



# THUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS APRIL/MAY 2020

## Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV): A Swift and Deadly Killer

By Megan Hilands

Over the past few months, new outbreaks of a variant of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) have appeared across the U.S. RHDV is a deadly and highly contagious disease. Over the past few decades, the disease has sadly claimed the lives of millions of rabbits around the world.

For any rabbit owner or rescue, an outbreak of RHDV is extremely serious, and we all need to take precautions and look toward solutions, potentially including a U.S. vaccine, in order to keep our bunnies safe.

### What is RHDV?

RHDV, also sometimes called Rabbit Calicivirus (RCV), is a dangerous calicivirus first discovered in 1984 in China. It affects domestic and wild rabbits of European origin (and North American wild rabbits, in its most recent variant) but it is not known to affect other animals or humans.

RHDV has a short incubation period of between two and 10 days and a high mortality rate estimated at between 50% and 100%.

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Noelle was abandoned in a wooded area, and she was overrun with fleas and ticks from her time outside. She was rescued at the end of March and is now safe and settled into her foster home.

## Rescue Operations And Covid-19

By Rabbit Rescue & Rehab

The Covid-19 outbreak has brought changes and challenges to our day-to-day activities. Beginning in February, as the full extent of the situation became known and it began to affect all of our daily lives, shelters and rescue organizations sadly experienced a surge in surrenders and abandonments, while also facing obstacles that affected our standard operations.

Throughout the months of March and April, we have seen a record number of outdoor abandonments, which is both illegal in New York state, and a certain death sentence for a domestic rabbit

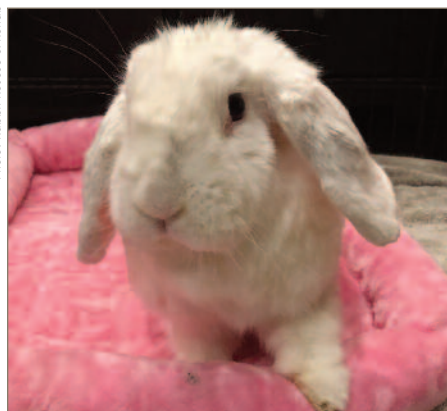
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## Please Help Talulah Receive Essential Surgery

Talulah, a beautiful girl, was surrendered to Rabbit Rescue & Rehab with a significant case of fur mites and a very large ear base abscess on her left side that was rapidly worsening and causing her tremendous pain. Only a few days after coming into our care, the pain in

*(Continued on page 2)*

Photo: Rabbit Rescue & Rehab



Talulah.

## RHDV (Continued from page 1)

In laboratory testing, the virus has been shown to be stable for *over 7 months* at 39 degrees Fahrenheit and three months at 68 degrees Fahrenheit. It is resistant to freezing, can survive on surfaces for long periods of time, and can be spread long distances by flies, mosquitos or other insects.

There is currently no cure for RHDV, and no vaccine widely available in the U.S., though there is and has been for some time in Europe.

### What are the symptoms?

The main symptoms associated with RHDV are as follows.

- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Bleeding from rectum, nose or mouth
- Fever
- Spasms
- Sudden death

Several of these symptoms are shared with other common rabbit illnesses. And some rabbits may show no symptoms at all before dying suddenly.

With an incubation period as short as 48 hours, that means RHDV all too often results in a sudden death. Sometimes infected rabbits may not even show any symptoms before dying of the disease.

### Where did RHDV come from and what are the different types?

There are two predominant theories about how the virus originated. Similar to how Covid-19 began to infect humans, RHDV may have undergone a species jump to rabbits. It may have also evolved from an existing non-pathogenic (non-disease-causing) virus in rabbits.

The earliest outbreaks were likely caused by one of two variants: either classical RHDV or RHDVa, which together are often referred to as RHDV1 due to genetic similarities. In 2010, a new variant of RHDV known as RHDVb/ RHDV2 was observed in France for the first time.

**RHDV Home Biosecurity Measures**  
In RHDV affected areas, please take the following precautions to protect your rabbits.

- Remove shoes before entering the home. *RHDV can survive on surfaces for months and resists freezing.*
- Change clothes upon entering the home.
- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after being outdoors.
- Avoid contact with other rabbits and rabbit people.
- Disinfect with safe and effective cleaners.
- Do not purchase hay or greens harvested in affected areas.
- Do not take your rabbit out in public or to be around other rabbits, except for essential trips (vet visits).
- Prevent flies and other insects from entering your home with window screens; eliminate any inside.
- Quarantine new rabbits for at least 10 days.

RHDV2 is the type of RHDV responsible for the most recent outbreaks in North America. Unfortunately, the newer RHDV2 subtype has been known to affect a greater variety of rabbits. RHDV1 only affects wild and domestic rabbits of European descent, and for some time the same was thought to be true for RHDV2. In the recent outbreaks in Arizona and New Mexico, though, RHDV2 infected and killed North American wild rabbits and hares.

### Where and how did the RHDV spread over time?

Within a year of discovery in 1984, RHDV1 caused the deaths of over 140 million rabbits in China and also spread

to Korea. It is believed that the rapid early spread of the virus was tied to the fur trade.

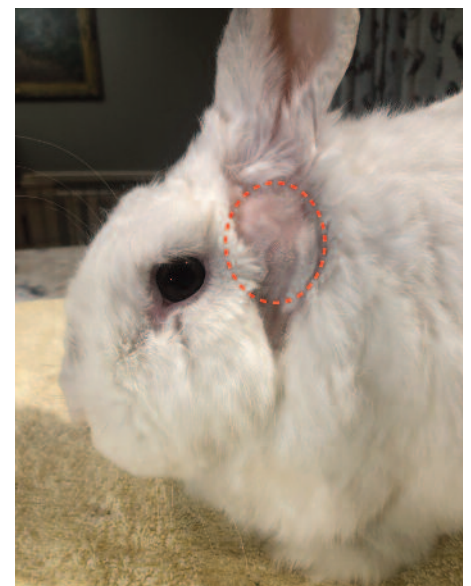
Soon thereafter, RHDV1 was seen in Europe, where it ravaged wild rabbit populations in Italy (1986), Spain (1988) and Portugal (1989). Mexico also saw its first outbreak in 1988, which was again believed to be the result of exports from China.

In Australia, where some sadly consider wild rabbits to be pests, RHDV was actually introduced as a bioweapon in the 1990s. The same variant quickly spread to New Zealand – which shows just how difficult the virus is to control.

In the early 2000s, the first cases of RHDV1 in the U.S. were reported in the states of Iowa, Illinois and Utah. The virus later spread to Indiana, New York and Minnesota. Cases of RHDV1 continue to persist in the US. In 2018, 40 rabbits

*(Continued on page 17)*

## Talulah (Continued from page 1)



This photo of Talulah shows the location of her abscess.

Talulah's head began to prevent her from eating or drinking. She was urgently started on pain medication and subcutaneous

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## **Covid-19** *(Continued from page 1)*

that isn't found and rescued quickly. In addition to these rabbits that have been rescued from outside and placed into foster homes, stay-at-home guidelines have dictated that adoptable rabbits in public locations be relocated to foster homes, further stressing the already limited number of available foster spaces.

If you have fostered or adopted before and are interested in providing a foster home to a rabbit, please do reach out to us! If you are new to rabbits and to fostering, please reach out as well, and we would be happy to get started, remotely, on the rabbit education process!

It was reported that some domestic companion animals may be capable of contracting Covid-19 from the humans in their homes after two domestic cats tested positive for Covid-19, both displaying mild respiratory symptoms. There continues to be no evidence to suggest that animal-to-human transmission

from companion animals to humans can or would take place. There is also currently no evidence of rabbits being susceptible. Still, in the interest of taking precautions to protect our furry family members of all species, advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the U.S. Agriculture Department at this time is to wash your hands before touching your animals if you are presenting with symptoms of Covid-19 or have tested positive. Where possible, assign care responsibilities to members of the family who aren't sick.

