch noses; Snoopy and Radish share a bowl; Beezle and Bloop recline together.

Photo: Max Heiman

Photo: Mary Ann Maier

Photo: Jane O'Watt

Photo: Max Heiman

Photo: Mary Ann Maier

Photo: Tom Castellano

Love and Second Chances in the Golden Years: It's Never Too Late

By Kerstin Aumann

Can you imagine suddenly finding yourself homeless at age 80?

This is what happened to Storm, a little black dwarf, when she was surrendered to Animal Care & Control in the fall of 2007. Her previous owners had owned her for eight (!) years and were surrendering her now because they had had a new baby. Storm was inconsolable over losing her long-time home—she was so depressed, she wouldn't eat for weeks.

Storm was a sad little old lady, frail and skinny. It was clear that her previous owners had lost interest in her long before they turned her over to AC&C for an almost certain death. Storm's left eye looked badly infected and a closer look at her mouth revealed overgrown, brown incisors and more signs of infection and neglect.

Fortunately, Storm was rescued and moved into her "retirement home," where she received medical attention and lots of TLC. It took several weeks for her condition to improve physically and psychologically, but eventually, she was well enough to be spayed. About three months later, she was ready to find love with a middle-aged lop named Joshua.

These days, Storm loves life with zest! Her favorite hiding place is under one of Joshua's floppy ears. She loves her daily routine, which includes shots of antibiotics for her dental abscess and Critical Care feedings to ensure she maintains a healthy weight. Each morning, Storm comes running to greet her human—if she were a little dog, she'd bark so loud that she'd wake up the whole building with her excitement!

Sadly, Storm's case of being abandoned late in life after years of loneliness and neglect is hardly unique. Patty and Patrick are two ten-year old Dutch rabbits who share a similar story. Each had lived many lonely years with their previous owners—one in an outdoor hutch, the other in a mechanic's garage—until



Photo: Mary Ann Maier



Photo: Victor "Hasi" Smansky

From top, Patrick, left, and Patty; Kerstin and Storm; Joshua and Storm.

they were discarded. Luckily, Patty and Patrick found each other in the home of an HRS educator, where they are now living out their final years as a blissfully bonded pair.

Few things in life are as rewarding as taking in an older rabbit and giving him or her a second chance at a good life with happiness, care and the love of a devoted human—and better yet, a rabbit companion. Please consider opening your heart and your home to a rabbit who has little or no hope of finding a happy ending without you. 🐰



Photo: Victor "Hasi" Smansky

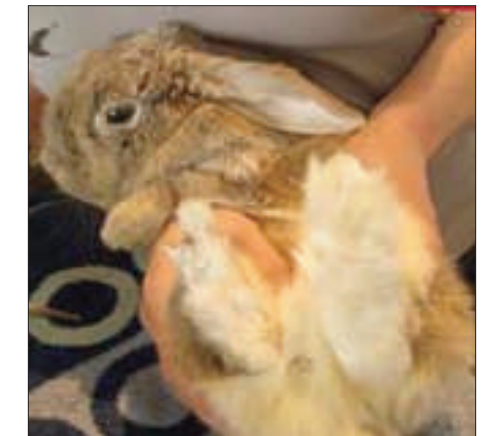
—Kerstin Aumann, Ph.D., a House Rabbit Society educator and an AC&C shelter volunteer in Manhattan, can be contacted at nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com.



Photo: Lisa Fresolone



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



At left, Sogna and Biff; top right, Sogna in January 2009, suffering from sore hocks; lower right, Sogna in May 2009, after treatment.

REHABILITATION

How Sogna Stole Biff's Heart –And Mine

By Lisa Fresolone

Sogna was abandoned at Staten Island Animal Care & Control in early January 2009 by owners who said they were “moving out of the country.” Apparently, they received her as a gift from someone who had bought her at a pet store. She was thin, timid and had severe sore hocks. She needed to have a toe amputated on her back right foot.

Sogna was lucky that the AC&C veterinary technician who handled her intake had just transferred to Staten Island from Manhattan and was familiar with the volunteers and fosterers there. He contacted the New York City House Rabbit Society's educators to evaluate her condition, and to see if she could be rehabilitated.

