

THUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT

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How Annabelle Traveled With Me To the Other Side Of the World

By Niketa Gupte Narayan

When I decided to adopt a rabbit three years ago, I never dreamed I would one day move to the other side of the world. It took me months to find my perfect rabbit. I read and researched everything I could find about rabbits, and the day I met Annabelle, I promised her that I would take care of her for life.

So last year, when it became clear that my then-boyfriend (who was in the process of moving to Hong Kong) was planning to propose to me, I began to mull the question of how to move overseas with

Annabelle. She had never been on a plane before, even for a domestic flight. Many of my family members tried to convince me that Annabelle would be happier in the U.S., and I briefly considered putting her up for adoption. But Annabelle and I were a package deal – we couldn't and wouldn't be parted.

Around this time, I contacted Mary Cotter of the House Rabbit Society with my questions and concerns. I was afraid that Annabelle wouldn't survive a 16-hour flight – especially in the cargo hold, since I knew that animals weren't allowed

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HEALTH, MEDICAL ISSUES

Everything Seems Fine...But Is It?

By Kerstin Aumann

Survival of the fittest is the first rule in nature. Show any sign of weakness, and you're likely to become somebody else's lunch. If you're not on the top of the food chain, you best put on a happy face and pretend that nothing is wrong.

Our house rabbits may not have to worry about predators lurking around the corner, but biologically, they still know this rule. As descendants of prey animals, rabbits have perfected the art of hiding illness more than any other domestic animal.

I have learned this lesson the hard way. About two years ago, I lost my dwarf hotot warrior princess, Xena. It was a day like any other and Xena had been her usual self. At dinnertime, though, she didn't come running down the ramp of her Leith condo with her sister, Luna, and boyfriend, Snowball. Instead, she sat hunched in a corner of the condo, looking very uncomfortable.

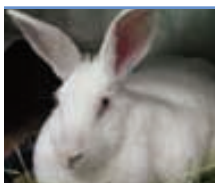
While the other two proceeded to chow down Xena's dinner along with their own, I worked frantically to save Xena's life. I knew that each minute was crucial, and I proceeded with all the emergency-care steps I had learned during my volunteer and rehab fostering work. Sadly, it was

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Annabelle.

Photo: Niketa Gupte Narayan



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in the cabin on Hong Kong-bound flights. Rabbits are fragile creatures, and they get scared easily. Fear leads to stress, and enough stress can cause a rabbit to have a heart attack and die. I had no idea how Annabelle would fare on a journey that isn't even that easy a feat for a human.

Furthermore, Hong Kong is extremely hot in the summer. Rabbits are not heat-friendly animals, so I wondered how Annabelle would cope in such a hot and humid place.

At this point, my family was still urging me to give Annabelle up for adoption, but I couldn't really consider the idea seriously until I'd researched what having a rabbit might be like in Hong Kong. It turns out that rabbits are surprisingly popular pets in Hong Kong. Many shops carry Oxbow products and Carefresh litter, and there are even a few specialty shops exclusively for rabbits. Hong Kong also has boarding facilities for rabbits, and a number of vets cater to the needs of small animals and exotics.

With this knowledge in hand, I applied for a special permit through the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. The permit was basically just a license stating that I was allowed to bring a rabbit into the country, and included an attached health certificate. The permit process took about three weeks from start to finish. After receiving the permit, I set up an appointment with Annabelle's vet. (According to Hong Kong law, this appointment can't be more than 14 days before departure; the time period may vary from country to country.)

I then called Cathay Pacific Airways and discussed booking Annabelle in the cargo hold. (I would much rather have kept her with me in her carrier beneath my seat, but I didn't have a choice. Please note that the cabin is an option for domestic flights within the U.S., and many international destinations as well. If you can, you should always keep your rabbit with you in the cabin. Rabbits can and have died while traveling in the cargo hold. I

Checklist for Rabbit Owners Who Are Moving Abroad

Check the website of the governmental unit that handles pet importation in your destination country.

Apply for any required import permits; at the same time, call airlines and check which ones would be willing to transport your rabbit. Keep in mind that many countries will not allow animals in the cabin on international flights, but always inquire. If you have a choice, always opt to keep your rabbit with you in the cabin.

Make an appointment with your rabbit's vet for a checkup. Make sure the vet pays particular attention to any conditions that might be outlined in your country's import permit.

Buy a comfortable crate for your rabbit that meets the requirements of whichever airline you choose; absorbent cage liners and a gravity water bottle are also good additions.

Find out where your closest USDA office is located – this website is very useful:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/regulations/vs/iregs/animals/animal_faq.shtml#six

Make sure you know where to drop your rabbit off on the day of your flight, and where to pick him or her up at the airport once you arrive in your new country.

If a veterinary health check is required, make sure it is done within the time frame specified by the airline and/or the authorities in the country to which you are traveling.

was very lucky.) They gave me their crate specifications, explained how cost was determined, and told me which documents they would need. A week before the flight, I would need to fax four documents: a signed USDA health certificate, the Hong Kong special permit, the Hong Kong health certificate attached to the permit, and a sheet outlining the details of the flight, home address, destination address, crate weight and dimensions, etc.

After Annabelle's vet signed the Hong Kong health certificate, I realized that the USDA health certificate had to be signed by a port veterinarian at the airport, and I obtained his signature two days before the flight. I would not suggest saving this step for the day of the flight.

On the morning of the flight, I loaded Annabelle into her crate, put a bowl of Oxbow pellets inside with her, and clipped her water bottle on the door. We dropped Annabelle off in the Cathay Pacific cargo terminal about three hours before the flight. There, I paid her transport fee (about USD\$350), filled out the final paperwork, and took a copy of the air waybill from the cargo staff so that I had it to show to the Hong Kong cargo personnel once we arrived at our destination.

On the flight, I often wondered how my little girl was doing down there in the cargo hold. I knew it was climate-controlled and that I'd tried to make her crate as comfortable as possible for her, so all I could do was wait to see her again. Still, ever the concerned mother, I couldn't help worrying. Was she scared of all the strange noises and smells? Could she breathe properly in the plane's pressurized atmosphere? Were there dogs or other predators in the cargo hold with her? This was more activity than she'd ever witnessed before in her life, so I really didn't know how she would handle so many new sounds, smells and sensations at once.

After I landed, my fiancé picked me up at the airport, and we collected my baggage. Then we headed to the cargo terminal at Hong Kong airport. We went to the pickup point and were given the original copy of the air waybill. We were then directed to pick Annabelle up and take her to customs. There, officers took a peek at her to make sure she was all right, and then read through the documents: the air waybill, both health certificates and the Hong Kong special permit. The process took a little bit of time due to shuttling back and forth from office to customs to the pickup point, but Annabelle looked perfectly fine through all of it.

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Everything Seems Fine

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too late for Xena, who passed away quietly that night.

Xena was four years old, which is the prime of life for house rabbits. I hadn't noticed anything about her that might have indicated a medical problem. A necropsy showed, however, that Xena had been suffering from kidney disease – apparently for some time. Only after Xena was gone did I notice that she had been drinking about two-thirds of the water in the large bottle inside the trio's condo. In hindsight, this might have been a symptom of her problem.

It's anyone's guess how long Xena had been living with kidney problems. Kidney problems often don't become symptomatic in rabbits until a substantial proportion of the kidney is affected. The fact that Xena lived in a "herd" as rabbits do in nature, made it even easier for her to hide her illness.

Tandy is another recent example of a rabbit effectively hiding her illness from her humans. (Her story was featured in the February 2011 issue of *Thump*.) Tandy passed away from complications related to thymoma, a type of tumor that had been slowly growing inside her for some time. There were no outward signs of illness. In hindsight, Tandy's owner had noticed that Tandy had been eating more slowly in the last two weeks of her life, which could have been related to problems caused by the mass inside her abdomen. But Tandy was still eating

Photo: Kerstin Aumann



Xena, Snowball and Luna.

about the same amount, so there were no obvious alarm bells.

The lesson we can learn from stories like Tandy's or Xena's is that as bunny owners, we need to be aware of the fact that our little friends excel at hiding illnesses not only from their enemies, but also from their loved ones. We need to pay close attention and take seriously any changes, no matter how small and trivial they may seem. Sure, not every little change is in fact a symptom of illness, but rabbits don't usually give us clear, unambiguous signs that it's time to head to the vet.

For example, my lop Joshua developed a preference for lying down against a wall (or the toilet) with his left ear propped up. I barely even noticed this new little quirk. However, Mary Cotter, the chapter

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Joshua.

manager for NYC House Rabbit Society, saw a picture of Joshua doing this and advised me to have the ear checked. Sure enough, it was infected. Joshua apparently felt better when he propped it up this way. This is how innocuous the initial

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Travel

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When we finally took her home, I breathed an immense sigh of relief. It took Annabelle no time at all to adjust to her new surroundings. Within an hour or two, she was eating and using the litter box as usual. To be honest, I think I was more dazed by the long flight and hassle of travel than she was.

As early as the next day, she was sniffing our apartment with great curiosity and claiming wooden benches under our dining room table for her own use. My concern about the long flight turned out to be unfounded, as did my fears about the temperature in Hong Kong. All of the buildings are air-conditioned, and Annabelle has had very little exposure to unreasonable heat.

If you are considering a big move, know that while taking your rabbit isn't as easy as hopping on the plane by yourself and waving goodbye, it is much easier than waving goodbye to your rabbit. The process requires a little bit of organization and follow-through, but every moment of panic about driving to airports, faxing forms and obtaining a myriad of signatures is worth it when you finally settle into your new home with your rabbit by your side.

Everything Seems Fine *(Continued from page 3)*

signa of illness can be. Joshua received treatment, the infection cleared up and he eventually stopped propping up his ear after a period of time.

It would be impossible to assemble a list of all the ways in which bunnies may tell us that something is amiss, but below is a list of some things to look out for. Some

of these are pretty obvious, but others are less so.

– *Cindy Stutts contributed to this article.*

Potential Signs of Illness:

Refusal to eat! This is an emergency and requires immediate attention.

Other clear symptoms that require immediate medical attention include a bloated abdomen, high or low body temperature (normal is 101-103 Fahrenheit), teeth grinding (this sounds terse and anxious and is clearly different from the relaxed tooth-purring you may hear during a head rub).

Any change in appetite. This may include decreased appetite, eating more slowly, dropping food or avoiding some foods. For example, a rabbit with a dental problem may try to eat, but drop her food because it hurts to chew.

Drinking more fluids. Some variation is normal, e.g., in hot weather, but look out for any dramatic changes.

Changes inside the litter box. This may include fewer droppings; changes in size or consistency of droppings; more or less urine; presence of sludge (gray, chalky stuff) in urine. Deterioration of litter-box habits may also indicate a problem. For example, an arthritic or injured rabbit may have trouble getting in and out of her litter box.

Weight loss. A rapid weight loss is an obvious red flag, but this can also happen very slowly. Regular checkups can help in monitoring your rabbit's weight over time, and you can make dietary adjustments as needed.

Changes in energy or activity level. Look out for anything that seems inconsistent with your rabbit's personality, age or medical history.

Changes in fur quality. In sick or elderly rabbits, fur may become dull or less full. This is not to be confused with regular shedding, which can be heavy at times and still be perfectly normal.

New "quirks." Think of Joshua propping his infected ear up against the wall.

New behaviors that may seem odd or quirky may be nothing but a quirk, but there could be more to it. Know your rabbit well, trust your instincts and if in doubt, ask your vet.

Rabbit looks sick. Sometimes, rabbits do show clear symptoms, like frequent sneezing, runny nose or watery eyes, that require treatment by a rabbit-savvy vet. Lumps, cuts or sores on the skin also require medical attention.

Be Prepared!