This frightening situation is a good reminder to always be prepared with a plan for your rabbits in the event that you become ill and are unable to care for them. Contact people you can trust to look after them, and create a list of care instructions and emergency contacts – including your rabbit-savvy veterinarian – for each rabbit. Include details about their feeding schedule and all information about health conditions and necessary

medications. Keep a physical copy of this document somewhere in your home. As always, it is a good idea to have several weeks' worth of supplies on hand, including hay and pellets, medications, and other essentials such as a carrier in good condition.

It is our priority to continue our rescue operations to the maximum extent possible while reducing the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Please be advised that at present, we are still accepting inquiries and applications for adoption, but are proceeding with caution and potentially postponing in-person portions of the adoption process temporarily. Your patience and understanding are greatly appreciated.

As always, we remain available to discuss rabbit care and offer assistance with any rabbit-related concerns. We wish for everyone's good health during this tumultuous time.

## **Talulah** *(Continued from page 2)*

fluids to combat dehydration, and penicillin injections to begin addressing (and hopefully shrinking) the abscess prior to surgery. These measures were initially successful, and Talulah's appetite gradually returned as her pain subsided.

Now, several weeks since we first met Talulah, the already-severe abscess has begun to worsen significantly despite her continued antibiotic therapy, and surgery must be done urgently. Abscesses in rabbits are very serious and must be treated aggressively. Talulah's surgery will involve an ear canal ablation and bulla osteotomy, and antibiotic-impregnated beads will be implanted. Antibiotics and pain medication will then continue following surgery.

Talulah is a confident and bold rabbit who loves to follow humans around and stay involved in what is going on around the house. She is sweet and affectionate,

and melts into a content fuzzy puddle when given affection and a spot to curl up next to you. It has been such a joy to watch her personality open up as she grows accustomed to her foster home and as she begins to experience relief from the pain of the abscess. Once the surgery is complete and Talulah has had time to recover, we eagerly look forward to her being pain-free once again and living a joyful and comfortable life.

Lops are particularly prone to ear infections and this type of abscess. It is a good practice (for all kinds of rabbits, not just lops!) to feel all around the sides of your rabbit's face and head and be aware of any changes in symmetry or signs of pain. Regular veterinary exams are also crucial for helping to catch issues like this at an early stage, when treatment is easier with a higher rate of success.

Talulah's veterinary costs include her medications, blood test, culture and

sensitivity test, and surgery. Rabbit Rescue & Rehab relies entirely on donations to meet the cost of caring for rabbits like Talulah, to treat their injuries, and to give them a brighter future. We are a small all-volunteer rabbit-rescue organization with many special-needs, chronically ill, and sanctuary rabbits under our care, as well as many adoptable rabbits. Please consider making a donation for Talulah's care so that we may continue to help rabbits in need. Donations can be made to [Rabbit Rescue & Rehab through PayPal](#).

We extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our supporters, and Talulah sends a huge thank you as well!

Your contribution is tax-deductible! Rabbit Rescue & Rehab (d/b/a NYC Metro Rabbit) is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) charity registered in New York State.

# A Simple Vet Visit Takes Bizarre Twists Amid Coronavirus Crisis

By Jane O'Wyatt

On March 25, I decided to bring my big Californian, Hardy, to the Animal Medical Center because the area around one of his eyes was irritated and he was sniffing. To my surprise, an appointment was available at 2 p.m. that same day, so off we went on a fast, bumpy taxi ride through a city in virtual stasis.

When we arrived, I could tell that AMC was operating in coronavirus crisis mode. At the entrance, a masked, gloved woman in green scrubs was playing three roles: receptionist, gatekeeper and triage nurse. She allowed only one person at a time into the entryway and no one into the lobby. "What's the baby's name? Did you call first? What's the problem?" she asked, and I told her that Hardy had an appointment and why. She wrote the information on a clipboard and told me to wait with Hardy in one of two open plastic tents in the AMC parking lot; someone would collect Hardy for his exam, during which a vet would call my cell phone to discuss treatment. I chose the tent with only two people in it and sat down on a white plastic folding chair.

About 15 minutes later, a masked man in a disposable yellow isolation gown took Hardy from me, and I prepared to wait – with reading matter and the ringer volume of my phone turned up so I could hear it over the roar of traffic on nearby FDR Drive. At length, the 45-degree cold got to me despite the tent's two electrical heaters, more decorative than thermal. I got up and started to pace. Glancing at my phone, I saw that one of the vets had tried to reach me 20 minutes earlier. Damn! The parking lot, tucked into the hospital's overhang, was apparently a dead zone. I returned to the gatekeeper, who said, "Wait here," while she went into the lobby to call the vet with whom Hardy had an appointment. "They'll call you." Shortly thereafter my phone rang and I took the call outside the building's perimeter. A vet tech told me that the doctor was with another

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Animal Medical Center, March 25, 2020.



Hardy.

patient, but meanwhile I should answer a few Bunny 101 husbandry questions about Hardy. Because I was getting colder by the minute, I answered impatiently. The tech apologized for the cold weather and assured me that the doctor would call me back soon. Since phone reception where I was standing was good, I waited there. For another half hour.

In our phone consultation, the vet said that Hardy had an eye infection due to a blocked tear duct and proposed performing an MRI to identify the cause, flushing the duct and giving subcutaneous

injections of an antibiotic called BenzaPen. Now trembling with cold, I opted for the simplest, least time-consuming suggestion: BenzaPen. Then I kvetched that I was freezing, and the vet kindly replied that I could wait for Hardy and his meds in the lobby. Wonderful!

"No," the gatekeeper said, "You can't wait in the lobby. We can't let any clients into the lobby." Fortunately, though, she now allowed me to wait in the somewhat warmer entryway. Standing against a wall as far as possible from the gatekeeper

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# Enough to Go Around

By Robert Kulka

To put it mildly, we are living through some very unusual and difficult times. In fact, most of us have never seen anything quite like this. During the Spanish flu in 1918, where millions of lives were lost, shutting down and social distancing weren't really practiced universally. The spread of the pandemic was compounded by World War I, with troop movements around the globe. But this is not exactly what I wanted to write about.

I want to focus on 2020 and our current pandemic and, of course, my experience of things. Sheltering in place with rabbits, I am learning more and more about myself and how I have approached much of my life and the lessons I am being taught. In the 18 years I have been around rabbits, they have walked me through learning about who and what rabbits are. They have shown me that each has a very distinct personality and different ways of communicating with their humans. I've learned what it is like to be vulnerable without being weak. They have shown me how to be wise and adaptable to my surroundings.

When adjustments are not possible, they have shown me that you need to take things into your own hands, or nose for that matter, and move those things to where they clearly belong. I have thought about trust and how it builds slowly but solidly. That has been an important lesson I have learned about assessing things before jumping or hopping too quickly.

I think one of the biggest lessons they have imparted on me is that you can be soft and unassuming but strong and

Photo: Robert Kulka



Skip.

resilient. I have seen how you don't give up when things are tough. I have seen rabbits meet adversity head-on and push through to the other side. As soon as I get into a self-pity place, I look at bunnies and the fight in them and I am shamed into being just a big boy.

But I never dreamed that being locked up and sleeping and eating and hanging with rabbits day in and day out would open my eyes to the most profound self-discovery. At my advanced life stage, I am seeing how I have lived and approached things. My eyes have been opened to how I approach things like relationships and emotions throughout my life. I have been shown that I have made an assumption most of my life that may have been entirely off-base. The insight is so life-changing I can see that the rabbits had to wait until I was ready and they had enough time with me to get the very simple but amazing concept across. They have stayed true to me as I have incorporated this important shift.

The simple lesson they have shared with me is that there is enough to go around.

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## A Simple Vet Visit

*(Continued from page 4)*

and the queue of clients, I heard her repeatedly ask, "What's the baby's name?" and heard people tell her what ailed their dogs and cats. I saw owners weeping because they couldn't say goodbye to their beloved, terminally ill pets who were about to be euthanized in the hospital. I watched a man carrying a motionless greyhound with an exquisitely delicate face approach. "Is this an emergency?" the gatekeeper asked. "He can't walk," the man said. "Bring him into the lobby," she said, morphing from obdurate, imperturbable gatekeeper to triage nurse. In that moment I realized what a truly stressful job she had, and hoped that she was not obligated to

remain at her post for the rest of the week, or even for one more consecutive day.