Sogna's foster mom is the real hero in this story. The vet tech brought Sogna to her apartment, and she saw in Sogna's eyes that the little girl was a fighter who would pull through if given proper care. Kerstin, the foster mom, said she couldn't stand by and watch a rabbit with so much spirit be put down, so she brought Sogna into her home and nursed her back to health.

Kerstin took Sogna to be seen by some of the best veterinarians in New York. Because Sogna's foot was bandaged for so long after the toe amputation, she still has some calcification in the tendons in that foot. After five months of recuperation, she was spayed and ready to be considered for adoption.

During her very first meeting with us, Sogna stole the hearts of my rabbit Biff and me. I remember how Biff ran right up to her, startling her a bit. We brought her home, and it took only a couple of days before her vibrant personality started to show. It became obvious she was sweet, playful and affectionate. The bonding process was quick; it was only a week or two before she and Biff were in complete bunny love.

Today, Sogna enjoys a comfortable life with Biff and me. She has lots of toys, fresh daily greens and free range of the bedroom. Twice a day, she and Biff have playtime and are allowed to run around the apartment. Sogna still has trouble navigating the wood floors between rugs, but she never lets her past hold her back. She keeps right up with Biff. Her husband grooms her lovingly and fastidiously

every day. He's also appointed himself her protector, spending his days guarding the “burrow” under the air conditioner so she can have some peace of mind while she sleeps. I call her my little angel girl.

Sogna is just one of many sick or injured rabbits who would have been euthanized if it weren't for fosterers. In this case, her fosterer was an angel in disguise who opened her home and devoted time to the rehabilitation of an unhealthy rabbit until Sogna could find her forever home. Your local shelter has a limited amount of space, even for healthy rabbits. So if you have the space and some free time, consider fostering. You'll give a rabbit a new lease on life and, if a rabbit has been sick, a more comfortable home during the recovery process. 🐰

—Contact Lisa Fresolone at lisa.fresolone@gmail.com.

Does Your Flooring Pass the Binky Test?

By Jane O'Wyatt

Before I took care of a feisty young lop named Winnie, I hadn't given floor surfaces in house rabbits' homes much thought. My first clients happened to be House Rabbit Society members, and in spacious pens around the city I'd seen sisal carpeting, low-or-no-pile rugs, corrugated cardboard and woven jute or straw squares.

But Winnie's environment was different. She lived in a small closed cage, and her out-of-cage play area was a room whose flooring was smooth white tiles, unrelieved by rugs—though there was a fringed Cardozo School of Law beach towel spread on the slick floor. When out of her cage, on the floor, she preferred the towel, but her chief use of it was as a launching pad to jump up to a 13-foot binky/race course made up of two couches placed end-to-end. There she hopped, ran, shuddered and executed balletic leaps.

(Of course, Winnie hated returning to her cage, where she stretched out on a purple plastic floor—not great, but better than the metal-grid flooring found in some cages.)

While the couches' essential appeal to Winnie probably was the traction they provided, a rabbit named Pacino reinforced another aspect of Winnie's routine: springiness underfoot is also desirable. Pacino, a little bunny whose environment included a binky-friendly rug, used a couch for special workouts: short sprints, high jumps and aerial turns. Pacino showed me that a surface is more fun if it absorbs the shock of vigorous landings. A springy surface adds bounce, comfort and safety. Yet I finally "got" the importance of the mattress effect only after a friend emailed me a link to a YouTube video featuring Billy Bunny, the Baryshnikov of house rabbits: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmft43qUPaM>. Although he shows himself to be an eloquent exponent of cushioned wall-to-wall carpeting, Billy Bunny's most

impressive dance moves—his bravura leaps and record-breaking Bunny 500s—are performed on a king-size bed.