- **Know your rabbit.** Observe your rabbit and get to know his or her habits and personality. Knowing what's normal for your bunny will make it easier for you to spot changes in behavior or symptoms of illness. For example, if a normally outgoing and active rabbit becomes listless and withdrawn, something is probably wrong. If a favorite treat is rejected or taken only hesitantly, something's amiss.
- **Know your vet.** Become a client at a rabbit-savvy vet before your rabbit has a problem or an emergency. We recommend annual "well bunny checks" with a rabbit-savvy vet. These checkups can help detect health problems early. They also provide important baseline data about your bunny's health. To find a rabbit-savvy

vet in the New York City area, visit www.rabbitcare.org/vets.htm.

- **Learn how to take your rabbit's temperature.** Knowing if your bunny is too hot or too cold is important in determining the best course of action in an emergency. Your local rabbit volunteers can help you learn this life-saving skill.
- **Have subcutaneous fluids on hand.** Ask your vet to teach you how to administer sub-Q fluids to your rabbit, and keep a supply at home. Along with maintaining a rabbit's body temperature, keeping your bunny hydrated – until you can see your vet – can save his or her life.
- **Have an emergency kit ready.** The emergency kit should include a digital thermometer and Vaseline, SnuggleSafe

or other type of microwaveable heating pad, a stethoscope, infant simethicone drops, Critical Care or ground-up pellets and a feeding syringe, antibiotic ointment (without steroids), chlorhexidine or Betadine disinfectants, saline solution and syringes, sterile gauze and cotton pads, scissors with rounded tips. Also have a pet carrier, soft towels and contact information for your vet ready.

- **Educate yourself about some common medical problems.** A valuable article is "Help! My rabbit is sick and I can't reach my vet!" by Mary Cotter, Ed.D., and Gil Stanzione, DVM. It is available at <http://www.rabbitcare.org/help.htm>.

What I Learned From Franklin's Cataracts: Check Your Rabbit's Eyes Regularly

By Joanna Seddon

Our previous rabbit, BigFoot, died quietly after 10 very happy years. Before him, we'd had a couple of less happy experiences, including BooBoo, a large and ferocious female, ready to stand and fight and bite both us and our cat, at the slightest provocation. So we took the choice of a successor to BigFoot seriously.

After interviewing a number of rabbits, both at the Upper East Side Petco and the East 110th Street shelter, we adopted a small gray lop-eared rabbit – or more accurately, a small mutt – half gray, half brown. He had helicopter ears – one ear was down and the other was straight up – and he had the ability to whirl his ears around.

He'd been found wandering the streets of Brooklyn, so he was a strong-willed fellow deserving of a mensch name. After much family debate, we called him Frank, lengthened to Franklin for greater respectability. He has turned out to be the most enchanting rabbit ever – tame, tidy, friendly, not much of a chewer and incredibly determined. He lives loose in the house, with his own corner containing a hay box, toys and an empty Heineken carton.

It took him several months to tame our cat. We rescued her as a feral kitten from the island of Catalina (after which she is named). She retains some of her feral characteristics and doesn't tolerate competition easily.

His absolute determination to make friends eventually won her over. Now, they sit together during the day – two small, gray furry animals on a red rug. Franklin's only vice is chocolate. He's completely unable to resist it, will climb onto tables to get it, and once ate through two Bloomingdale's bags and a Godiva box.

So you can see that we were devastated when, at the age of only three, Franklin developed a serious health problem. It began as a slight tearing in his left eye. Over the next couple of days, it developed with alarming rapidity into a full-blown cataract, and his right eye began tearing also. After visits to two local vets, the cause was diagnosed as, most probably, not hereditary cataracts but the parasite *E. cuniculi*. Urgent action was needed to save his right eye, where white spots were already appearing, as well as to stop the pain he was clearly experiencing in his left eye; our hitherto energetic rabbit had taken to huddling miserably in a corner.

We had the enormous good fortune to meet Rina Maguire, a veterinarian at the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine who had been experimenting with new treatments for another rabbit with similar problems. Her treatment completely

Franklin taking medicine with full cataract visible.



Franklin with Catalina the cat.

arrested the cataract development in Franklin's right eye, saving his sight, health and peace of mind.

He's now back to climbing on the table, and we are again happily hiding the chocolates. All he needs is an eye patch for his left eye. I wish we had acted fast enough to save it as well.

I urge other rabbit owners to learn from our experience. Check your pet's eyes regularly, and if anything at all looks wrong, take your rabbit immediately to the vet and get him or her onto the proper medical regimen.

Suzy, Once Obese, Looks Forward to Better Times After Removal of Abdominal Mass, Spay Surgery

By Jane O'Wyatt

Almost every cage in the shelter's rabbit room was occupied, so we couldn't really blame whoever had put a shockingly obese, New Zealand white bunny in the kitten ward on Nov. 22. With 17 rabbits to care for, Kathryn Pizzo and I hadn't gone looking for more. Instead, it was Helen Chen, making a quick, intuitive sweep of the shelter, who found Suzy in a cage next to a high-pitched litter of motherless tabbies.

Kathryn and Helen, lifting together, got this big, docile bunny into a carrier so she could be moved to the rabbit room. There we put her into a puppy pen while we found her a cage by shuffling a few other rabbits. At 13 pounds, Suzy was so overweight that she could hardly get her feet under her body to hop around. Mostly, she wanted to be petted, which we were happy to do. Despite having received indifferent care in her former home – she obviously had been kept in a cramped cage, allowed little exercise and fed too much before being dumped – Suzy was a friendly, sweet-tempered rabbit.

As with all new arrivals, we turned her over to look at the bottoms of her feet and at her abdomen. Suzy was surprisingly clean for a neglected rabbit – she had only minor hock sores. She did, however, have a large, firm mass on her lower abdomen. A thin brown liquid oozed from a nipple on the surface of this mass, possibly a mammary tumor.

A few days later, Cindy Stutts took Suzy to the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine. Besides the mass previously noted, Dr. Alexandra Wilson found that the rabbit had other, smaller masses on her underside. A radiograph was not easy to interpret; Dr. Wilson couldn't rule out metastasis, the possibility that cancerous cells had migrated to Suzy's lungs. Surgery was not an option because Suzy's weight posed a serious anesthetic risk. What could be done to help her?

Cindy decided to foster, then to adopt, this lovable, "unadoptable" rabbit. Suzy's sore hocks healed, and she thrived on a high-quality diet, the companionship of other rabbits, space to exercise and plenty of doting attention from Cindy and her husband Bill. "Suzy is one of those rabbits who are like dogs," Cindy reported. "She comes when you call her name and she follows you around. She is submissive with our other bunnies, and she likes to sit in Bill's lap!"

Three months after Cindy had taken Suzy home for what she thought might be hospice care, she brought her back to Dr. Wilson for a checkup. Suzy had managed to lose four pounds, and another radiograph revealed no metastasis to the lungs (body fat may have distorted the previous radiograph). After examining Suzy, Dr. Wilson proposed surgery: a complete ovariohysterectomy (spay) and removal of her abdominal mass – which now, after her weight loss, looked enormous.

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Dr. Alexandra Wilson examined Suzy in March while speaking with Cindy Stutts about the rabbit's behavior and symptoms.



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt

Suzy (Continued from page 6)

A lengthy surgery revealed that six-year-old Suzy had abnormal reproductive organs. Dr. Wilson identified “dark, thickened, irregular areas” in Suzy’s uterus. “There were a few small cysts [closed sacs of tissue filled with fluid] on her ovaries.”

The mass on Suzy’s abdomen was, according to Dr. Wilson, “quite solid, not cystic.”

Were the tissues that Dr. Wilson removed cancerous?

“We did not send out any tissue samples for histopathology,” Dr. Wilson said, “so unfortunately we don’t have a definitive pathological diagnosis.”

A rabbit rescuer’s budget rarely covers such tests, and in the absence of histopathological confirmation, some rabbit-savvy vets tend to be noncommittal about the nature of masses they remove from the bodies of rabbits. (Although on occasion we may hear, “I think we got it all.”)

Photos: CAEM



Top, “The large mammary tumor after we had shaved it and surgically scrubbed it.” (Dr. Wilson)
Bottom, Suzy’s reproductive organs during spay surgery.

House Rabbit Society’s advocacy of spaying female rabbits is based on numerous research studies that document the pre-eminent role of sexual hormones in cancerous and pre-cancerous (a vet might call the latter “abnormal”) masses in the ovaries, uterus and mammary glands.

Thus, even at Suzy’s relatively advanced age, her ovariohysterectomy can prove beneficial. Removal of the heavy abdominal mass, whether mammary cancer or not, certainly made her more comfortable. Further surgery is planned to remove remaining mammary tumors, but this, in Dr. Wilson’s opinion, “should be a minor procedure compared to the spay/mass removal.”

Since her surgery, Suzy has become much more active and downright feisty, to the extent that she no longer tolerates being humped by Toto, a rabbit with whom she bonded shortly after being adopted. In fact, the bond between the two rabbits has broken for now. Cindy, however, is optimistic:

“A few times in the past, a workable pairing disintegrated when one of the bunnies started feeling better,” Cindy said. “In this case, Suzy’s apparent submissiveness was the inability to assert herself because she was in poor physical condition. Reconciling Suzy and Toto is certainly possible. It will just take time and patience. Both Suzy and Toto love attention and want to have a friend. I have high hopes that it will work out in the end.”

Photo: Cindy Shurts



Suzy (with Toto in background), April 1, 2011.

Photographs, With Commentary, From Two Spay Surgeries by Anthony Pilny, DVM

Photos: © Anthony Pilny, DVM 2011



A normal uterus in a healthy rabbit.



Uterine adenocarcinoma [cancer] in an advanced stage.

“In rabbits, the biological behavior of uterine adenocarcinoma (ACA) is different than in people in that the tumors are slower to spread. Spay surgery which results in detection of ACA at an early stage is curative: the possibility of spread of the tumor is much less likely.”

– Anthony Pilny, DVM

Adoptable Rabbits on Long Island

Text and photos: Donna Sheridan



Barbie

Barbie is a gorgeous Dutch, gray and white with the most beautiful blue-gray eyes. She is a true princess. She was very shy when she first arrived at the rescue and hid in her hidey-box most of the time, but now she bounces to the front of her pen when someone reaches in to pet her. She has truly blossomed in the short time we have had her.

Barbie would be great in a single-bun household where she can be worshiped by you, and is a good candidate for bonding with another bun as well.



Clark

Clark was part of a large group of neglected rabbits rescued in Ridge, Long Island. Although he never got any affection in his previous life, you can see he is now ready to make up for lost time. He hasn't wasted a minute in finding a human to cuddle with. Clark is ready to nose his way into your home. All you have to do is open your door and your heart.



Penelope

Penelope was part of a large group of neglected rabbits rescued in Ridge, Long Island. She loves everything about her new life, especially the great chew toys. Her curiosity is charming and her personality sparkles. All she needs is her forever home and Penelope's happiness will be complete.



Ruby

Ruby, a beautiful New Zealand white, was rescued from a lab where she was due to be euthanized once the experimentation was done. She now has a new lease on life and is ready for her forever home. She is gentle, neat and shy, but loves to be petted. Ruby's working days are over, and she now seeks a peaceful home where she can retire and be snuggled daily.



Tommy and Carly

Tommy and Carly are most likely siblings. They were dumped together in a parking lot on Long Island on a bitter cold day this winter. Now they are both out of the cold and starting to come out of their shells. They aren't currently bonded and are available separately. Both of these gorgeous bunnies would love humans who can make them happy and help them forget their horrible time out in the snow.

To find out more about how to adopt these rabbits, please call us at (516) 510-3637 or email us at info@LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

Store-Bought Toys Don't Amuse Skip

By Robert Kulka

Toys that rabbits like are as varied as rabbit personalities are, and that is quite a wide range. I have found rabbits who like to push things around or throw things like plastic rings or balls. Certainly, the chance to chew on things that seem like treats, whether hay-based or pellet-filled, can be a big draw. But I have always found that simple is best. In fact, simple things that provide an activity or involvement with a rabbit's "human" toy are best.