Eventually she handed Hardy and his dispensary bag of BenzaPen to me. "Thanks for your patience," she said.

Hardy and I sped home via taxi during what in a previous era had been called rush hour. Seemingly more aggrieved than usual after a vet visit, he had been in the AMC building (without me!) for nearly three hours. Had he experienced some novel aggravation or had he been weirded out by the general situation? Staff members would have been wearing the same PPE as workers in human hospitals depicted in the news media, and while it seemed unlikely that Hardy's respiratory droplets contained coronavirus particles, his fur coat would have been

regarded more as a potential fomite (carrier of a pathogen) than a thing of beauty. Companion-animal veterinarians and veterinary technicians routinely work in physical proximity, and Hardy would probably have been restrained by a tech while the vet examined him. In addition to the risk of fomite transmission, the potential for reciprocal infection in such a close human-to-human encounter – via even asymptomatic viral shedding – would have been significant. And at the heart of this was the question of Hardy's medical condition, which was diagnosed amid stringent coronavirus protocols. The more I thought about the atmosphere of hypervigilance in which Hardy must have spent the afternoon, the more stressful this simple vet visit seemed.

## Enough *(Continued from page 5)*

Enough love, I mean. I think all my life I tried to sort through relationships and try to put them into categories so I could make sense of feelings. A lot of that is driven by the guilt I feel in looking unfaithful to others. I worried about that with the very first bunny to enter my life. You see, I was quite convinced that my first little guy, Skip, was the most special rabbit. I repeated my love and gratitude to him and often said he was my angel and that there would never be anyone like him. When he left me, I was devastated and yet almost immediately brought another rabbit into my life. That rabbit was clearly special but I had a work-around. Skip was my prince, and Lara was my only and best girl. So I was able to stretch and not feel too guilty because I was taking nothing away from Skip by bringing Lara home. I was able to categorize them once again. One male and one female. There was room for each and I did not need to divide a finite amount of love and allegiance.

That was working just fine until I lost Lara and I had other rabbits entering into my life. I saw myself holding back emotionally and being very careful not to use the words I used for Skip or Lara with anyone else. Doing that would

have made me unfaithful and maybe even get me to doubt how I felt about my best boy and my only girl. Carefully, I would use new terms and be cautious in how I approached other rabbits. Difficult because after a short time I would let another rabbit into my heart. And then another and another until I was very conflicted about the love I was feeling for each. In the back of my mind, I was being wary about doling out love and sentiment so I did not discount feelings for each of the new rabbits I was letting in or the ones that passed through my life.

So here is the latest lesson: Adapt and include. It's that simple. Many of the bunnies in foster homes get moved from one place to another. Each time they need to adapt and also approach a new relationship with love. It dawns on me as I observe this behavior that there is no reason for me to fear loving each of them. Each is unique in his or her way. Each responds to and adapts to love in each situation. You see, rabbits as gentle and small as they may be on the outside have very big hearts. Those hearts can be filled with strength, forgiveness and, most of all, love. And that is the key. I, too, have enough to go around. Loving each new bunny partner does not diminish the love I had for the other rabbits in my life. I have enough to go

around and that love continues to grow and expand, showing me I don't have to put things into categories or ration the love I feel anymore. There is room in my heart for each of them, and even more love where that came from.

As crazy and difficult as things are these days, there is always something new to be discovered about ourselves and those around us. There is always the other side of everything we experience in life, regardless of whether the situation is easy or difficult. I see now that we grow and we discover with each new adventure before us. I can be strong yet forgiving, gentle but resilient. Most of all, my heart can be filled with more love than I ever believed possible. Feeling all that love does not diminish any other emotions and experiences in my life. Seeing how these little "gurus" have led me from one thing to another, I wonder what lessons I will be taught going forward by these little ones with the big hearts. Whatever lesson may be in store for me yet, I will be ready to learn and follow the lead of these bunny guides. One day I can only hope that they show me the way across the rainbow bridge. That will be where all the lessons will pay off and where all the love that is possible will be clear. Until then, all I can do is follow the bunny hop.

## Finding Hope and Healing in Rabbits

*'A loveless world is a dead world'*

– Albert Camus, *The Plague*

By Amelia Wilson

I am writing this article for 'Thump' in early April, in the apex of plague. Fear, horror and grief have waylaid humanity. In addition to the literal and immediate loss of life that many have experienced, there are other, more insidious (and enduring) losses that we will have to survive. They are economic, societal, social and psychological – and will be felt for generations.

One criticism of rabbits I have heard over the years is that they don't "give anything in return." Unlike a dog, people say, you can't take them for walks; they don't defend the home; you wouldn't take them camping; they don't herd sheep. And unlike cats, you can't pick them up; they don't warm your lap; they don't keep our homes and ships and root cellars free of mice.

Prior to the pandemic, I would always respond that an animal's worth is not derived from its utility to humans. I would add that, in fact, they are very

affectionate, that they do give a lot in their own way. I have always loved rabbits and found them endearing, cute and comical. But I will confess that my evaluation of the role they play in my life (what they "give to me") was not profound. I suppose the same could be said of many things, people, liberties and privileges I enjoyed pre-pandemic.

We began isolating in early March. It was still cold, wet and dreary. Like many, I experienced sudden and debilitating

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# Rabbits Spending More Time with Human Companions Who Have Been Working From Home

By Amanda Puitiza

As I have been working and studying from home recently, I have had more time to be with my bonded rabbits.

With all the extra time I have now to peruse the Internet, I read an article on a dog blog stressing we should try keeping our companion animals on the same schedule as always. I have found that my rabbits are actually quite comfortable going about their business even with me hanging around their room, making extra noise or moving stuff around. I think we have reached that point of familiarity.

With the recent amount of video chatting, I have noticed companion animals – particularly dogs and cats – peeking out of the corners here and there as their human companions focus on their notes and tech. I'd like to see this time as a

Photos: Amanda Puitiza



Jack.

positive opportunity to learn even more about what my rabbits are like as individuals and the complexities of their relationship. I also have more time to make toys and other simple items for their entertainment.



Athena.

So this is not really “social distancing” for me as much as it is a chance to improve “cross-species sociality” that I wouldn't have had with the usual demands of city life. Hope you are all staying safe with your furry friends!

## Finding Hope

(Continued from page 6)

Photo: Gina Briggs



Pippi and Dashie.

anxiety. I spent long moments staring out the window. On good days I suffered from ennui; on bad days my chest would tighten, my heart would thump in my chest, and the rooms would shrink and expand in a vertiginous nightmare. “Look up at the sky,” I perseverated from my

window perch. “Look up. Look up.” Until one day, I looked down.

Pippi and Dashie were deep in a midday nap, his ear tilting to one side. The foster bunny Juniper was flopped over on her side, white belly exposed. I moved through the noxious fog toward the pair's pen and sat down slowly. I watched them for a while as my breathing slowed. I started naming five things I could see, four things I could feel, three things I could hear, two things I could smell.

At first this exercise yielded superficial results: “I see two bunnies, a water bowl, an errant poop.” A thing I could hear was always the refrigerator humming in the kitchen. I could feel the Ikea rug beneath me, the weight of my sweatshirt on my shoulders. This first time in their pen I gently touched Pippi's head (she didn't wake up). I put my nose in the soft spot between her ears and inhaled deeply. She smelled like sweet hay.

As my meditations with the bunnies became more frequent, my sensory

experiences of them deepened. Dashie's right ear droops most around 2:15 p.m. Light stretches, and when it does Juniper's coloring changes from cream to beige to sand. The soft spot between Pippi's ears smells like summer days and sunny hours. Quiet can be heard like a low molecular vibration.

The bunnies' gift during this pandemic has been an appreciation of stillness and home. Before the virus, the swirl and pull of life outside kept me from valuing the small, the slow, the simple. I now rejoice in them. I am no longer afraid of long periods of solitude because with the rabbits I'm not alone. They are there to keep me company, keep me grounded, keep me safe, keep me still. Perhaps it took a fell, invisible monster and three bunnies to show me that sometimes the only place to go is within. Next time I am asked what a bunny does or gives, I will have a better answer.