Unfortunately few guardians make available to their rabbits king-size beds, couches, wall-to-wall carpeting, sizable area rugs or even large towels. Nutmeg, a sweet little Rex whose hocks had patches of exposed, calloused skin, lived in a bathroom tiled in white marble. When I suggested a natural-fiber rug for comfort and traction, her guardian replied, "Nutmeg's eaten every kind of floor covering I ever tried. What is worse, living on a marble floor or dying of G.I. stasis? She's had stasis episodes—scared me to death!" I backed off, feeling sorry for the bunny and resigned to getting nowhere with her family. However, the next time I took care of Nutmeg, I found her lounging on a slightly nibbled cotton bed sheet on the bathroom floor.

Pearl and Izumi were young siblings, nominally free-range, whose home base was a folded bath towel on a hardwood kitchen floor. Izumi managed basic locomotion, but Pearl, who'd apparently been born with a splayed front leg, had trouble getting around and tended to stay on the towel like a castaway on a desert island. At my suggestion, their family acquired a biggish indoor-outdoor carpet remnant. On this rug, which they didn't chew, Pearl displayed surprising agility and Izumi did binkies.

A 12-year-old lop named Frou Frou no longer used a litter box—his family put down wee-wee pads but Frou Frou peed and pooped everywhere—and there wasn't a single rug in his home, a downtown loft. Watching Frou Frou shuffle across the loft's shiny wood floor, I could see that his legs were splayed out. Lacking traction, he couldn't get his legs under him. His belly and abdomen were too close to the floor, and the dense fur on the underside of his body was damp and matted with urine. What to do? With Frou Frou's guardian's blessing, I called a

House Rabbit Society friend who advised rug pathways so that Frou Frou could go where he wanted without further damage to his joints. Bed Bath & Beyond was having a sale, and, voilà, Frou Frou stepped eagerly onto the first of 10 bathroom rugs laid out for him. He looked relieved as he paused to sniff the rug. Then he followed the soft, yielding path to his favorite retreat.

One rabbit-rescue volunteer has worked with her husband to create a comfortable environment for their three bonded pairs and frequent fosters. The apartment features edible, comfortable, traction-providing surfaces: sisal carpeting, natural-fiber woven mats, cotton runners, soft bathroom rugs and bamboo rugs. Bella and Jerry, whose territory is the bedroom, chase each other on the king-size bed, while the other rabbits enjoy hopping up on the living-room couch. Snowball and Luna, amusingly active in their Leith Petwerks condo penthouse, love it so much they sometimes stay in it even when the door is open. Faced with a range of textured surfaces, Joshua frequently opts for the bathroom floor because he craves the coolness of marble. In contrast, Joshua's elderly partner, Storm, seems to prefer to sunbathe on a bamboo rug. A foster bunny recovering from sore hocks rests in a cage lined with plush fake sheepskin. And so on.

The importance of knowing what house rabbits require and enjoy underfoot, and our responsibility to provide it, can't be overemphasized. Light-boned prey animals, they were designed to sprint and leap, to flee and dance—which they can do in our homes, given the proper conditions. 🐾

—Jane O'Wyatt, a volunteer at Manhattan AC&C who is also a rabbit- and cat-sitter, can be reached at jowyatt@nyc.rr.com.

Special thanks to Mary Cotter and Kerstin Aumann for their help with this article.

See "Happy Feet" on the facing page for a list of good floor coverings.



HAPPY FEET

For natural-fiber rugs, made of jute, sisal or 100% cotton, go to:

<http://www.createandbarrel.com/natural-fibers-rugs/home-accessories/1>

<http://www.ikea.com/us/en/catalog/categories/departments/Textiles/10653/>

<http://www.naturalarearugs.com/sisal/>

<http://www.pier1.com/SearchResults/tabid/37/txtSearch/rugs/Search/rugs/List/0/Default.aspx>

http://www.target.com/Natural-Fibers-Rugs-Home/b/ref=sc_fe_1_4/187-4448290-4133263?ic=UTF8&node=2207035011

For fake sheepskin bedding:

http://www.rabbit.org/links/palace_pet.html

Keep These Tips in Mind:

Bamboo rugs are durable and easy to clean but can be slippery.