With my rabbit, Skip, I have found that most store-bought items fail to interest him. He is usually slow to adapt to new things or items that he is unfamiliar with, so toys end up being nothing more than clutter. Over the years, here is what I have found to interest and entertain him:

Cardboard: Skip likes small boxes that he can climb up on or crawl into and push around. He loves pieces of cardboard that he can shred or throw about. He claws at the cardboard pieces as if he is digging. He enjoys a two-story cardboard box castle that allows him to climb up and be at "human" level to observe his surroundings, carve out a headrest and sit as he patiently awaits my return from work in the evening. Because it is at sofa height, he uses the cardboard castle as a means to come over to the sofa on his own. And although it is not left in that access position, he has on occasion pushed it at the base with his nose to try to make his leap to the sofa when no one is watching.

Tubes: Paper-towel tubes are fun to move, throw or rearrange. We spend hours rearranging the placement so he can push them and throw them when they are not placed where he wants them. It's a little like playing with pick-up sticks. Small toilet-paper rolls stuffed with hay are also good: He will chew, eat hay and throw the tubes around, getting exercise, entertainment and his important daily hay intake. Placing boxes and cardboard in places that are not the usual ones can provide mental and physical challenges

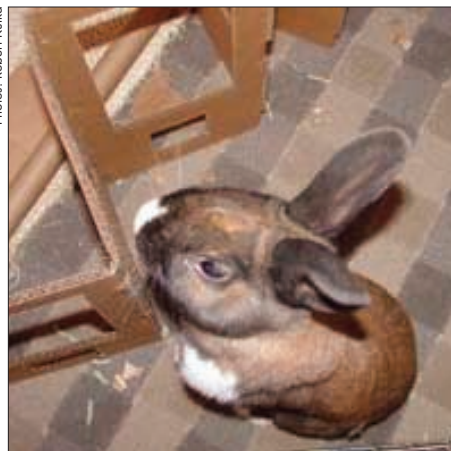
for him in his pen space. Pushing things about and putting them where they belong, or at least away from where they don't, is entertaining for both of us.

Fleece: My bun has his "blanky." In fact, over the years he has had two different ones. They are fleece throws that he can spend long periods of time crawling around, into and under. He digs and chews on the blanky, creating a blanket that looks like a piece of lace because of all his bite marks (embarrassing when washing it in the laundry room and explaining its condition). It is also what I use on a corner of the sofa that clearly defines his space and, more importantly, my corner when we are watching TV.

Overall, simple, engaging toys that you and your bun can share are the things that provide hours of mutual enjoyment.

Top and middle, Skip contemplating his cardboard obstacle course and paper-tube collection. Bottom, Skip sitting atop his castle, surveying his domain.

Photos: Robert Kulka



Let's Get Serious About Having Fun

By Cathe Rekis

For children, toys do more than entertain. Toys can stimulate coordination and intelligence, facilitate development of motor skills and promote social interaction.

All living creatures need to be challenged mentally to avoid boredom. For your rabbit, toys can offer the same benefits, as well as relaxation and stress reduction. And, most important, toys are fun!

There are countless toys you can provide for your rabbit. From the expensive to the inexpensive, you can find challenging toys for your rabbits at home, the pet store and a few other places you wouldn't have thought of.

Here are some ideas:

- Baby toys for infants and toddlers, like hard-plastic key rings, are great for a rabbit to bite (without the danger of ingesting) and then toss around. They can be found wherever baby items are sold (Babies "R" Us) as well as discount stores (Jack's 99 Cent Store).
- Cardboard toys are easily to make. The inner cylinder of a roll of toilet paper can be filled with hay. A cardboard box with little or no ink or advertising can serve as a hidey box or homemade house for your rabbit to explore.
- Grass fans hung on a pen, grass mats, grass and hay huts, or grass balls (with bells or treats inside) can be eaten as well as played with.
- Tunnels can be made from oatmeal containers (after removing the plastic seal). Larger concrete-form tunnels are available at Home Depot. Twig tunnels purchased at pet stores are edible.
- Hard-plastic stacking cups (not soft pliable rubber ones) will provide fun for your rabbits. They can grab the handles to lift and toss. Hard plastic shower-curtain rings can be strung together.
- Willow and wood products (nontoxic items that are made specifically for rabbits) are popular. Any nontreated

rabbit-friendly willow toys, apple twigs and sticks should be purchased from pet stores to ensure they are safe. Apple twigs are safe for rabbits but many other fruit-tree twigs are toxic.

- Wicker and straw items come in many shapes and sizes for your rabbits and are edible. One all-time favorite is the carrot sisal toy.
 - Brown paper bags can be stuffed with hay. Beware of using natural jute twine, natural raffia or natural hemp twine as ties for these bags; rabbits can get tangled up in the twine and then panic when they can't get out. (Also avoid synthetic ribbons.)
 - Cardboard cottages provide hours of fun. I've never met a rabbit who didn't love a cottage to explore, jump on, chew on, rearrange and hide out in. These can be found on Internet sites and in pet stores. Keep in mind: avoid anything harmful or toxic.
- Always check the labels to make sure that all wood, twigs and grass are free of stains, paint, varnish, chemical coatings, harmful dyes, metals and nails.
- Avoid anything that your rabbit could ingest, such as soft materials, soft rubber, Styrofoam and plush materials.

—Always purchase natural materials. Don't assume that an item that looks natural actually is safe. Often materials are bleached to attain a "natural" look and the bleaching chemicals can be harmful to your rabbit.

—When purchasing toys at a pet store, avoid seeds, corn and other such "treats" or unhealthy "toys."

Photo: William Leung



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Photo: Susan Lillo



Photo: Susan Lillo



Photo: Kitty Pizzo



Photo: Kitty Pizzo



TOYS FOR BUNS

Some Toy Ideas for Jaded City Buns

Your bunny seems bored, so what should you do? Is there a way to erase that “I am not amused” expression from his adorable face? Many of us have tried all sorts of toys and realized that what may delight one rabbit is just a total failure with another bunny. Some rabbits toss around hard plastic baby keys. Other rabbits enjoy shredding paper. Cardboard is fun, especially if it is anchored under a piece of furniture and offers resistance to repeated tugs. For chewing and exploring inside, the Cottontail Cottage is an easy-to-assemble structure. As rabbit volunteers, we have amassed a wealth of toy ideas over the years. Meanwhile, we know to avoid toys with seeds, honey, soft plastic and artificial materials. Here are some of our suggestions.

—Susan Lillo

Kashi's Favorite Toy

Kashi's all-time favorite toy is a set of plastic stacking cups. I've seen them at Target and CVS for about four or five dollars. You can stack them inside of each other, or upside down like a tower. Either way, he has a blast knocking them down, and they have little handles that are perfect for bunny mouths to pick up and toss.

Another favorite is his jingle ball that I found at Pier 1. It was intended as a gift tag. It's nice and loud, and has a loop on top for threading a ribbon through, and that he uses that as a grip. He actually picks it up and runs around his cage with it in his mouth.

A nice paper bag filled with hay and a banana chip tied with a piece of raffia are also hits. Raffia ribbons, in general, are always appreciated, and I've even played a (very gentle) game of tug of war with him.

—Kitty Pizzo

From top:

Rhonda with grass ball and wooden/sisal play center.

Cornflake with his plastic baby keys.

Kashi with his favorite toy, plastic stacking cups.

Kashi's toy, aerial view.

Oatmeal Containers Get High Marks

Empty oatmeal containers (provided the bunny is big enough not to get stuck in them) are wonderful playthings. I just remove the plastic seal on top and let the rabbits go to town. Bailey and Belvedere have even been seen tossing it back and forth to each other like a game of catch. The oatmeal containers last longer than toilet-paper rolls and provide a ton of options.

—Melissa Schroyer

Messing Around With Hay

The best toy is a bunny friend. :) Aside from that, though, I put a small bale of hay in a brown paper bag and place that inside the rabbits' pen area. They jump on it, rummage around and munch there. It is messy but they seem to have fun with it.

My bunnies go ape over the bags, picking at them and tearing them. I don't close the bags. I just leave them open, and also I cut a hole in the end of each bag. I put a raisin inside and an authorized treat.

I also stuff wicker and straw balls with hay and let the hay dangle from it. I then hang the ball, with hay dangling out of it, a little higher up on the pen so they have to go on their hind legs to munch on it.

—Vivian Barna

Be Creative!

Especially in this economy, I always advise new adopters to spend as little as possible on toys, and be creative. A heavy cardboard tunnel from Home Depot or Lowe's is one of my favorites. It's usually found in the same aisle as the drywall. Either cut the tunnel up, or keep it at the full size – about four feet long. There are several diameters available – six, eight or 10 inches, depending on the size of your bun. The cost is around \$9, and these tunnels are virtually indestructible. Buns love to run through them or hide inside.

(Continued on page 12)

Wheatgrass for Bunnies

By Helen Chen

It's no secret that bunnies love to eat fresh greens. Vegetable selection and quality varies by season at the market. What if you could grow fresh greens in your own home for your bunnies? Not

Photos: Helen Chen



everyone has the space for a lettuce garden, but just about anyone can grow small trays of wheatgrass at home. Many people consume wheatgrass in juice form because it is a powerful detoxifier and contains vitamins and minerals. It is



often sold in health-food stores and pet stores, but it is easy for you to grow your own.

All you need are some wheatgrass seeds, potting soil and a suitable container. Wheatgrass seeds can be purchased online or at health-food stores. I've recently seen them sold in pet stores as well. Any potting soil would do fine, but some people prefer to use an organic mix. The container must have holes for draining water, so a small flowerpot or

(Continued on page 13)

Left, Helen's rabbit Toby with a mouthful of the good stuff.

Toys *(Continued from page 11)*

Toilet-paper and paper-towel tubes filled with special treat hay keep your bun busy for hours. I buy small bags of orchard grass, oat hay or brome hay. I don't use it often because those hays cost more, but I will use it when I know I'll be out of the house for many hours. A small bag will last a long time.

Cardboard boxes from the grocery store are great toys. Take the tape off and connect the different sizes to make a maze.

I also recommend baby rattles made from heavy plastic that can't be bitten through, and sisal twine tied to the cage or pen and then braided together.

If your buns are diggers, an entire roll of paper towels or a whole phone book may keep them busy for a long time. Go to rabbit.org for these and more ideas.

—Marcie Frishberg

UPS Boxes, Wicker Balls

My rabbits' favorite toys are my walls (just kidding).

I use my rabbits to recycle cardboard boxes. Their favorites are any cardboard that can be shredded. I always try different packaging boxes for them; as of last month, they loved UPS boxes. These are

only a few inches deep, and the rabbits love sitting on the boxes and eventually tearing them up.

I also give them apple sticks from FarmerDave that they seem to love.

And I always keep an eye out for wicker balls. Pottery Barn used to sell them, and once I found them on sale for \$1 each. I grabbed as many as I could carry. I also pick them up from other stores when I can find them cheap.

—Will Leung

Word of Caution

This is just a word of caution about giving your rabbits bales of hay that are in plastic bags. Some bunnies will eat the plastic bag material – faster than you can see it – and this is really asking for (possibly expensive) trouble. It's safer to stuff the hay in some brown paper shopping bags (I use the ones from Trader Joe's) and let them go to town with those.

—Mary Cotter

Returning to Nature

The toys my rabbits seem to enjoy the most are items made of natural plant materials, such as sea grass, straw, willow and palm leaf. Many of the best buys

can be found in craft stores and dollar stores, where you can find straw hats, straw wreaths, sisal place mats, unfinished wood kitchen utensils, and the like. If you don't have time to browse through these stores, you can get two of my buns' favorites at www.orientaltrading.com: raffia fans (search "refreshing fans"), and straw hats (search "beachcomber hats"). These come in multipacks, so a pack of these will last for weeks.