*“But what does it mean, the plague? It's life, that's all.” – Albert Camus*

## My First Rescue Mission Was a Success: Paisley Is Safe

By Alyssa Eisenberg

My mom got a call on March 24 that a poor bunny was abandoned in Baldwin Harbor. The caller said that the bunny's hind legs were injured, and it couldn't move very fast.

Even though I had schoolwork to do (I'm in ninth grade), I decided I wanted to go with my mom because I had never rescued a bunny before. My mom, Christine Roche, is a volunteer with Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group.

We quickly got in the car and headed to the address that was provided to us. Baldwin Harbor is right near the water, so we were afraid that the rabbit would be hard to find. Once we got there, the kind man who found her showed us where the bunny had been, and we walked carefully around the area because we didn't want to scare the poor thing.

We didn't know the condition of the bunny, and had no idea how long it had been on its own without food or water. We wanted to hurry to get it to the vet ASAP.

We spotted the rabbit and followed it around the man's pool. The bunny couldn't move very fast and eventually its hind legs gave out and the rabbit fell to its



Paisley pre-rescue.

side. My mom saw an opportunity and grabbed the bunny and put it in a carrier.

When we got the rabbit to the car, I kept talking to it and making sure that it was okay on our way to the vet. I started to think of names to give the rabbit, but we didn't know if it was a girl or a boy.

Once we got to the vet it was hard to say goodbye because I wanted the rabbit to be okay. I had thought of a couple cute names for the bunny after we found out it was a girl. I reached out to another LIRRG volunteer, Denise



Photo: Denise Berblaff

Paisley relaxing at home.

Bertolotti, who helped me narrow down the selection. The options that I had to choose from were Addison, Paisley and Sadie. Right away Paisley hit me and I asked Denise if I could name her that. Denise said that she was hoping I would pick that name, and now that cute little bunny has her own name.

Denise is taking care of Paisley as she gets medical treatment and recovers from her ordeal. Paisley's mobility is improving, and she has a healthy appetite. I am so grateful to have had this experience!

## Cassie's Rescue Opened Doors for Me

By Krystin Koerner

Life is like a room with multiple doors. One will open and another will close. Some lead you nowhere, while others help you find your way out. When I was asked about fostering a rabbit for a few days until space at another foster home opened, I was opening a new door, not knowing all the doors I would go through. It was fate for me to be a part of this rescue of Cassie.

Last April, another volunteer and I joined a rescue effort in Mastic, New York. A local resident found a rabbit sitting by his garbage pails and called the local animal shelter. The shelter told him about Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, and he reached out to us. When we arrived, the man told us that the homeowners across the street had just moved. He spotted the rabbit and was able to pick her up and bring her indoors. The man owned two large dogs and had never cared for a

rabbit before. He was using a large fish tank as a temporary space for the rabbit, and had purchased basic supplies at a local pet store. He feared that his dogs would hurt the rabbit.

Though the kind man had no experience with rabbits, he was able to recognize that this was no wild rabbit. I marveled at her beauty when I saw her. She was a gorgeous Mini Rex with a very rare otter

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## Cassie's Rescue

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coloring featuring shades of brown. I reached into the fish tank and she didn't hesitate to let me to pick her up. She snuggled into my arms and I had a feeling that I wasn't going to be just a temporary foster for her. I felt her body relax in my arms, as if she knew she was safe. The man thanked us, and I thanked him for being so generous by taking action to save this rabbit.

The volunteer and I brought her to the car for a closer examination and to apply Revolution for possible mites. When I went to lift her up, though, I noticed there was blood all over my hand. Being an emergency medical technician for many years, I always had a kit filled with first-aid supplies in the trunk of my car, and asked the other volunteer to grab it. My eyes began to fill up with tears because I saw how long the rabbit's nails were, and she was bleeding because a nail had broken off. Sometimes rabbits lose their dewclaw nail but the main nail was intact. The neglect that this rabbit had endured was apparent. In all of my time with the rescue group, I had never seen nails so long that they were curling into a rabbit's feet. I held her close and we began to clip her nails.



Sassy Cassie at home.

to out of necessity because of the pain in her feet. After a few hours I saw her move in her space, and it was as if she had just discovered how to move around. Her hop was more like a walk, with one paw moving and then the other. I sat with her and she bowed her head and allowed me to pet her. During that time, I choose a name for her, Cassie. After a few days, I was told that a foster space had opened up for her, but she had become so comfortable with me that I felt it would be best if I just fostered her. Every time anyone walked by her, she would hop over and solicit pets. Within a week, Cassie's true personality began to shine and she would binky, chin and dig. That's when she got her nickname, Sassy Cassie.

A new man came into my life who never had personal experience with rabbits.

Cassie instantly felt so comfortable with him that she sprawled out next to him and just let him pet her. My friends never wanted to stop petting Cassie because her fur was so plush and smooth! After a few months of dating, my boyfriend asked me to move in with him, saying that my two rabbits and my foster Cassie would have their own "bun room." I began to consider officially adopting Cassie, knowing that having more space would make it possible in the long run. We would have room to bond with Cassie and make her a family member.

On moving day, I noticed Cassie wasn't acting like herself. She sat uncomfortably and didn't greet anyone while we were moving things. This wasn't like Cassie at all; she always had wanted attention. I began to treat her for stasis and kept a

(Continued on page 10)

Photos: Krystin Koerner



Some clippings from Cassie's very long nails.

When I got home, and she was in her new space, the rabbit didn't seem to know how to hop. I thought that maybe she only hopped around when she needed

## Cassie's Rescue

(Continued from page 9)

close eye on her. The next day she was still not right, and I knew she needed to go to the vet. The rescue group uses an incredible vet called Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital, and it wasn't close to where I lived, but I knew that Cassie had to get immediate medical care. She spent the night there, and my new home just didn't feel right without her. Looking into the "bun room," and only seeing two – not three – rabbits, made my heart sink. I was able to pick her up the next day.

The vet informed me that I did the right thing and that Cassie had required lots of fluids, medications and professional assistance. We did suspect that she might have head tilt and she was prescribed Panacur. During the drive home, I

began to feel that maybe I caused her stress by moving. Could rabbits have PTSD? She had been abandoned when her original owners moved. Had my decision to move, and to pack up my belongings and clear out my house, triggered it? I myself have PTSD and know about triggers. I barely slept and kept checking on her all night after bringing her home.

The next morning, I went to give her meds. The right side of Cassie's body appeared weak, and her foot was stuck in the water bowl. Grabbing a towel, I rushed over and lifted her out of the water bowl. I held her close and told her, "I got you. Mommy has you." I was in the middle of my finals for grad school, but I could only think about my sweet Sassy Cassie and how she had to get better. The symptoms of head tilt had

come on very fast, but I had medicine to treat her. I sat with her while trying to study, but then noticed a change in her breathing. She was barely moving. I rushed her to the vet.

Over the next few days Cassie stayed at the vet and I called every day to see how she was doing. Before my last final I receive that call that you never want to hear. Cassie was in a lot of pain and they didn't know how much longer she had left. Her breathing was getting worse. The incredible vets at Catnip & Carrots told me they would stay open so I could come after my final and say good-bye.

My boyfriend drove me to the vet. When Cassie saw me, she tried to wiggle out of the doctor's arms, though she was very weak. I held her and she nestled her head under my chin as I took in her beauty for the last time. I petted that plush coat of hers and repeated over and over that I loved her.

The vet's office later mailed me a card and a marble holder with a clipping of her fur. A necropsy showed that Cassie had a thick layer of mucous in her lungs, which led to her death.

I may have only had Cassie in my life for four months, but time does not make a difference when your whole heart goes into loving an animal. I hoped that I was able to show her what love was and to let her know that she didn't deserve to be abandoned.

Before her passing I was going to be a human canvas for a tattoo show called "Ink Master: Turf War." The tattoo I was getting would be a pin-up girl holding a rabbit. A week after Cassie's passing, I got the tattoo. I sat for six hours and didn't look too hard at the tattoo that was being drawn on my leg. But when I finally saw the picture, my eyes began to water. The rabbit in the tattoo was sleeping and looked like Cassie, although I had told the artist nothing about her. So instead of closing the door, Cassie will forever be by my side.