Seagrass rugs are palatable to rabbits and easy to chew, so they're likely to be eaten. If you prefer seagrass rugs, be sure to get them without nonslip latex backing.

You can offer bunnies lots of chew toys to distract them from eating floor coverings.

Some entirely, or partly, synthetic floor coverings work well in rabbit households. If you decide to try one of these, observe your bunnies carefully. If they begin chewing these materials, remove them.

Since many rabbits like to chew on rubber, avoid rugs with rubber borders.

Bunnies' nails may get caught in wide-weave or "looped" carpeting with large loops.

If you use wee-wee pads, don't let them come into direct contact with your bunnies. They contain a chemical that may contribute to urine scald. "Chucks," a similar product made for human use, does not contain this chemical and is available from medical-supply stores.

Love Letters From Adopters: a Sampling

One of our great joys is to receive emails from adopters, letting us know how a rabbit is doing, how the household is adjusting and how blissful life has become. Many emails include photos showing the rabbit's new domicile, complete with a picture of a sprawled-out, contented bun. The following are some excerpts, happily offered up for the newsletter by adopters. (By the way, if you would like to email us with rabbit news or be added to our distribution list, write to nyc.acc.rabbits.news@gmail.com)

almost have his fur all brushed out. But he seems very happy.

Thanks again so much for making this all happen!!

Jesse



Elmo & Betty Lou (Both adopted from AC&C)

I just wanted to let you know that Elmo and Betty Lou have bonded! It took much less time than I was expecting, seeing as Elmo was so aggressive. Two days ago they cuddled their heads together while I was petting them. Since then I've seen them get closer and closer, cuddle and hop over one another, share meals and explore together. Elmo seems so much happier and more active having a lady around. I was resigning myself to the idea that none of the females at the shelter would be a match for Mr. Humpy, but I'm so glad we were able to find Betty Lou and that you encouraged me to adopt her and to work with them. I am fully and completely a rabbitophile.

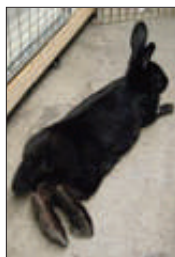
Laurifer



Leonardo

He is just fabulous! He loves his new home and has been flying around my room for hours. Which seems to be normal for him at night until he gets tired of playing and then lays in bed with me and kisses my face! I just couldn't be happier with him. My roommates love him as well! He is eating well and I

Love Letter From a Black Bunny Named Marge



When I was abandoned in a city park in August, I thought I would die of loneliness – or get eaten. Then a stranger picked me up and brought me to the AC&C shelter, where I was put in a room with other rabbits. Kind people fed, petted and played with me. They discussed having a rabbit-savvy vet look at my left eye, which I hadn't been able to use for quite awhile. I had appointments with four vets with gentle hands: the third removed my useless eye; the fourth spayed me. They, like other rabbit-savvy vets in the area, take care of bunnies like me at greatly reduced rates—and often at no cost. I am so grateful for their care and wish to thank them all.

I also want to thank Maddy DeLeon for chauffeuring me to vet appointments and Kim Renk for welcoming me to her midtown office where Cindy Stutts, my personal assistant and fosterer, could spend quality time with me. 🐰

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.

Westchester County:

Anthony Pilny, DVM

Animal Specialty Center
9 Odell Plaza, Yonkers, NY 10701
(914) 457-4000

Gil Stanzione, DVM

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

Laurie Hess, DVM

Fine Animal Hospital
Bedford Hills, NY 10507
(914) 666-8061

Bond Animal Hospital, 250 Central Ave.
White Plains, NY 10606
(914) 949-8860

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

Manhattan:

Becky Campbell, DVM

Symphony Veterinary Center
698 Amsterdam Ave., 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

Alex Wilson, DVM

Linda Pesek, 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

Licensed HRS Representatives

Mary Cotter, HRS Licensed Educator,
Chapter Manager, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab,
mec@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/ACC Rabbit Program,
bygolyolyo@att.net, (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

Donna Sheridan, HRS Licensed Educator,
Long Island Rabbit Rescue Volunteer,
hpocus217@yahoo.com,
longislandrabbitrescue.org