IKEA is a great place to pick up toys for your rabbits. An all-time favorite is a set of sea-grass pots with lids. At \$4.99 for the set, it's a buy:

<http://www.ikea.com/us/en/catalog/products/70013462>

They also have a set of decorative balls that come eight to a pack, that are also a good buy:

<http://www.ikea.com/us/en/catalog/products/50153458>

There is one more GREAT toy idea that is worth mentioning because it is so inexpensive and the buns get weeks – even months – of play out of these: cardboard cylindrical concrete tube forms that are sold at Home Depot and Lowes. They cost about \$6 and can be cut in half. This is a great toy for floor or pen play.

—Nancy Schreiber



Why Isn't a Small Rabbit a Good Companion for Small Children?

By Lisa Carley

While both tiny rabbits and little children register high on the cuteness scale, they often don't register well living together. This generally has to do with the nature of rabbits and of little kids.

Tiny rabbits are often much more skittish than their larger cousins. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule – but that is the rule. Because they are easily frightened, they are more liable to bite as a defense mechanism. Let's not forget that they rarely vocalize, so verbally complaining isn't an option.

Another problem with the small-on-small pairing is that little children usually can't differentiate between a small plush bunny and a small plush toy. Because of

that, they are inclined to want to carry and cuddle their small bunny.

While that may make a lovely visual, it's a really bad choice. Rabbits are prey animals. That basically means that they live in fear of being eaten. Prey animals are very dependent on "flight" to protect themselves. A bunny who is being held or cuddled cannot get away if danger approaches. No matter how often I tell my own Wabbit that he is "not for eating purposes," it just isn't how his little rabbit psyche works.

If a small rabbit kicks out to free himself, a small person is very likely to drop him. That could lead to a broken spine (a very delicate part of the rabbit anatomy) or a broken leg.

And, of course, lack of verbal skills makes the rabbit much more inclined to bite to get away. If you think about it, the only way a fearful bunny can express his immediate displeasure is to bite you or scratch you.

The match that is made in heaven, though, often is a well-supervised child with a larger rabbit. Those big New Zealand and Californians are the dogs of the rabbit world. They love attention, are outgoing, and are generally too big for a small child to try to pick up. A win/win situation for all.

Lisa Carley is a volunteer with Rabbit Rescue & Rehab and the proud human of a two-pound Jersey Woolly named Wabbit.

Wheatgrass *(Continued from page 12)*

seeding tray works perfectly, as well as a number of other substitutes. In the summer I buy a lot of strawberries, so I simply reuse the clear plastic containers to grow my wheatgrass.

To start growing wheatgrass, you should first measure out enough seeds to cover the surface of your container. About one-quarter cup is sufficient for a small flowerpot. Rinse the seeds and soak them in water for 8-12 hours. Each seed will look like it has a tiny white tail on one end once it has sprouted. Drain the seeds.

Fill your container with soil. (Wheatgrass doesn't require a lot of soil, but the more soil you use, the more moisture your grass will be able to drink in and the less you need to water it.) Moisten the soil with water. Pour your sprouted seeds on top of the soil. Generously water the seeds, and then set the container somewhere away from sunlight. Water the seeds twice daily (morning and night) for two to three days. After three days, your grass should have grown about two inches and you can place it in the sunlight. Depending on the size and depth of your growing vessel, you can water the seeds every day or twice per day.

After about nine days, the wheatgrass will have grown at least six inches and you can begin harvesting it by cutting about an inch from the base. Grass will continue to grow out of the same container as long as you keep watering it. In the humid summer months, however, wheatgrass has a tendency to develop mold. After about two harvests, or whenever you see mold at the roots, you should start over and grow a new batch. All that is left to do is watch as your bunnies gobble the blades of wheatgrass up by the mouthful!

Houdini's Message: Harnesses Can Kill

By Natalie L. Reeves

Harnesses for rabbits: Pet stores sell them. *Rabbits USA* magazine advertises them. American Girl's 2010 "Girl of the Year" doll, Lanie, promoted them. But are harnesses and leashes for rabbits actually safe?

On Internet chat boards, some people defend the practice of using harnesses and leashes, saying that it gives their rabbits an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. In many other cases, people say their rabbits died as a result of being in a harness.

One woman, Diana Brushey, agreed to share her tragic story with *Thump* so that other rabbits might be saved. The following is Houdini's story as told by his owner, Diana.

"Houdini" was my first rabbit. He was a gift from a well-meaning friend who showed up at my 13th birthday party with a cardboard box. In the box was a baby bunny, perhaps two months old. We had no food, no house, no information about this animal or what to do with him. We improvised housing and fed him basic pellets from a livestock feed store. He lived in a wire-bottomed house with cedar shavings in a tray underneath. He got some alfalfa and some straw and iceberg lettuce.

We had never before seen a creature made of pure joy. His binkies (I learned the word years later) tickled our hearts. He raced around the basement at his playtimes, leaping and twisting and dancing with delight at being alive, zooming over to kiss us with his tiny pink tongue. In the evenings he was an escape artist, defying all of our attempts to confine him. He jumped out the top of one part of his house and literally scaled the wall of another. I saw him do it, like a little mountaineer. I also saw him flinch when he jumped to the floor on the other side of the cage wall. It was almost four feet down.

He was fine, but he tried again the next evening, this time nose-bonking the big

window screen we had put on top and weighted down with dictionaries, Bibles and medical encyclopedias. He still managed to get out, despite our efforts to confine him. He squeezed through an impossibly small hole in the mesh of his cage.

I awoke in the night to hear music and found him sitting on my dresser (again, nearly four feet off the floor), chewing on a music box. I was baffled and put him back in his house, and watched. This time I saw him compress himself right through the side of the cage. We wrapped the cage in chicken wire after that so that we could get some sleep.

Houdini loved to run. He loved dashing around the living room, zooming around the furniture legs, racing over to greet us and then racing back under a table.

Someone suggested that we might want to bring him outside to play and to eat some fresh grass. The pet store sold a darling little harness that was "designed for rabbits and small pets." It was brightly colored and the package showed a rabbit modeling the device. My mother asked if it was safe for our tiny rabbit's neck and front legs, and the salesperson assured us that it was an excellent product by a reputable brand.

And so, we brought him outside to our backyard. Houdini didn't like the harness. He tried to chew it off. He didn't binky when it was on. We soon realized that you can't easily "walk" rabbits; they don't have the same sense of where you are going, nor do they have the proper anatomy to really fit into such a device. The harness went on him, sure; it was easy to adjust, and it did hold him. But he wasn't happy with it. At one point he jumped from my arms (he hadn't ever done that before) and dangled for half a second, which scared me. When he tried to run, we could see that it put pressure on him and that it was uncomfortable in a way that differed from a leash on a dog. Once, when he spun quickly, the leash tangled around his neck. My father, who had snared rabbits in his youth, said we should be careful. But we still used it.

I don't remember if it was the first day, or the third day, or perhaps the first week. I know it hadn't been long since we had this device. It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon in summer. My mother was home and we had been reading outside, with Houdini. He was on his harness and we had decided to use it as a leash so that we could free our hands. He was in the shade under the picnic table, with the end of the harness looped around the table leg. We had lemonade and novels. The phone rang and I went in to answer it. It was for my mother. She stood up outside as I called her and I went back out to give her the phone.

Our ignorance led to his death. But I also believe that the harness played a role. Either the harness broke his back as he tried to escape, or the cat was able to break his neck because we had harnessed the rabbit.

An instant later, Houdini was dead. Unbeknownst to us, the neighbor's cat had been behind our porch, just a few feet away from us. When mom stood up, the cat pounced. Houdini was spooked, and in this moment of terror his body was broken. I didn't see it, but my mother did. What I remember most is my mother wailing and rocking back and forth with his little body in her arms.

Earlier that morning had been the first time I'd ever seen him flop and roll over. He exuded happiness. He had only been with us for a couple of months. His baby fur had just grown out and his new fur was just coming in, with a new spot over his nose.

I know that the cat was the mechanism of his death. I know that our ignorance and essentially our negligence – even though we were right there – led to his death. But I also completely believe that the harness played a role. Either the harness broke his back as he tried to escape,

(Continued on page 15)

Pyza Slimmed Down, Learned to Walk and Fell in Love

By Anna Kupis

This story has been long in the making but finally, here it is. You might remember Lucy, a lionhead abandoned in a Queens cemetery. My husband and I found her on our way to the mall on a hot night last summer. We brought her to the shelter, where she was spayed, but realized that we wanted to give her a home.

We already had one male rabbit, Zuzek, so we quickly decided to adopt Lucy as company for him. As she was somewhat plump, we gave her a new name, Pyza (Polish for dumpling).

It took her quite some time to become comfortable in our apartment. She ate with gusto and learned to use her litter box within a couple of days. However, whenever we reached to pet her, she retreated into a corner of the cage.

She didn't want to leave her cage. After a few days, I decided to gently take her out and noticed that she didn't know how to walk on either wooden floors or carpeting. It seemed as if her previous owners had never let her out of the cage.

I took my yoga mat and let Pyza out every day to teach her how to walk. I decided she needed some exercise in order to lose some weight and boost her mood.

Zuzek loved the mat as well, jumping up and down on it and relentlessly

ripping it into pieces. He didn't fall in love with Pyza, though. He kept attacking her, which made the walking lessons difficult.

I tried to convince Zuzek that Pyza wasn't his enemy. I felt helpless many times, when he kept attacking her for what seemed no reason at all.

Finally after a few weeks came the first breakthrough. Zuzek was able to lie next to Pyza on the mat (but not touching). She was doing much better as well, jumping from side to side and in and out of her cage, and slowly losing the extra weight.

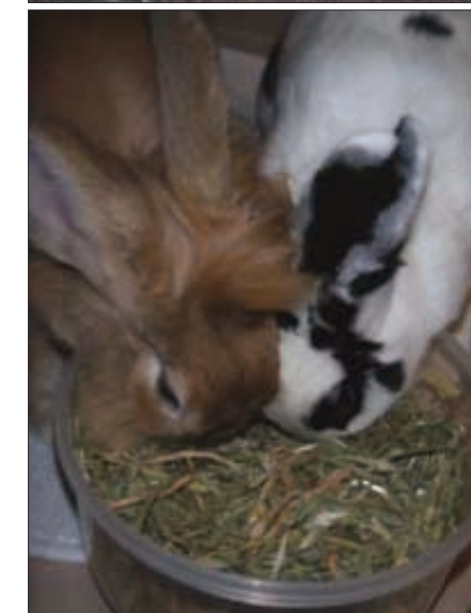
A month or so later came another milestone: Zuzek started grooming Pyza. That was the sweetest thing I have seen him do. Up until then I thought the little guy was antisocial. He now pulls hay out of the bowl and puts it in front of her when they are eating together.

It took another few months until Zuzek allowed Pyza to touch and groom him. So I guess we can say that the bonding process is (almost) over. It took a long time but it was worth it.

I wanted to thank you all for helping us with the adoption. You made the process nice and easy.

Right, top, Pyza.

Right, bottom, Pyza and Zuzek.



Harnesses *(Continued from page 14)*

or the cat was able to break his neck because we had harnessed the rabbit.

I assume the guilt for Houdini's death, and I know my mother certainly did, as she sobbed and stroked him. But we would not have been out there, lulled into false security, without that harness. That day we learned how vulnerable our prey pets are. I have since learned a lot about rabbits over the past two decades. Most of my rabbits have lived to be a decade or older. My rabbits do not have

harnesses, nor do they go outside. I know how many hazards there are out there. My family has been involved in rabbit rescue and we have seen the damage from predators and parasites. I have also heard far too many stories about rabbits who suffered broken legs, backs or necks from harnesses.

I have heard many stories about rabbits who love to go for walks on their harnesses. I have seen the videos. I know not everyone agrees. But too many of us have these "my first rabbit died from..."

stories. Trust me. It's not worth the risk. It's not worth the grief. It's not worth their lives.

Note from Mary Cotter, NYC House Rabbit Society chapter manager: Over the years I have received (and saved) many tragic emails from rabbit owners who learned the hard way that leashes and harnesses are NOT safe for rabbits. If there were one type of product I could remove from all pet-store shelves, it would be harnesses and leashes for rabbits.