Photo: Kelly Severtson



Tattoo done by Kelly Severtson on tattoo show, 'Ink Master: Turf War.'

## Collaborating on Long Island to Save Rabbits' Lives

By April Overholser

I came home from work in mid-November to find a message on my phone. A friend who rescues cats wanted to know if the rabbit rescue community was going to do anything about a bad situation in Manorville, located in Suffolk County. News reports said that six dogs and 18 domestic rabbits had been found unprotected in freezing temperatures.

Police brought the dogs and rabbits to the Brookhaven Animal Shelter. The rabbits were examined and treated with Revolution for mites, and then were placed in dog crates with litter pans, some hay, water bottles and pellets.

I was one of the volunteers who helped take care of the rabbits. I had gotten to know the shelter's director four years earlier, when I organized a group of volunteers to help out whenever rabbits were brought in.

We began our work, one crate at a time. We put soft carpets and blankets under each rabbit so that they felt comfortable and safe.

We went to thrift stores for supplies, and searched our own homes for big water crocks. We hunted for bigger litter boxes and loaded them with hay. We brought in more crates, a condo and some X-pens so that each rabbit had his or her own space.

We made sure there was always plenty of good-quality hay, pellets and water for each rabbit, and we brought fresh greens daily. Each day every rabbit was given time to run around in a pen. We used pets and snuggles, toys and music in the room to distract from the sound of barking dogs.

The rabbits showed their joy and appreciation with big highflying binkies, and some would hop into our laps on the floor looking for pets and attention. When we started out, we had three or



The bunnies before they were rescued.

four volunteers each day who spent about four hours a day at the shelter. We would start working on opposite ends of the room and we kept going until each rabbit was cared for. As time went on, things got easier as the rabbits' litter-box habits improved and as rabbits were sent to safe placements.



Ali and her 3 kits.



Flake and her 6 babies.

Spaying and neutering got under way, and we began talking to rescue groups, looking for fosters and forever homes. The spays didn't happen quickly enough. On Dec. 4, Flake had six babies, and on Dec. 8, Ali had four. Luckily, our team member Krystin Koerner had plenty of

experience working with rabbit moms and babies. Mothers and babies were moved to pens in a corner of the room. We provided alfalfa and alfalfa-based pellets. The mothers took good care of the babies, and they were so comfortable with our team that many of us had the pleasure of watching them nurse. More people wanted to volunteer with us and our room soon became popular with visitors. This provided multiple opportunities for us to educate people about rabbit care and talk about the plight of rabbits.

Working with a shelter to save lives often requires flexibility, thoughtful collaboration, calmness and patience. At the same time, the shelter worked with us, allowing us to enter the building on holidays and during staff hours using the staff entrance. The shelter invited us to their holiday celebration and they made sure that the rabbits were included on the wish list for Christmas donations.

Then came the important job of finding safe places for the rabbits to go. The Brookhaven Animal Shelter has its own Facebook page to advertise adoptions, and our team took photos of the bunnies that were posted on Facebook. Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group also notified families about the rabbits at Brookhaven. Our team member Shahira Amin did phone screenings. If the phone screenings went well, we set up a home visit that

*(Continued on page 12)*

## Collaborating

*(Continued from page 11)*

included rabbit-care instruction and handouts. We made sure everyone understood that our rabbits were for indoor homes only. LIRRG also allowed all of our adopters to join their “Friends of LIRRG” private Facebook group, where they can ask questions and get help from rescuers and other caregivers if needed. We made sure that adopted baby rabbits had a spay/neuter plan.

We reached out to the broader rescue community for help in finding homes for the rabbits. Meanwhile, my extraordinary team came to the shelter each day until



Photo: April Overholzer

Faith-Ann Laznovsky with Muffin.

every rabbit had a safe place to go. Some volunteers helped a few times and some came multiple times every week.

No team can operate without the supplies they need. Thank you to all the people in LIRRG who donated toward supplies of hay, pellets, litter pans, crock dishes, vegetables, toys and treats.

All 28 rabbits experienced the good care and love of a human, and every rabbit was safely placed in a home by March 16. It all happened because of the collaboration of the multiple rescues, the police department, the SPCA, the Brookhaven Animal Shelter, and multiple animal-welfare volunteers.

## ADOPTIONS

### A New Bunny Joins the Cooley Household, at Long Last

By Ciaran and Cricket Cooley

On Jan. 5, 2020, a new member joined the Cooley household in Brooklyn. His name is Woofle Horatio Wilberforce Mr. Dude Jack White Fernando Cooley.

The youngest Cooley remembers the day when they went to the Brooklyn Animal Care Center to get their bunny and bring him to his new home. As they went home, Ciaran Cooley, who is 10, thought about how for her whole life, she had wanted a bunny for her very own.

Previously Ciaran (Cooley Jr.) had always hoped for a bunny, but had been told numerous times that it wasn't going to happen. Then on Dec. 25, 2019, the unbelievable did in fact occur. After opening all of her Christmas presents under the tree, her mother, Cricket (Cooley Sr.), handed her a small box and said, “You still have one more present left.” The box led her on a scavenger hunt all around the house where after opening a closet, she found animal treats and other items. Cooley Jr. responded with a confused “Is this ... for ... me?”

She found out that the family was getting a bunny.

“On Friday night, the 3rd of January, I was scanning the Brooklyn shelter’s website, and there was this adorable

fluffy dude named Jack White,” said Cooley Sr. “As he is my favorite musician of the moment, it just seemed like fate.” Early Sunday morning, Jan. 5, the

*(Continued on page 13)*



Photo: Cricket Cooley

Ciaran eating celery with Woofle.

## We Are Looking for Loving Homes: These Rabbits Are in Foster Care

### Carmela

Carmela is a young medium-sized Rex rabbit. Her beautiful coat is mostly white with tan and black spots. She is a sweet rabbit who loves to have her soft nose petted. She also likes to explore her house, but her favorite thing is to relax with a nice soft blanket. Carmela is shy and would likely do best in an adult-only home. She would also likely make a good partner for another rabbit. She has been spayed and is in foster care. For more information and/or to arrange a meeting with Carmela, please email [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

### Ernie

Ernie is a handsome, medium-sized young bunny who was in bad shape upon being rescued, apparently because he was left outdoors. We got him the vet care and TLC he needed, and now he is looking for a forever home. Ernie has a

great appetite for pellets and greens, but still will not eat any hay, so about every three months he must have his molar spurs filed down by a rabbit-savvy vet. This is a relatively quick procedure, and he has always started eating immediately afterward. Ernie is an active and curious rabbit, but still very shy and not much interested in humans (other than when you offer food, of course!), so we think he would be best off as a partner rabbit. He has been neutered and has very good litter-box skills. If interested in fostering or adopting this resilient, hunky bunny, please email [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

### Marshmallow and Carmine

Marshmallow and Carmine are a perfect pair of bonded rabbits looking for the loving forever home that they deserve. Marshmallow is a white and brown female English Spot mix and Carmine is

*(Continued on page 14)*



Carmela.



Ernie.

## Forever Homes Found!

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Benito and Sphinx.

### A New Bunny

*(Continued from page 12)*

Cooleys brought him home after a brief visit and a lecture about rabbit care.

Jack White immediately accustomed himself to the Cooley household by ignoring his huge, expensive hutch, all of his new toys (a feeble chew or two, then dismissed), and delightfully sinking into Ciaran's lower bunk, which he immediately peed and pooped all over. When he licked Ciaran's foot and fuzzled Cricket's face with his whiskers, however, all was forgiven.

Two months on, the Cooleys cannot ever remember a time when Jack White,

now known as Woofle, was not part of the household. Woofle spends his time exploring Ciaran's dollhouse, chewing his boxes (producing some stunning works of art, which we hope might help pay college tuition), loafing about in his favorite napping spots, chinning all his possessions, and following around all his interesting roommates. "He's become quite friendly with Deeby, our robot vacuum," said Cricket. "He likes to follow Deeby around."

Woofle is a parsley man, and is also a huge fan of cilantro, cucumbers, celery, peppers, and above all, apples. "He will jump in my lap and literally just start eating the apple out of my hand," said

Ciaran. He vehemently rejects watercress, mustard greens, and zucchini.