Kerstin Aumann, HRS Licensed Educator,
NYC/ACC Volunteer,
nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com

Jennifer Saver, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator
Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

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Creative Director: Jane O'Wyatt

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/NYS 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:

Cindy Stutts
1199 Park Avenue, #14D
New York, NY 10128

Keep This List of Internet Sites Handy

By Natalie Reeves

Any online search for information about rabbits should begin with a visit to www.rabbit.org, the Web site of the House Rabbit Society. The New York chapter of the House Rabbit Society can be found at www.rabbitcare.org, which contains a listing of recommended rabbit-savvy veterinarians.

HEALTH

No matter how trustworthy a source may seem, never let advice from the Internet about your rabbit's health replace a visit to a rabbit-savvy vet. But when you can't reach your vet, or when you are just trying to learn everything you can about rabbits, there are several excellent Internet resources.

Etherbun is a free listserv through which subscribers can ask others about rabbit health, care and behavior. The searchable archives also are a great source of information. To subscribe, send a blank message to etherbun-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

You may receive approximately 20 emails a day, unless you opt to have your emails come in a digest form.

Dana Krempels, Ph.D., of the University of Miami's biology department, has written and posted a number of articles about rabbit health issues to: <http://www.bio.miami.edu/hare/rabbithealth.html>.

Another excellent resource on health-and-care issues is www.medirabbit.com. One particularly interesting part of this site is found in the "Feeding" section. Click on "Feeding the House Rabbit" to obtain one of the most comprehensive lists (and pictures) of veggies that are safe for rabbits.

Watch videos posted on the "FastUpOn Rabbit Care" channel on YouTube about a number of topics, such as what to feed your rabbit, how to clip your rabbit's nails, and how to administer subcutaneous fluids: www.youtube.com/FastUpOnRabbitCare.

—Natalie Reeves can be reached at NatalieLReeves@yahoo.com.

WHAT'S WRONG?

“HELP! I’m Allergic to My Rabbit!”



Ellen Kane and Bailey

By Mary Cotter, Ed.D.

In early 2005, Marcy Fox¹ adopted an orange and white lop rabbit she had fallen in love with, from a major municipal shelter. A few months later, Marcy, in tears, showed up at the shelter, “Blooper” in tow. “What’s wrong?” said the desk clerk. “I’m allergic to him,” wept Marcy. “When I first brought him home, it wasn’t so bad. But now that it’s spring, my symptoms are worse than ever. I love him so much, but I just can’t live this way!”

Year after year, rabbit owners relinquish their beloved pets to shelters, certain that they have allergies², and that their symptoms will disappear when the rabbit does. Are they right?

“Not necessarily,” says Dr. Paul Lang, founding member and board-certified

“The assumption is that it’s the animals. But very often it’s not. It may be dust or dust mites that the person’s allergic to— with *zero* sensitivity to the animals.”

allergist at the North Shore Allergy and Asthma Institute. “There are certain conditions that mimic allergies, such as vasomotor rhinitis – where you can get a lot of sinus congestion, postnasal drip, irritated eyes. But this has nothing to do with allergies, and is treated differently.” Further, he continues, “very often, what

a person *thinks* they’re allergic to is not what they are sensitive to, especially when it comes to animals – and that’s the reason for professional allergy testing.” Lang cites the example of a visitor to a household that has pets. “If the visitor experiences allergic symptoms – such as sneezing, watery eyes, runny nose – the assumption is that it’s the animals. But very often it’s not. It may be dust or dust mites that the person’s allergic to – with *zero* sensitivity to the animals.”

Marcy Fox’s case illustrates just this kind of assumption. If an owner does not undergo allergy testing, warns Lang, she may be giving up her pet for no reason at all. “It’s really important to try to objectify allergic responses as much as possible,” he continues. “Otherwise, it’s just hit or miss.”

But what if you are tested by a qualified allergist, and diagnosed definitively with an allergy to your beloved Thumper. Must the two of you hop your own separate ways? Again, not necessarily.