Charlie's Encounter With Foster Bun Bella

By Diana Kronenberg

For the rabbit-obsessed, fostering might seem like a no-brainer. If I have the time, space and materials, why wouldn't I try and help out some buns who are temporarily without a home? However, fostering doesn't always work out as planned. I discovered this when attempting to foster for the first time.

After fostering Bella Leche from Long Island Rabbit Rescue for less than a month, my family decided there was no way we could continue. We needed to make her ours permanently. Obviously, we didn't set out to adopt another rabbit, but circumstances made it impossible for us to consider ever giving her up.

We had set up a pen in the living room for Bella with her own litter box, toys and plenty of attention from the family.

However, we hadn't given much consideration to how our other rabbit, Charlie, would react to Bella. I thought he might like seeing another bunny, as he had been alone for over a year, but I never counted on him actually falling in love with her.

Charlie lived upstairs and would spend hours gazing down at the living room from the top of the staircase. He knew instantly that another rabbit was in the house, and he was desperate to see her.

The first sign that Bella was here to stay occurred when we brought Charlie downstairs to meet her. We often carried him down to the living room for a little change of scenery, and he usually hopped around for awhile and settled in under the coffee table. This time, however, all he wanted to do was sniff at Bella through her fence and attempt to groom her. This went on for over two hours.

After about a week, the weather turned frosty and our living room got a bit chilly. We decided to bring Bella upstairs for a few nights and then return her to the living room in the daytime. We put a fence up in the hall, separating Charlie

Photo: Diana Kronenberg



Bella and Charlie.

from Bella. He stayed at the fence the entire evening. She'd come over to the fence, eager to see him, too, and they'd exchange sniffs while trying to groom one another through the fence.

We decided to let the two have a play date in the dining room in a small pen. I had expected a little fighting at first, but the two took to each other so quickly that they were grooming each other and exploring together in a matter of minutes. Then they started biting at the fence together, signaling their desire to be let out. I expanded the pen to most of the room and let the two play with each other, always watching them.

It soon became obvious that Charlie and Bella Leche weren't going to let us separate them. Whenever they could, they would be together, and stared at each other through a fence when they could not. I had never expected this to happen. Charlie was a very independent rabbit and I thought it would take much longer for him to bond to any bunny. The family had grown attached to Bella – but Charlie had fallen in love with her.

Although we hadn't set out to find him a mate, that is exactly what happened.

Fostering can work, and does for those who are prepared. A separate area should be designated for a foster bun – somewhere that other rabbits don't visit or consider "their territory." Charlie had been all over our house so there was no place that Bella could really claim as her own. She was in his space so he was naturally curious about her. The biggest issue I faced when bringing home a foster rabbit was that I had a bunny bachelor. Rabbits really are happier in pairs – even my very independent bun. After seeing how much Charlie wants to be with Bella, I would never keep just one rabbit again.

I still may try to foster another time in the future. Now that I've experienced what it's like to bring a new rabbit into the house, I have a greater understanding of how to handle it. With a bit more space, and enough attention for all, fostering can work out. For now, I have a pair of very happy rabbits who are very much in love.

Will Love Blossom for Flower Pot?

By Erin McElhinney

I used to do the Friday night shift at the shelter, but was relieved two-and-a-half years ago when I was asked to move to Sundays. I was looking forward to some quality time with the rabbits on Sunday afternoons, and also knew I would have a better opportunity to interact with the public during the weekend adoption hours. And aside from the occasional missed brunch with friends, I never looked back on my decision. I developed a leisurely pace and a relaxed manner at the shelter; I could finally focus more on helping to socialize the rabbits and really listening to people when they came in the rabbit room.

And then one Sunday, Flower Pot came in. Jane O'Wyatt had collected her from a non-rabbit-savvy vet clinic in Manhattan where she had been unceremoniously dumped. Of course, she didn't have a name just yet. What she did have was flattened back paws, and she couldn't put pressure on one front paw – which caused her to periodically topple onto the ground. She had split her lower lip from hitting the floor so much, and there was a small scab there. Her other problems included sore hocks, obesity, lack of appetite – the usual afflictions of a rabbit caged up with only whatever thoughts a rabbit has to pass the days.

Afraid she wouldn't make it through the night, but also fearful that I couldn't provide the medical help she needed, I brought her home and called out sick from work the next day (this is not a habit of mine!). I phoned my vet and proceeded to treat the rabbit with Metacam and simethicone, just in case.

I vowed to stay up all night with her in case things started going south and she needed to be warmed. I needn't have bothered. This elderly, unspayed female came to full life when she sniffed out the young, boisterous unneutered male foster of mine, Casey! I penned her off and lined her pen with extra-soft blankets and towels. She devoured the vegetables

that she wouldn't even look at during her brief stay at the shelter, and she soon fell into a deep sleep after a playtime session that included a lot of flipping and tossing a wicker ball roughly the size of her whole body. I named her Flower Pot after a three-legged cat that I know. I was convinced that she would lose her front paw, since she continued to favor that paw and continued to bonk her chin down on the floor.

Photo: Erin McElhinney



Flower Pot.

I woke up at various points throughout the night on the floor next to her makeshift puppy pen. Casey was flopped out on the other side of her pen, a rabbit Harold and Maude couple if there ever was one. Not being fixed yet, neither rabbit was litter-box trained. She seemed so old and frail that I was scared to vacuum in front of her, lest she have a heart attack and die. I fielded a few work calls in my best sick voice, which wasn't hard to fake after a fitful night of sleep on the couch and on the floor next to Flower Pot. And then, the fun began.

At my vet, Flower showed her real kissy nature. She licked me as I put her in the carrier, and she licked me as I took her out. She licked the vet tech; she licked the vet. She licked so much that I decided this was more of a nervous reaction than a sign of affection. However, when I brought her home, the licking continued.

Her next vet appointment, which was a second opinion appointment, was different. She bit everyone there. Larry Marion, one of the rabbit volunteers, picked her up from the clinic and was told by the staff that this little Flower

Pot was one grouchy lady. "They were talking about a different rabbit," we both agreed. Indeed, at her third vet appointment, her spay, she was back to her normal kissy self. Should you start to get ideas that maybe the second vet mishandled her, I watched in helpless horror as FP turned on my mother during a cuddle over Christmas break and began to – I have no other words for this – suckle her upper chest. My mother was buffered from the pain with several glasses of wine and we had a laugh at the timing of it as my mother was in the process of telling me how all animals just naturally love her.

Flower's vivacious personality and recently spayed scent also brought out the curiosity of some wild rabbits during a visit to my family's house in New Hampshire. We woke up one morning to a fresh dusting of snow and rabbit tracks in front of the room where my rabbits were staying. The tracks indicated there had been a wild rabbit binky fest outside. Who knows what kind of silent, scent-driven communication went on between these domestic rabbits and their wild brethren. It makes me smile to imagine the kind of stories they could have told each other.

Are you a loving, kind person, preferably with an eligible bachelor rabbit companion for her? This little old lady, who is estimated to be between five and eight years old, deserves to grow old in a home that will love her indefatigable spirit and never-ending appetite. She loves nothing more than having her head petted and smooshing against your legs. She is very particular about where the hay in her litter box goes and will promptly rearrange her box as soon as you clean it. Flower Pot, perhaps from a life in a wire or mesh cage, has the strangest little flattened feet. She gets around just like any other rabbit, though, and would just need a towel or faux sheepskin to nestle into and to maintain traction. Flower is the kind of rabbit who has probably been an old soul since the day she was born. She will melt your heart.

The Many Guises of Ollie: Puppy, Pilot, Food Snatcher

By Katelyn Belyus

It's 6:30 a.m. when I hear the clang of metal scraping across the bathroom tiles, followed by a crash. The light is just creeping in through the windows, and I'm loath to investigate – I already know what it is. Instead, I pull a pillow over my head. Two minutes pass in silence. Then I hear more banging. This time, it sounds like someone's playing those overturned buckets in the street for money. I sigh and open the door to the hallway, and the noise stops.

I peek into the bathroom, and as my eyes take in the scene – trash pail overturned, tissues strewn across the floor, tufts of fur stuck to the shower curtain – I focus on Ollie, the neck of a two-foot-tall metal bird clamped firmly in his jaw.

He blinks at me, and then returns to his jubilant noisemaking, thrashing his head from side to side with the decorative bird made of a garden stake still in his mouth, trying to wring its neck. Today, Ollie thinks he is a predator, a tiny little wolf gone hunting.

He must have learned this from Maya. It's the only possible explanation. She taught him how to hide under the couch and dart out like a shark, how best to

attack ankles while avoiding hands, and to only come out and lay in the middle of the floor if there is a shark documentary on television (or a rerun of "The Cosby Show").

When Ollie finally drops the bird to the floor, he darts from the room and skids to the fridge, a furry little lop-eared Tom Cruise from "Risky Business." A pause. A quick glance in my direction, then an expression of what can only be described as one of pure longing cast toward the refrigerator door. He runs back to my feet and stands up, trying to hug my calves. His tail wags. I was wrong – he's no wolf. Today he is a puppy dog.

He runs back to the fridge – he's no dummy. "Okay, okay," I grunt. "You want greens?" I open the refrigerator door and instead of nodding in approval, he tries

to jump onto the shelf crammed with bags of wet kale, parsley, lettuce and cilantro. He falls backward and races to tell Maya that breakfast is almost ready, licking and grooming her under the kitchen table. He hops to the spot where his greens plate usually appears, and Maya follows slowly. I sing the "Greens Time" song (trust me, its verses aren't much more complicated than the title, and yes, it's every bit as embarrassing as you imagine), and Ollie stands on his rear legs eyeing the plate like it's a flying saucer.

They eat like starving poets, wet and sloppy, methodically choosing to start with the best bits. They steal kale right from each other's mouths, Ollie twisting his head nearly upside down so he's looking up at Maya, literally waiting for juicy kale pieces to drop from her mouth to his.

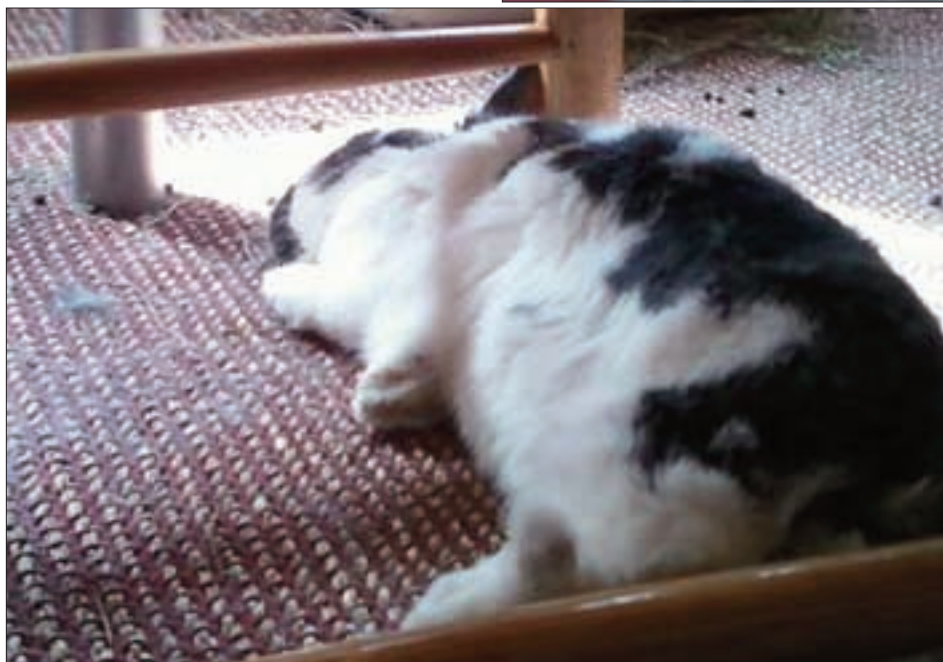
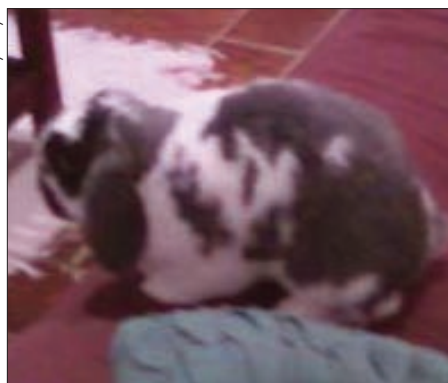
Some days, he's neither wolf nor pup – in fact, he's not even an animal at all. "I'm a pilot," he tells me and then, as if to prove it, he hops onto the couch, takes a cautious step onto an even taller end table, and literally launches himself off, his ears flapping in the breeze. His gray lop ears are unusually long; standing still, they touch the ground and fold over like Ls, just like tiny little golf clubs pressed against his head. So when he's in the air, they flop around like Dumbo's, except *Look, Ma, no feather!* When he's finished, he turns and looks at me triumphantly. "I like being airborne," he says earnestly.