He is remarkably vain about his fluffy white fur, spending a good part of his day licking himself, and his recent molting has caused him distress, but he is adjusting to being brushed. He "punished" his grooming brush by chewing some of the bristles off of it, so the Cooleys are doing a better job at keeping things out of reach. A quick neutering has taken care of his litter-box issues. Woofle is a happy bunny, and a soothing balm in days of quarantine.

## Rabbits in Foster Care

*(Continued from page 13)*

a white and brown male Dutch and Lionhead mix. This sweet and spunky pair of buns hope to find humans who will love them as much as they love each other. They would do best in a home with lots of attention and time to exercise. They are both fixed and litter-box trained. If interested in adopting Marshmallow and Carmine, please contact [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

### Ashton

He is a medium-sized dark chocolate Rex who is as soft as he is fabulous! Ashton is a super-friendly, young boy who loves attention. He is an easygoing, inquisitive extrovert. Ashton has been enjoying living in a bunny-friendly home. He has been moderately active, but we have much more to learn about him. If interested in potentially adopting please email [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

### Gussie

Gussie is a small, young girl who is cute as a button. This little nugget has big beautiful eyes, one blue and one brown, surrounded in thick black eyeliner. Gussie is a very sweet little cherub. She loves to snuggle with her stuffed animal friend, explore and eat. She is on the independent side, but loves nothing more than to be petted by someone who has gained her trust. She has been affected by some trauma in her life that left her quite anxious. She desperately needs her own person—someone with a calm demeanor who can provide her with a peaceful, quiet and stable home to call her own. Gussie is spayed, litter-box trained and living in a foster home. If you would like to help this little one find happiness, please contact us at [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

### Pineapple and Sugarplum

Pineapple and Sugarplum are a beautiful pair of large Lionhead sisters who were born in the shelter as part of a litter of



Marshmallow and Carmine.



Ashton.



Gussie.



Pineapple and Sugarplum.

five babies, before we took the whole young family into our rescue. Their mother, two sisters and brother have all been adopted and now it's their turn.

Pineapple is black and white, while Sugarplum is all black – and both have amazing manes of hair! These girls are shy at first but have tons of energy and are a joy to watch as they exercise – running and binkying with reckless abandon! They have been spayed and are living in foster care. If you are interested in adopting Pineapple and Sugarplum, please email [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

## Calvin's Story

By Shannon Cail

*(Editor's note: Sadly, despite putting up the bravest battle possible, Calvin gained his angel wings on March 30, shortly after this article was written.)*

On June 5, 2016, my heart was complete again. That was the day I adopted Calvin (fka Robert) from the NYC Animal Care Center in Manhattan, and traveled five hours back home to Massachusetts with him. Within a week he was racing around the house, going up and down stairs and had no problem with our two bully mixes, Harvey and Apple Pie (also from NYC ACC shelters). His personality was so free spirited, funny and even a little naughty at times.

Since then, Calvin has chewed quite a few USB cables. So many, that we've lost count! He's become the "spokesbun" for Bullies & Bunnies Pet Bowls, traveling to Philadelphia every May for the event

and wooing the ladies. He soaks up the love from anyone and everyone. Basically, if you're willing to pet him, he's willing to sit there for hours upon hours, not-so-gently thrusting his head under your hand if you dare stop. He is my little shadow and will follow me from room to room. In the morning, as I'm getting ready for work, he's right there with me in the bathroom. If I leave the living room for a second, he's off, looking for me. Even if dad is in there, Calvin doesn't care and will come upstairs to find me. He's grown so attached me, and me to him. He's just such a love!

We've had a few bouts of stasis over the years, but nothing too serious. Radiographs always showed a little bit of fur in his GI tract. These long-haired Angora rabbits are no joke and need lots of grooming every single week. In late October 2019, I noticed Calvin sneezing, and a little bit of a white discharge coming

from his nose. I knew immediately he needed to be seen, and called the vet. I'm not one to fool around or play the "wait and see" route when it comes to getting our furkids better. I'd rather know immediately what we're dealing with, so I requested a culture and sensitivity test right then and there. He was put on sulfamethoxazole/trimethoprim until the culture could grow and we knew what it was for sure.

About seven days later my vet called, saying that he had enterococcus. From the way I understand it and the way my vet described it, enterococci are natural inhabitants in the gut of rabbits. They are "healthy" inhabitants until something underlying is going on and they present themselves. Basically, they take advantage of their host and can be a precursor to something else. At that time, everything seemed fine with Calvin. We changed his antibiotic to apple-banana flavored Baytril (which he hated), since this was the only antibiotic that enterococcus wasn't resistant to, and added in a probiotic, just in case. Upon examination, his lungs, heart, eyes, teeth – everything – looked good. The sneezing and discharge cleared up and he was back to his bouncy self. We never gave it another thought.

About late November I thought I started noticing the tiniest bit of his third eyelids showing, but I really didn't give it too much thought – mostly because Calvin has always had a slight tilt to his head and his ears fall to one side. Hence, they tend to pull that eye upward a bit, showing a bit of his third eyelid. Then one Monday night in early December I noticed his eyes bulging. I knew right away something was not right. By Wednesday we were at the vet having a complete exam, including a quick ultrasound. Everything looked and sounded good and the ultrasound didn't show anything. I breathed a sigh of relief somewhat, but still opted for a

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Calvin flopping.



Photo: Shannon Cail

**Calvin** *(Continued from page 15)*

CT scan to be sure, as his eye bulge and third eyelid showing were conditions I had experienced eight years prior with my other rabbit, Lily, and I had to be sure.

The next Wednesday morning, I dropped Calvin off with my vet and she took him over to Port City Veterinary Referral Hospital in Portsmouth, N.H., since she would be the one administering the anesthesia, etc., and she was with him the entire time during the procedure. I got a call about 2 hours later. Calvin had an approximately 6x4x2-centimeter mass in his chest. The attending veterinarian and radiologist said that, based on the findings, Calvin had a primary diagnosis of lymphoma, which is a malignant tumor that can affect other organs. A thymoma (a slower-growing tumor) was also considered, though that seemed less likely. I was not expecting this. He was only 5 years old, and this wasn't supposed to be happening to him. And it felt like déjà vu because this was what I had gone through exactly eight years ago almost to the day with Lily.

While Calvin was under anesthesia, the doctors drew blood and did a needle-guided aspiration of the mass in case I wanted to pursue things further. Finding out what type of mass this actually was would determine how we would treat it. My vet went over many different options with me, telling me that Calvin was a strong little bunny and he was young, and he could very well withstand treatment. I told my vet to go ahead and send out the cytology and blood samples and maybe we would get some definitive answers from that and go from there. I will preface this by saying that I have ALWAYS said I would never put any of my furkids through chemo or radiation. I could not put a little six-pound bunny through that. I just couldn't. But, now... I was having second thoughts, because I also couldn't bear the thought of losing Calvin.

Photo: Shannon Coil



Another USB cord falls victim!

In the meantime, I started researching everything I could. I immediately put Calvin on the same CBD oil we had our dog Harvey on. I had nothing to lose at this point, and I had to do something. I also started Calvin on echinacea drops to try to boost his immune system as much as possible. Could the enterococcus that he had in August have been a precursor to this? Why didn't I pursue things further when we got that diagnosis? I should have! But why would I have thought to do so? Maybe things had changed in the eight years since Lily's diagnosis? Maybe I would find other ways to treat this? After all, our 13-year-old dog Harvey had been diagnosed with cancer in his thyroid, lungs and carotid artery in February 2018 and we were told we had six to nine months with him. Here it was December of 2019 and Harvey was miraculously still with us! We changed his diet, added in CBD oil and took him to our homeopathic vet. Something was working with him, so why couldn't that work with Calvin, too?

It took about a week for the blood and cytology report to come back. The

cytology report showed the cell population was a bit more consistent with a thymoma, but wasn't conclusive (lymphoma was still possible) The blood work, however, showed that he had a mild increase in his circulating lymphocytes (consistent with a lymphoma in the leukemic phase); everything else looked good, though. It was frustrating because there were tests pointing in different directions and no absolute answers. My next step was to make an appointment with an oncologist at Tufts University's small animal hospital in North Grafton, Mass., because I wanted all possible scenarios, expertise and recommendations before I made a final decision.