Allergies are often conceptualized in relation to a threshold: a certain number of allergens can be handled by the body without incident. But add just *one* more, and it may be the “last straw,” pushing a person into a hypersensitized state, with full-blown symptoms. Lang uses the analogy of a skin burn: “When your skin is burned, it is hypersensitive to any kind of touch. But when it heals, then you can tolerate various kinds of touch without a problem.”

In practical terms, this means that if you can reduce the overall allergen load in your environment, you may very well be able to live happily with a pet. How to do this? Lang proposes several ways:

- 1) Keep your pet out of the bedroom. This will minimize allergens to which you might react, even while sleeping.

(Continued over)

¹ Name and details have been changed, to safeguard privacy.

² An allergy is an exaggerated response of the immune system (resulting in histamine release) to a substance that is essentially harmless.

HELP! I'm Allergic

(Continued)

2) Perform frequent cleaning – it's the animal's dander that people are typically allergic to. Reduce the dander, and you reduce the symptoms.

3) Use air purifiers and HEPA filters – these can be very effective in lowering the allergen load in your home.

4) Bathe the animal, and consider using a product such as "Allopet" that can be added to the bath water. It moisturizes the animal's skin and reduces flaking. [Author's note: bathing is NOT recommended for rabbits, but in a household with multiple species, bathing the other species can help to minimize dander.]

Ellen Kane, of Queens, NY, credits her rabbit, Bailey, with alerting her to a previously unrecognized allergen load in her own apartment. Shortly after adopting Bailey (a friendly, puppy-like, ex-lab-rabbit, who bonded quickly with Kane's cocker spaniel, Murphy), Kane developed severe allergy symptoms, requiring treatment with albuterol (a bronchodilator), steroids, and antihistamines. She was tested by Dr. Lang, and found to be allergic to rabbits, among other things. Heartbroken, she decided to return Bailey to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab.

When returning Bailey, Kane was very surprised to discover that, in the fosterer's home, her allergies seemed under control, in spite of the presence of a large number of rabbits, and a large quantity of grass hay. She noticed that the fosterer had no wall-to-wall carpeting, and wondered if her own carpeting contributed to her

She was very surprised to discover that her allergies seemed under control, in spite of the presence of a large number of rabbits, and a large quantity of grass hay.

allergy symptoms. After discussing the situation with Dr. Lang, she decided to remove her wall-to-wall carpeting in an effort to reduce the allergen load in her home. She found mold in some areas of the floor under the carpeting and took steps to eliminate that as well.

The result was dramatic. Kane was able to reclaim Bailey, and is now living happily with her, under Dr. Lang's supervision. "If it weren't for Bailey," says Kane, "I never would have discovered how many other allergens I was living with. I give her full credit for improving my quality of life – in so many ways. I'm off albuterol, I'm off steroids. And I can kiss my bunny right on the head!"

Photo: Mary Cotter



Dr. Paul Lang

But suppose you've reduced as many allergens in your environment as possible, and you still experience symptoms around Thumper. Is this a sure sign you must relinquish your pet?

"Some people may need to give up their pets," says Lang, "but certainly not all. It really depends on how severe the allergy is, how amenable the person is to the use of medication, how effective the medicines are. There are some people who say 'I don't want to take medicine – I have to get rid of the animal.' But I'd only consider that *if they've actually verified that it's the animal who's causing the problem.*"

Lang espouses "minimum intervention for maximum improvement," and does not routinely recommend allergy (desensitization) shots. Nevertheless, he recognizes that, for some patients, the benefits of animal companionship can outweigh the difficulties caused by allergies, *assuming their symptoms can be kept under control.* "Everybody has different needs and desires for a pet," he says. "There are some patients who are highly allergic, but I'll go ahead and treat them with allergy shots, because for them, their pet is their child."

The bottom line, according to Lang, is this: "Don't make assumptions, and don't just endlessly take medication; if you are experiencing symptoms, get appropriate testing by a professional who is qualified to interpret the results." 🐰

—Mary Cotter, who is the founder of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab and Manager of the NYC Chapter of House Rabbit Society, can be reached at mec@cloud9.net.