Out of sheer joy, I scoop him up and kiss his face. If he struggles, I plunk him down and he hops to Maya, who has been glowering at us from the corner with her too-cool-for-school attitude, and nuzzles her. Then he'll race around the room until he finds a perfect spot of sun, and flop over in it, where he can remain for anywhere from 30 seconds to two hours.

Such is the life of a budding pilot: flying, eating, nuzzling and napping. Not bad at all.

Ollie.

Photos: Katelyn Belyus



Petco's Rabbit Rally Weekend: Great Exposure, Good Vibes

Coming just before Valentine's Day, the Petco Rabbit Rally weekend on Feb. 12-13 was a good opportunity to give many of our AC&C rabbits some extra exposure. Part of the Petco "Meet the Critters" program, the weekend featured promotional posters and extra publicity for the rescued rabbits who were available for adoption.

The idea was to invite rabbit owners into Petco stores to ask questions and to talk about their bunnies. On both days, volunteers transported additional rabbits from the shelter to the Union Square and Lexington Avenue Petco stores, so that they might have an opportunity to find a home.

At the Union Square Petco, Cathe Rekis, Hilary Kastleman and Thea Harting worked with Marcie Frishberg and Larry Marion to get the rabbits ready for their big weekend. Clementine and Polito were on hand to meet potential adopters,

as well as store regulars Austin and Ulysses. Maddy DeLeon provided transportation from the shelter for rabbits and volunteers, and both Jane O'Wyatt and Lisa Fresolone helped out. Three people brought their rabbits in for the event, and volunteers were able to offer advice on housing and diet. Lucky Polito also got to have a sleepover at Cathe's house, and he hopped into and slept in Cathe's bed as if he owned it.

At the Upper East Side store, Susan Lillo and her daughter, Stephanie Lorence, set up early on Saturday, decorating with balloons and hearts. Foxy, Hin-Sung and Oreo enjoyed entertaining store customers, and Oreo went home with adopter Felicia Lawson of Far Rockaway. One woman brought her rabbit to visit and the bun, Vanilla, played in the pen vacated by Oreo and also received a manicure. The event attracted a number of potential adopters, and many asked for literature and contact information. On Sunday, Loraine Kopf was there to keep the rally going. Joining her was Alisa Christopher, who recently adopted Dash. Three additional rabbits were brought down from AC&C on Sunday: Francis and the bonded mother and daughter, Jill and Lacey. "So we had five bunnies and lots of people petted them," Loraine said.

Will Leung and Vivian Barna traveled to the Petco in College Point, Queens. They were assisted by adopter Nancy Carbone, whose household includes Binky, Sugar and Momo. Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital provided two unbonded sisters named Shark Bite and White Tip for

the event. A few rabbit owners brought their pets in and asked about dental health, litter boxes, exercise pens, pellets and general nutrition. One of the visiting rabbits had previously been fed pizza by a former owner.

Cathe Rekis said the weekend was a success, adding, "I want to thank everyone who helped so much on a very busy promotional Sunday at Petco."

From left, counterclockwise, at Petco, 86th Street & Lexington, Stephanie Lorence (volunteer); enthusiastic kids; staff members Amanda, Mikey and Emily. Below, at Petco, Union Square, volunteers Thea Harting, Marcie Frishberg and Hilary Kastleman.

Photo: Susan Lillo



Photo: Susan Lillo



Photo: Susan Lillo

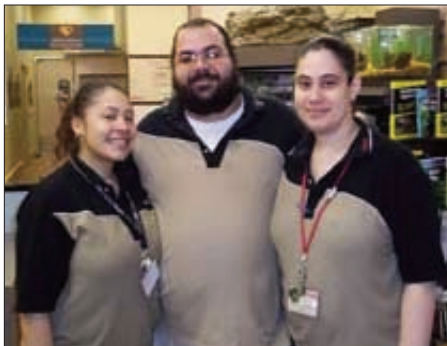


Photo: Cathe Rekis



Photo: Cathe Rekis



Photo: Cathe Rekis



Superstar Appearances, on TV and in Chinatown

Photos: Natalie Reeves



Photo: William Leung



Rabbits and volunteers traveled to Chinatown on Feb. 6 to take part in a parade for the Chinese New Year. Potential adopters could observe the rabbits through the windows of a van that parked along the parade route. The rabbits felt right at home, and they seemed to enjoy the attention.

sleepy volunteers appeared on a 6 a.m. segment on “Weekend Today in New York,” NBC’s Saturday morning local news. Foxy, an up-eared rabbit with one blue eye and one brown eye, and Beauford, a mini lop with a sweet disposition, shined before the cameras. They even ignited a debate off-air among people in the studio as to whether up-eared or lop-eared rabbits are cuter. Veteran anchor Pat Battle weighed in that she prefers up-eared rabbits as she cooed over Foxy. She told viewers that she had pet rabbits in the past and thought they were wonderful, but couldn’t adopt a rabbit now because she has a dog with a strong prey drive. Foxy and Beauford have since been adopted.

Many rabbits and volunteers also traveled to Chinatown in early February to participate in a parade to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The rabbits traveled in a van that parked at several locations so that people could look in the windows. Meanwhile, rabbit volunteers stood outside the van and spoke to passers-by about basic rabbit care and adoption.

By Natalie L. Reeves

New York City’s bunnies have started “The Year of the Rabbit” with much fanfare.

In February, Martha Stewart welcomed Cindy Stutts and three bunnies from New York City’s Animal Care & Control to her show on the Hallmark Channel.

The bunny superstars included: Ruby, a big New Zealand white bunny with pretty pink eyes; Reese, a grey chinchilla bunny with incredibly soft fur, and Mr. Rabbit, an adorable black-and-white lop.

Martha opened her show with the three bunnies huddled together in a large basket as Martha talked to Cindy about “The Year of the Rabbit.” Cindy and the bunnies made an encore appearance in the last segment of the show. Cindy

explained to Martha why rabbits make such good companions, the commitment required, and where to go to adopt a rabbit. There aren’t many celebrities who get to start and finish a major television show, but clearly these bunnies are special. To see pictures from the show, go to

<http://www.marthastewart.com/article/rabbit-adoption>.

NBC invited adoptable rabbits to appear on shows on its network, as well as on a cable-channel affiliate. Bunnies looking for homes traveled from the Manhattan animal shelter to Rockefeller Center to grab their shot at fame. They were featured on “Maria’s Pet Project” on LVTN, a lifestyle channel of NBC. Wide-awake bunnies accompanied by

Photo: Ben Zucker



Dina and volunteer Emma Mullins in Chinatown.

Our Angel, Harley

Photo: Kara Alderisio



Harley.

By Kara Alderisio

I wrote the story of Harley's cancer, feistiness and sense of humor last April in Thump. She continued her antics and love of life for months after that. However, she required surgery every six to eight weeks. Our vets, Dr. Jennifer Saver and Dr. Laura George, had to keep removing tumors as they appeared. Many, many times Dr. Saver remarked that she was only performing so many lumpectomies because Harley handled the anesthesia, procedure and recovery so incredibly well. Dr. Saver had never seen a rabbit recover so easily.

In July, a tumor appeared on a very difficult part of Harley's front leg. Surgery there would have been very painful, and removal of the tumor was likely impossible. She also had developed a chain of tumors on her stomach that would be extremely difficult – probably impossible, definitely painful – to remove.

We decided not to operate anymore. I brought Harley home and she had seven more fabulous months of running, teasing, eating like a horse and watching television with me.

In February, I had to put my little angel to sleep. The tumors had gotten so large that she couldn't lie down comfortably. She could hop around, but she got short of breath very easily and she couldn't groom herself completely. She also started to have loose stools, which she never, ever had had. So I had no choice but to let her go.

I loved Harley with all my heart and she brought me so much joy. She went on vacation with me more than a few times and she was always great company. I miss her every day.

Photo: Joanna Ung



Harry being held by Brittnee.

RIP: Harry

By Brittnee Spence

Joanna Ung and I were tending to the many homeless rabbits at the AC&C on a late Tuesday evening a few days before Christmas 2010. A staff member entered the room with a lily-white dwarf hotot in tow named "Harry" and placed the bunny's metal carrier on the floor.

Harry was unusual in appearance. Thick mascara accentuated his mismatched, cerulean blue and brown eyes. After saying hello to our new resident, I got a cage ready for him as Joanna put the nervous boy into the playpen. Harry was shy with his new human acquaintances, but he immediately took to rearranging his new surroundings with zest.

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Harry bulldozing hay.

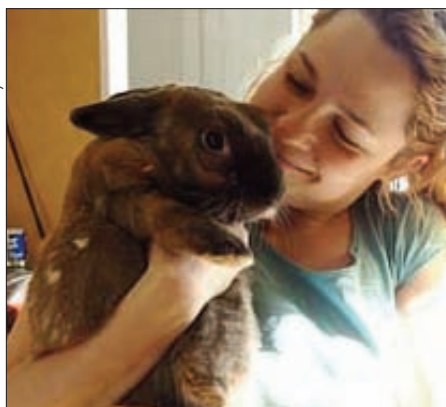
Harry settled into his habitat and we discovered his vivacious personality. He let his caretakers know he was the boss, and the little ball of fluff was never short on energy. Our high-spirited friend would spend most his playtime bulldozing hay and digging at the colorful mat. He didn't quite succeed at creating a burrow, but this never thwarted his efforts. When he had his fill of frolicking, he'd settle down for a well-deserved head massage.

I made a video titled, "How to Pick Up a Harry," because he often was a handful to get out of his cage, and I wanted to help the other volunteers. (<http://vimeo.com/20648456>)

Harry died on March 8 while undergoing a dental procedure.

We all loved Harry so much. He was such a cute little guy. Harry has inspired me to help other bunnies in need throughout my life. I think of him often and cherish the time we had together.

Photo: Mary Ann Hannon



Fred and Genevieve.

RIP: Fred Hannon

Birthday: July 4

Adopted by Me: May 2009

RIP: March 20, 2011

By Genevieve Hannon

In the late spring of 2009, I did a bonding session with Cindy Stutts of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, the New York Chapter of the House Rabbit Society. I went to the Animal Care & Control

(Continued on page 22)

RIP: Fred *(Continued from page 21)*

facility on East 110th Street, to try to bond my rabbit Daisy to one of three eligible bachelors. It was like “The Dating Game” show from the ’70s. After Daisy seemed to accept one of the rabbits, I adopted him.

Fred had been fostered by one of my rabbit volunteer colleagues, Marcie Frishberg. He and Daisy got along pretty well but the bonding process had to be put on hold when Daisy became ill. After Daisy’s passing, Fred became a bachelor, and I think he was quite happy that way.

Freddy was a tort (black tortoiseshell), and he was handsome, outgoing, feisty, smart, sweet and funny. He lived free-roaming in my office and bedroom upstairs and loved to nap on the soft blanket in the middle of the office floor or on my bed. He knew his name and would come running when you called him. He loved to greet you at the top of the stairs and would drop whatever he was doing and come running from anywhere he was to meet you. He also liked to hop up onto the bed in the mornings to wake you up.