We headed out to Tufts after the new year to meet with the oncologist (the same one who treated Lily 8 years prior). As predicted, the only way to know for sure what the mass was, was to do a biopsy. The results of that would tell us whether to treat with chemo or radiation. The oncologist described the treatment and prognosis. Calvin would have to go several times a week for four to six weeks and most likely have a port put in him. Treatment would only buy him another six to nine months. That prognosis was surprising to me. Granted every animal is different, but I think that was the deciding factor for me. We would have to travel three hours round trip, plus the time at Tufts each day, several times a week, for the next one to one and a half months, only to get another six to nine months? And that was ONLY if he made it through all the treatments. I knew right then and there, I wasn't putting him through that. I know that others had put their rabbit through this and had success. I understood it was Tufts University, one of the premier teaching veterinary schools/hospitals in the country. But, they couldn't perform miracles and I was not going to have Calvin spend his final weeks or months being poked, prodded, put under anesthesia and

*(Continued on page 17)*



**Calvin** *(Continued from page 16)*

everything else. I had made my decision. I was going to make Calvin as comfortable and happy as I possibly could, for however much longer he decided to be with me.

After I made the decision to not treat Calvin with prednisone, I made an appointment with our homeopathic vet. She had been a traditional vet for 20 years and had been in homeopathy for the past 13 years. She does Nutrition Response Testing, acupuncture, Reiki, homeopathy, and Chinese herbal medicine.

I also started learning and doing acupuncture on Calvin, thanks to an

Instagram friend from Hawaii who sent us a book specifically on rabbit acupuncture points. Calvin has thoroughly enjoyed his nightly acupuncture. Another friend in New York is doing distance Reiki for us multiple times a week, sometimes multiple times a day, if he needs it. We have had good days and sometimes not-so-good days. On the not-so-good days, he barely eats/drinks, leaves his fecotropes and will sit in his “quiet spot” in his expense. Some days Calvin’s eyes bulge more than others and his third eyelids show more than others. His respiratory rate IS different, but he is not flaring his nostrils

as Lily did the day before she became a fur angel. Many days Calvin eats everything I give him and demands more. I will give him whatever he wants at this point. I have a camera on him at all times when I am not home. Thankfully, I don’t work in the winter, so I’ve been able to be with him constantly lately.

When Calvin decides it’s time, I will be there for him, to help him cross the Bridge. My heart will shatter, but I know that he’s had the absolute best life any bunny could ever ask and hope for.

**RHDV** *(Continued from page 2)*

kept in a barn in central Pennsylvania contracted RHDV1 and died.

Again, the commercial trade of rabbits is a likely cause for the rapid spread of the disease, given these rabbits are in cramped, unsanitary conditions – and often outdoors where they can come in contact with insects.

**Recent RHDV2 outbreaks:**

By 2010 RHDV2 emerged in Europe. The first North American outbreak of RHDV2 was seen in Vancouver in March 2018, when at least 30 rabbits contracted the virus and died. The disease also spread to Washington state and Ohio.

Some New Yorkers might have first heard of RHDV2 earlier this year when an outbreak was observed in Manhattan. Sadly, all 13 of the rabbits who tested positive for the disease in association with the outbreak have died. The USDA and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) are still investigating the cause of the outbreak. Authorities are unaware of how exactly RHDV2 arrived in NYC. They have not found connections to the outbreak in Washington state.

The most recent outbreaks of RHDV2 occurred in Arizona and New Mexico in late March to early April 2020. Authorities first became aware of RHDV2 in the Southwest on March 25, when the State Veterinary Office received news of a confirmed case in a domestic rabbit in New Mexico. The disease has since spread to domestic rabbits in eight New Mexican counties, and was also found in wild cottontails and hare populations.

In early April, RHDV2 spread to Arizona. Widespread, sudden deaths of wild cottontails and jackrabbits and domestic rabbits in the state have been attributed to RHDV2.

RHDV2 spreads so rapidly that Dr. Anne Justice-Allen, a wildlife veterinarian for

the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD), estimates there could be a “pretty significant decrease in the rabbit populations as this disease spreads.”

It is unclear how long rabbits who recover from RHDV remain immune. With a more than 50% mortality rate, the loss to domestic and wild rabbit populations in the absence of a widespread vaccine would be catastrophic.

**How are authorities controlling the outbreak?**

Rabbit rescues and/or veterinarians are instructed to report outbreaks of the virus to their state, where the state veterinarians are instructed to oversee the containment.

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**RHDV2 Notice**

**Information on the developing RHDV2 outbreaks in the United States is up to date at the time of publishing. Please keep apprised of new developments at [rabbitcare.org](http://rabbitcare.org) or on the House Rabbit Society website [rabbit.org](http://rabbit.org)**

**Those who live in areas experiencing outbreaks should carefully observe the recommended biosecurity guidelines.**

## RHDV *(Continued from page 17)*

USDA and APHIS technically do not have oversight over rabbits, but as in the case of the Manhattan outbreak, they are often asked by the state to help.

At present there is no vaccine for any type of RHDV available to veterinarians in the U.S., though there is in Europe, where the virus is considered endemic.

Authorities helped to control the Washington state outbreak by vaccinating rabbits, but the vaccine hasn't yet been extended to the rest of the country. Given how serious the disease may become in the U.S., a vaccine needs to be considered for domestic and wild rabbit populations.

As we have seen with the Covid-19 outbreak's resurgence in places like Singapore – where cases were believed to be controlled but are again on the rise as social distancing

measures are relaxed – with serious diseases we really do need a vaccine to keep affected populations safe.

### What can I do?

Until a vaccine is made available, the biosecurity precautions you are taking for Covid-19 will also help to protect your rabbits from RHDV.

If you are not already, you should avoid contact with other rabbits and their people. Humans, other animals, and surfaces can be inadvertent carriers of the virus. If possible, you may also consider purchasing supplies for your rabbits online rather than in local stores, given the recent NYC outbreak.

If you go out, change out of street clothes and shoes when you arrive home and wash them as soon as possible. The HRS recommends washing clothes twice in

hot water to eradicate this stubborn virus. You should also wash your hands as often as possible before handling your rabbits.

REMEMBER: many popular cleaners – including Lysol! – have ingredients that are harmful to rabbits (and other animals/humans for that matter!). More importantly, Lysol and disinfectants like it have no effect on calicivirus.

We highly recommend an accelerated hydrogen peroxide cleanser, known as Rescue, to protect your rabbits from RHDV. (Bonus: It even kills the coronavirus!) You can purchase Rescue online or through your veterinarian.

Please share the information about RHDV widely, particularly for those in affected areas, and be sure to keep up with new developments.

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Photo: @sistermunch



Sister Munch, ears on and ready!

## Annual Benefit Concert

Thank you to everyone who came out for Rabbit Rescue & Rehab's second annual benefit concert at the Cobra Club! We had a great time seeing so many new and familiar faces for a fun night in support of our rabbits

A special thank you to our own amazing Tracy Bradbury for organizing and

running the show and for all of her behind-the-scenes work; to @tattooerjon for designing this year's tote bag; the Cobra Club for hosting; and to the bands HisSweatshirt, Galanos, Eat Lead, and Sister Munch for the contribution of their time, talent and kind words in support of our bunnies!

# Letters From Adopters

## Penny

*Amy Liao sent us another letter about wonderful Penny, formerly known as Lola, who was adopted in January.*

I actually have a huge update!

After we took Penny to the vet on Thursday, Jan. 9, we found out that she was underweight, had mild stasis, and had a kidney infection. The veterinarian that we visited was recommended by Penny's caregiver at the Animal Care Center we adopted her from.

We were prescribed three different medications to treat her illnesses. We successfully completed the medication and returned for a follow-up on Wednesday, Feb. 19. And on the very next day, we received our results: Penny's kidney values were back to normal!! This means that her kidneys are healthy again! We feel so blessed!!