He had perfect litter-box habits and didn’t chew or destroy things. He loved to dig and push on the blankets on the floor and my bed, which was really cute to watch. He loved to groom me and would lick and lick my bluejeans while I petted his head. He was easy to hold, both up against my chest and upside-down in a cradle position like a baby. He got really excited about food, so if you tried to hand-feed him, your fingers were in danger of becoming part of the meal.

My pet-sitter, Sharlene, loved to come upstairs and crouch really low at the top of the stairs with a carrot in her mouth. Freddy would take the carrot from her mouth (and Sharlene managed to save her lips in doing so).

Freddy was great with his dog and cat siblings and particularly loved to lounge around with his kitty sister Maggie. He

was also a real momma’s boy; we were very close to each other. Whenever I was working on a project in the office or at my desk, Freddy was always by my side – my little helper. Fred was a really sweet bunny.

Fred was a healthy, sturdy bunny, but would get GI stasis with hypothermia a couple times a year during his molts, despite how much I brushed him out. I was always able to clear up the episodes by warming him up to a normal temperature with warm towels fresh out of the drier, and by treating him with Baby Gas-X, Metacam for pain relief and Reglan for motility, and then feeding him Oxbow’s Critical Care.

One day, he had a milky discharge on his fur in front of his eye, which I knew was a blocked tear duct, so I flushed his eye out with saline solution and applied a warm compress. However, the next day, he had more discharge, and his other eye was bulging. He wouldn’t eat. I took his temperature and it was 106 F (normal is 101-103 F), so I quickly wrapped him in a dish towel and packed bags of frozen food around him to cool him down. I was able to stabilize his temperature at 102.8 F within 20 minutes and he started to perk up a bit, but was still disinterested both in his pellets and a piece of banana.

His incisors looked slightly misaligned to me, like his lower or upper jaw was shifted a touch. His breathing was a bit fast and his lips were slightly parted so he seemed to be trying to get more oxygen through his mouth. This is never a good thing for a rabbit since they are obligate nasal breathers. He also would whimper a little when I picked him up to take his temperature.

So I quickly called one of his vets, Dr. Alix Wilson at the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine, and described his symptoms to her. I asked if I could rush him in (it was Sunday), and she said she suspected a molar problem or an abscess and that he’d need to be hospitalized right away. So my boyfriend, Jim, and I took Freddy in the car immediately and

drove to CAEM. The whole way there, I held and petted and kissed and talked to Freddy to comfort him, and I kept the window open so he’d get more air. When we arrived 45 minutes later, I rushed him into CAEM. He peeped his head out the top of the carrier and rested it on the edge of the opening and looked at me with his sweet, soft eyes. I kissed his head and told him I loved him and would always love him.

Then Dr. Wilson took him into the back. She came back 10 minutes later to break the news to me that shortly after they took Freddy out of the carrier and just before they could get him on oxygen, he’d passed away. I sobbed in her arms, completely heartbroken. Dr. Wilson indeed thought Fred likely had an abscess growing in his head, pushing on his eye and causing it to bulge, and that it may have burst. She also thought that the high fever he had that day may have killed too many red blood cells and damaged his liver because he was pale inside.

I cried for a while over his body on the exam table in the back and then took him home to bury him in my backyard. I lay his body down on his blanket, still wrapped in the towel from the vet’s office, and let the other animals see and smell his body so they’d understand what had happened to their brother. One of his kitty siblings, Sydney, lay down on top of him. It was very touching.

Now, over the Rainbow Bridge, Freddy can finally complete his bonding with Daisy. Fred and Daisy, take good care of one another, and know that I will one day be with you again. I miss you, Freddy, and I love you always. Little man, little man.

HAY

Sincere thanks to all of our generous hay donors!

Letters

Photos: Louise Twining-Ward



Alfalfa Snuffles at home.

Alfalfa Snuffles

Alfalfa Snuffles (Alfie for short) was formerly known as Goldie. He was adopted in February by Louise Twining-Ward and her family, who sent us this email.

I have never known a sweeter rabbit. He falls asleep instantly when you start rubbing his face!

We are very happy to have adopted Goldie.

The calming influence of a bunny is wonderful!

He is the best rabbit ever.

Louise

Photo: Mark Eshelmon



Jill (now Butter) with Lacey (now Pepper).

Butter and Pepper

Butter and Pepper were formerly known as Jill (mom) and Lacey (her daughter). They were adopted in March by Katharine and Mark, who sent us this letter.

Hi Cindy,

Just wanted to send you a quick note and let you know that we are all settling in very well together. The bunnies were pretty shy and nervous on Sunday but we had an excellent evening yesterday with lots of big bunny jumps and curious running around, and another really good morning with the bunnies, who are now named Butter and Pepper.

We will send you another update in a few weeks but we just wanted to let you know that we are all doing well and how much we already love these girls.

Thanks so much!

Katharine and Mark

The Volunteers Are My Inspiration

By Tracy Nuzzo

I adopted Kelsey at the end of January, and he really is a doll. He kisses everyone. I don't know how he was raised before December, but the volunteers made Kelsey the little guy he is today. He loves to be held.

The volunteers are my inspiration. You helped me every step of the way. You suggested the Leith condo and gave me hay recommendations. Kelsey loves all herbs, but the list that AC&C suggested was so useful! It included basil, cilantro, mint and so many other things I would never have thought to feed a rabbit. I

Photo: Julia Quinn



Snowflake, left, with Churchill.

Churchill and Snowflake

Julia sent Marcie Frishberg this news in late January about Churchill and Snowflake.

Hi Marcie,

I just wanted to give you an update.

Churchill and Snowflake have finally become friends. They are cuddling up together and doing mutual grooming. When they are mushed up together, everyone in the house stops what they are doing to watch them. They are sharing Churchill's pen and when they are out and about they are never very far from each other.

Julia

Photo: Susan Lillo



Kelsey and Tracy Nuzzo.

always just thought "carrots." I am glad for the list (so is Kelsey).

So many of you knew Kelsey from the time he was left at the shelter. You filled in the blanks about his temperament, how to care for him, a great local vet, etc. I am so lucky.

(Continued on page 24)

Letters *(Continued from page 23)*

I have had Kelsey in my home for two weeks, but he brought a lot of love with him. I know he was well cared for at AC&C, by all of you.

Our little guy is lucky. He was loved by so many. Since he's moved in, he has had more angels looking out for him (Dr. Anthony Pilny and also the staff at Whiskers, who met Kelsey and just adored him). The staff at AC&C has made the transition so wonderful, for both of us.

Kelsey is thriving. I moved the K-man into his condo and he loves the top, carpeted level. At first, he was reluctant to climb the ramp. Now he almost never wants to go back down. On the top level, he hops and jumps.

He loves the new condo and all the things he's gotten the past two weeks, but he was lucky to have people who loved and cared for him when his owner dropped him off. I always say that I wish I'd found him sooner, but I do know he was loved during his time at East 110th Street. I don't think most folks realize the love you give at the shelter. Food and a place to live? Of course. But Kelsey does the whole "teeth chattering" purr when he's held. He's an affectionate little guy. If he'd been traumatized after his owner dropped him off, his disposition would



Kelsey chilling out in bed.

likely be so much different, but this little guy loves anyone he meets. That is a direct reflection on the volunteers. You loved him and he is a loving guy because of that.

Two weeks ago, I must have met six different rabbit volunteers and each one told me about Kelsey. They all knew him personally and all knew something different. Everyone knew him and wanted a good home for him.

I have hit the jackpot here. Kelsey is just a love. Anyone would have been fortunate to bring him home. I just feel lucky that I could get him the big condo and that I live near a 24-hour market where I can get him greens and herbs. I want to give him the best possible home. You all helped him through a tough time and I knew when he left there that he'd never want for anything.

I hold Kelsey every day and all he does is kiss and for that, I think of (and thank) every volunteer at the shelter. You made sure that Kelsey kept his spirit. It could (easily) have broken after 60 days in a shelter, but Kelsey is a testament to the love given by the volunteers. I can't thank you all enough.

I shared a nice story with Dr. Pilny. Every night, I have tons of organic greens on hand to assemble Kelsey's salad dinner. I chop up an apple and get the smallest slice – one you could almost read the newspaper through – and I put that in the bottom of the bowl. Kelsey searches (and finds) the apple and he drags it out of the salad. He eats dessert first. He devours the apple and then goes back for the romaine, endive and herbs. I love that he eats dessert first – I love that he can!

In the evening, I look at him and say, "Go night-night, Kelsey." You'd think that would be a command rabbits couldn't grasp, but the little guy puts down whatever he's playing with and goes to the left side of the condo and flops down on his side. (I try not to laugh so hard as to interfere with his slumber, but it cracks me up because he falls full force, as if someone pushed him, and rolls on his side!)

Best,

Tracy Nuzzo

Photo: Melinda Cheng



Maddy.

Maddy

Maddy, formerly known as Grace, was adopted in mid-January by Melinda, who reports that everything is going well.

Maddy is a lovely, active bunny who enjoys digging, running frantically and destroying willow baskets. She also enjoys surveying the world from on top of her box. While she is very curious and energetic, she also likes to stretch

out, relax and get cheek rubs. She fits right into our household because she loves to chow down; her favorite greens are kale, parsley and cilantro. We are very happy that Maddy has joined our family, and we thank Erin and Jane for their education and care.

Thanks!

Melinda

(Continued on page 25)

Forever Homes Found!

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Kelsey, Beauford, Oreo, Marlboro, Reese, Goldie, Grayley, Sherlock, Orlando, Foxy, Molly and Bailey, Brenda, Austin, Bonny and Clyde, Jill and Lacey, Pistol and Petunia, Francis, Ulysses, Leonardo, Frith and Lisa.

Letters *(Continued from page 24)*

Photo: Abigail



Napoleon.

Napoleon

Napoleon, formerly known as Twist, was adopted by Abigail, who sent us this letter in early February.

Dear Susan,

Many thanks to you and Cindy and all the wonderful volunteers. The love and care you give the bunnies shows and helps so much with the adoption process.

My recent adoption of Napoleon was a heartwarming experience. His kennel card said he had been picked up as a stray on the street, but this was hard to believe because he is so friendly and nice! His nippiness disappeared in a week or two (totally understandable after what he went through), and he is a charming companion.

I especially enjoy seeing him devour his salads – I think he eats enough for two bunnies – and he is very neat with his box.

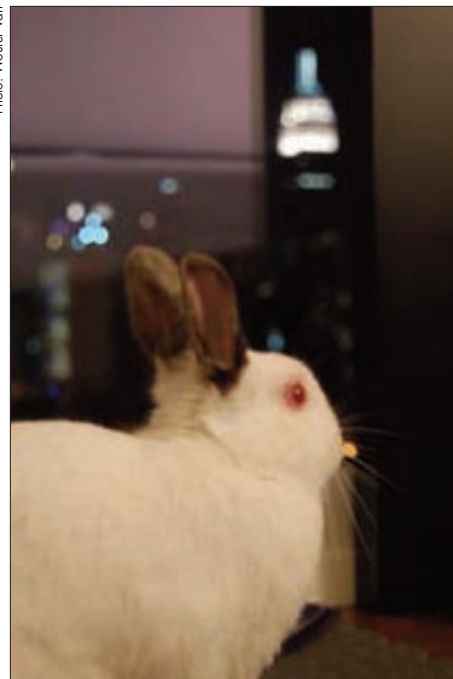
He loves to show off his super-fast running, which really is astonishing!

I'm glad the adoptions are going well at Petco. I enjoyed getting the chance to see Napoleon with his little teardrop marking and his cheerful personality several times before deciding to take him home, and now I don't go to the store without saying hi to the current resident bunnies. Please keep up the great work!

Best wishes,

Abigail

Photo: Wouter Van



Nikita.

Nikita

Nikita was adopted by Wouter, who sent us this update at the end of January.

Hope you are doing well, and apologies for not writing earlier. Nikita is healthy and at ease, has settled down and indeed has fully taken over the place. She also makes sure that I never oversleep :-) I wanted also to thank you for Thump, through which I found out about the adoptions at the Petcos, and where Marcie and Cathe introduced me to Nikita. Attached are some pictures of the lady, taken this evening.

All the best, and belated wishes for the new year.

Wouter

Photos: Betsy Baker-Smith



Yam and Oreo.

Yam and Oreo

Betsy adopted Yam as a partner bun for Oreo in December. She sent this letter in March.

We took our rabbit Oreo to a speed-dating session with Cindy Stutts in December, where she chose Yam.

Oreo, and her former partner, TaCee, had been part of our household since July 2005, when we lived near Spokane, Wash. We moved to East Stroudsburg, Pa., in 2007, and Oreo enjoyed TaCee's companionship



until April of last year, when TaCee died. Oreo appeared quite depressed, rarely leaving her cage although she had free range of our home. She spent much of her time simply facing the wall.

After Yam joined our family in December, Oreo began to be much more interested in her surroundings, and, of course, in Yam.

And after three months of "bunny bonding" (two sessions daily), she and Yam spent their first unsupervised night together on March 25, and all is well.

They have never been nasty to each other, and they groom each other regularly.

My daughter Christy also has a bonded pair. She and her husband, who live in Astoria, purchased Nutella, a Netherland dwarf, in early 2005. They took her to speed-dating with Cindy in July 2008, and Nutella chose Tango, a rather large Holland lop, who is exactly the same brownish color as Nutella. They bonded in early 2009.

Betsy Baker-Smith

(Continued on page 26)

Letters (Continued from page 25)

Photo: Ben Hernandez



Rogue.

Rogue

Ben adopted Rogue, formerly known as Foxy, in late February. Ben sent us this letter a short time afterward.

Thanks for checking up! Everything is great with Foxy, or as she's now known, "Rogue." She's been settling in quite nicely. I set her up in my room, and she pretty much has the run of the bed and everywhere else in

my apartment (except the living room where I have the most wires).

She has a healthy appetite, and she's always running around and sprinting. I will be taking her to the bunny vet nearby tomorrow for a general checkup .

She still is averse to being picked up, but I suspect she'll always be like this. I was wondering if you'd recommend any tips or techniques to help her be more at ease. I don't make a habit of it, but I would like her to be comfortable with the idea that if I needed to pick her up, I could do so – for instance, when we go to the vet.

I've included some recent pictures, and I've included a link on YouTube showing her on the second day with me, pretty much taking over my bed:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0-9F0DENls>

All the best,

Ben and Rogue (aka Foxy)

Photo: Krissy Koplen



Stravinsky.

Stravinsky

Stravinsky, formerly called Timmie, was adopted by Krissy and Robert, who sent this email in March.

Sorry for the major delay in updating you about our new(ish) bunny! My boyfriend, Robert, and I adopted Stravinsky (formerly Timmie) on Jan. 19. On Feb. 1, we moved into a new apartment, and Stravinsky has made an excellent adjustment.

He definitely likes our new place. He has tons more room to run around in and we get lots more natural light here. We were in a basement apartment before.

Anyway, the three of us have been getting along swimmingly. Robert and I are crazy about our fluffy little boy. My students have also become obsessed with him. I put photos of Stravinsky up in my classroom and the kids all draw pictures of him and ask me to bring him to school. (I wouldn't, so don't worry.)

We are so glad Stravinsky found us and completed our family. We think he is the best bunny in the world :)

Love,

The Bock Family

Krissy, Robert and Stravinsky

Photo: Joshua Miller



Wally.

Wally

Wally was adopted by Ellen and Joshua, who gave us some sad news in February.

Greetings,

You may recall that Ellen and I adopted Romeo (Wally) just over a year ago from the Manhattan shelter.

Wally has been an amazing addition to our family. His story is somewhat bittersweet, however. Shortly after we brought him home, we noticed that a small bump on his neck was getting bigger. We brought him to our vet and had it removed surgically, all the while thinking it was a parasite of some sort. Unfortunately, we found out from the pathology that the lump was actually skin cancer – malignant melanoma to be exact. After doing some research, we've learned that this form of cancer in rabbits is amazingly rare and, very sadly, not survivable. Almost a year after his surgery, Wally is doing remarkably well, though the cancer

has returned in the same location. We're focusing on keeping him happy, comfortable and pain-free. He seems to be holding his own and loves eating his hay, vegetable treats and lounging around.

Anyway, in the spirit of spoiling him with treats, we decided to get him a brand new cage and thus, have a gently used rabbit cage for donation. I know you do amazing work, and Ellen and I were hoping to see the older cage put to good use.

Many thanks for your help and for the wonderful work that you do. Moreover, thank you for helping to bring Wally into our lives.

Best,

Joshua and Ellen

Photo: Marianne DeMarco



Ruby.

Ruby

Ruby was adopted at the Whiskers in Wonderland event in mid-December by Marianne DeMarco, who sent us this email in February.

Ruby is amazingly wonderful and really is a great companion to my cat Viktor. Viktor has stopped biting me (a big, big problem)

ever since she became a part of the household. There was no fear on Ruby's part. In fact, I have a video of their first meeting. She hopped right up to him and sniffed him out. Viktor just kept backing up, trying to get away, until he relented and let himself be sniffed. Too cute.

Again, thanks so much!

Marianne DeMarco

HE'S NOT AN EASTER TOY.

HE'S A REAL, LIVE, 10-YEAR COMMITMENT.

It's that time of year again. Pet store windows are filled with adorable baby bunnies. Your kids are begging you to buy one. It's so hard to resist. After all, you think, wouldn't this be the perfect, low-maintenance "starter pet" for a young child?

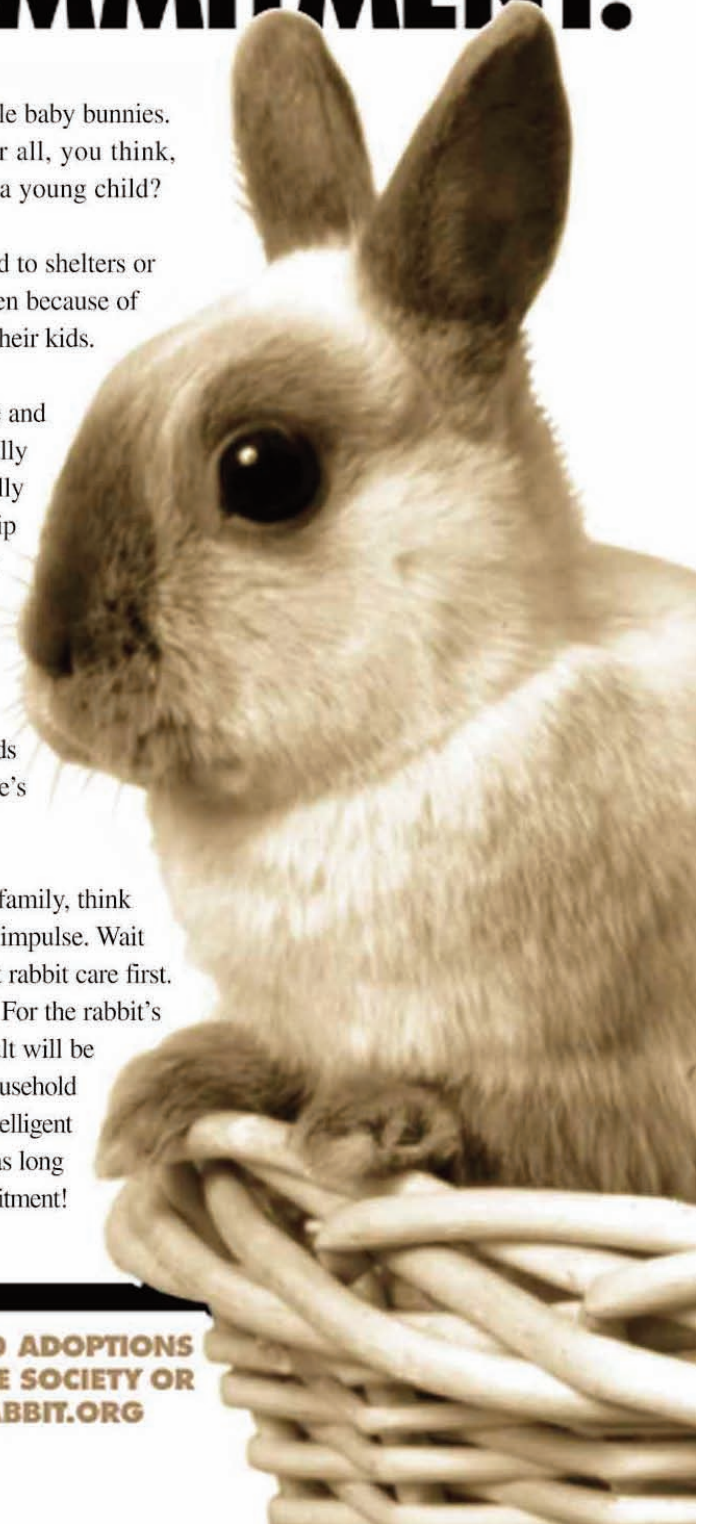
Think again! Every year, many thousands of rabbits are abandoned to shelters or released outdoors (a sure death sentence for a domestic rabbit), often because of misunderstandings on the part of the parents who bought them for their kids.

Rabbits are prey animals by nature. They are physically delicate and fragile, and require specialized veterinary care. Children are naturally energetic, exuberant and loving. But "loving" to a small child usually means holding, cuddling, carrying an animal around in whatever grip their small hands can manage — precisely the kinds of things that make most rabbits feel insecure and frightened. Rabbits handled in this way will often start to scratch or bite, simply out of fear. Many rabbits are accidentally dropped by small children, resulting in broken legs and backs. Those rabbits who survive the first few months quickly reach maturity and are no longer tiny and "cute." Kids often lose interest, and the rabbit, who has no voice to remind you he's hungry or thirsty or needs his cage cleaned, is gradually neglected.

Parents, please help! If you're thinking about adding a rabbit to your family, think about this: pet rabbits have a life span of 7-10 years. Don't buy on impulse. Wait until after the holiday. Make an informed decision by learning about rabbit care first. Consider adopting a rabbit from your local shelter or rescue group. For the rabbit's health and well-being (as well as for your child's), make sure an adult will be the primary caretaker and will always supervise any children in the household who are interacting with the rabbit. Domestic rabbits are inquisitive, intelligent and very social by nature. A rabbit is a delightful companion animal as long as you remember: he's not a child's toy. He's a real, live, 10-year commitment!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RABBIT CARE AND ADOPTIONS
IN YOUR AREA, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HUMANE SOCIETY OR
VISIT THE HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY AT WWW.RABBIT.ORG**

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Rabbit-Savvy Veterinarians

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

Long Island:

Jennifer Saver, DVM

Laura George, DVM

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

Heidi Hoefler, DVM

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

Jeff Rose, DVM

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

Manhattan:

Becky Campbell, DVM

Deborah Levison, DVM

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

Katherine Quesenberry, DVM

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

Manhattan (continued):

Alexandra Wilson, DVM

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

Anthony Pilny, DVM

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

Shachar Malka, DVM

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

Westchester County:

Gil Stanzione, DVM

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

Laurie Hess, DVM

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

Licensed HRS Representatives

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

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

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

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

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

Kerstin Aumann, HRS Licensed Educator,
NYC/AC&C Volunteer,
nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com, nycacc.org

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training at large, New Fairfield, CT,
gabbysbunnies@yahoo.com, (203) 746-7548

Jennifer Saver, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

THUMP April 2011

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

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

ADOPTABLE RABBITS

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

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

AC&C rabbit volunteers' email address in New York City is nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

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

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

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

For basic information about rabbits as pets, go to www.rabbitcare.org, www.longislandrabbitrescue.org and the House Rabbit Society main site, www.rabbit.org.