Since then she's been livelier than ever. We also experimented with several pellets. Penny is very particular about her pellets. Marcie Frishberg from the

Photos: Amy Liao



Penny.

Petco at Union Square gave us a sample of the ones that her buns eat. Penny devoured those, so we purchased the same ones!

If anyone is interested, we have an instagram page: @penny\_fluffington.

Amy Liao



Dinnertime.



Posing.

## Rutabaga

*Chris adopted wonderful Rutabaga in February. Here is a great update on Rutabaga.*

Rutabaga (I call him Rudy) has been adjusting well.

He loves straw mats, carrot tops and snuggling. He has clearly been through a lot, and I'm just so glad he made it to his forever home.

Chris Dieman

Photos: Chris Dieman



Chris and Rutabaga.



Rutabaga.

CELEBRITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT



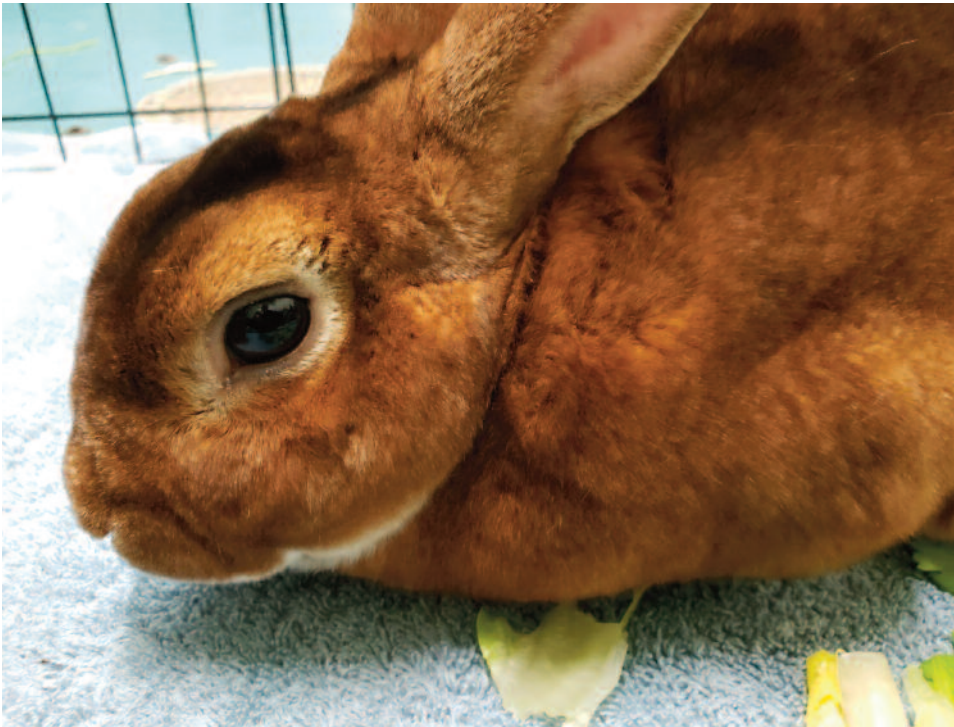
Remington.



Wally.



Skye.



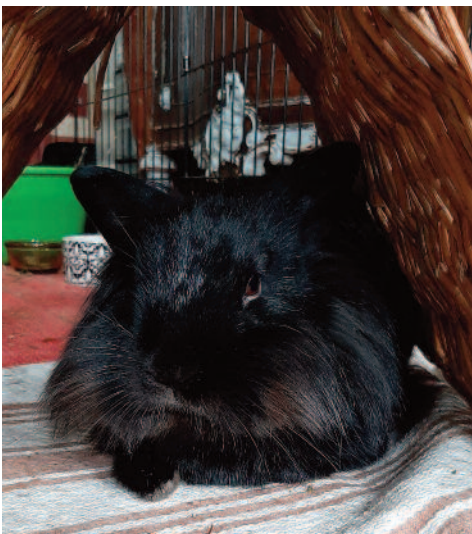
Chiquitin.



Kiki.



Blue and Purple.



Star.



Poppy and Otter.

## 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.

### Manhattan:

**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

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

### Westchester County:

**Gil Stanzione, DVM**  
Dakota Veterinary Center  
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

### Long Island:

**Jennifer Saver, DVM**  
**Laura George, DVM**  
Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital  
2056 Jericho Turnpike  
New Hyde Park, NY 11040  
(516) 877-7080

**Heidi Hofer, 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

**Shachar Malka, DVM**  
Long Island Bird & Exotics  
Veterinary Clinic  
333 Great Neck Road  
Great Neck, NY 11021  
(516) 482-1101

## Adoptable Rabbits

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

To adopt a rabbit in **New York City** or **Westchester**, contact [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com). On **Long Island**, contact Nancy Schreiber at [nschreibmd@gmail.com](mailto:nschreibmd@gmail.com) or at 516-510-3637 ([www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org)).

**If interested in volunteering or fostering for Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, please email [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).**

Adoptable Rabbit Rescue & Rehab rabbits are at Petco's Union Square location. Rabbit volunteers are present at these stores on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to answer questions.

You can also visit Manhattan Animal Care Center at 326 East 110th St., between First and Second avenues, and the Brooklyn Animal Care Center at 2336 Linden Boulevard.

Rabbits for adoption in Manhattan and Brooklyn can be found by going to:

<http://www.nycacc.org/> and doing an adoption search (for ACC inquiries about adoption/bunny dates, email [adopt@nycacc.org](mailto:adopt@nycacc.org)). Volunteers are there every weekday evening and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but it is best to arrange an appointment first.

Bunny speed dates can be arranged by appointment only on weekend afternoons at Union Square. Please contact [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com) to make arrangements.

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 [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).

## Licensed HRS Educators

### NYC/Westchester:

**M.C. Basile**, Chapter Manager,  
NYC House Rabbit Society

**Mary Cotter**, Founder, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab,  
Adviser to Thump, [mec@cloud9.net](mailto:mec@cloud9.net),  
(914) 337-6146

**Jeanine Callace**, [Rofoyo.pippin@verizon.net](mailto:Rofoyo.pippin@verizon.net)  
**Alex Mcle**, [alexlmcie@gmail.com](mailto:alexlmcie@gmail.com)

**Marcie Frishberg**

**Gabrielle LaManna**, New Fairfield, CT,  
[gabbysbunnies@yahoo.com](mailto:gabbysbunnies@yahoo.com), (203) 746-7548

**Cindy Stutts**, [bygolyoly@yahoo.com](mailto:bygolyoly@yahoo.com),  
(646) 319-4766

**Monica Shepherd, DVM**

### Long Island:

**Nancy Schreiber**, President, Long Island  
Rabbit Rescue Group,  
[nschreibmd@gmail.com](mailto:nschreibmd@gmail.com), (516) 510-3637,  
[LongIslandRabbitRescue.org](http://LongIslandRabbitRescue.org)

**Mary Ann Maier**, Long Island Rabbit  
Rescue Group Volunteer,  
[altitude8@yahoo.com](mailto:altitude8@yahoo.com),  
[LongIslandRabbitRescue.org](http://LongIslandRabbitRescue.org)

**Donna Sheridan**, Long Island Rabbit Rescue  
Group Volunteer, [hpocus217@yahoo.com](mailto:hpocus217@yahoo.com),  
[LongIslandRabbitRescue.org](http://LongIslandRabbitRescue.org)

**Jennifer Saver, DVM**

**Laura George, DVM**

## THUMP APRIL/MAY 2020

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

Editor: Susan Lillo

Creative Director: Jane O'Wyatt

Masthead Logo Designer: Mary Ann Maier

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 public on rabbit care through publications, phone consultations, home visits and presentations. This newsletter is published by RRR/NYC HRS, which is solely responsible for its content. We retain the right to edit all submissions, which become the property of the NYC Chapter and cannot be returned.

All donations go directly to caring for our foster rabbits and are tax-deductible. Please help us help them by sending contributions to: Rabbit Rescue & Rehab/NYC Metro Rabbit, 333 Mamaroneck Ave, #363, White Plains, NY 10605 or <http://rabbitcare.org/donations.htm>.

To contribute to Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, please go to [www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org).