



NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS APRIL 2012

FAMILY LIFE

Bunnies and Kids: Tips for Parents

By Kerstin Aumann

Unfortunately, rabbit-rescue volunteers field calls from individuals and families looking to find a new home for their rabbit all too often. Many of these calls come from expecting parents who are concerned about keeping their rabbit(s) beyond the baby's arrival. After all, many rabbit owners have at some point learned that rabbits and children can be a problematic combination, be it from personal experience or that of others. They may have even heard from their local rabbit-rescue group when they adopted their bunny that, contrary to

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BONDING

Speed Dating, NYC Bun-Style: Dancers, Athletes and Even a Brief Kiss

By Natalie L. Reeves

Through 16 seasons on television's "The Bachelor," not one of the eligible bachelors has actually married the woman he selected. Media analysts, bloggers and viewers have debated what is wrong, but none has offered the surefire solution for helping the show's contestants find marital bliss. "The Bachelor" needs Rabbit Rescue & Rehab's Cindy Stutts.

Cindy's years of volunteering with rabbits have rendered her an expert in their body language. When two or more rabbits are placed in a pen on a date, Cindy is an active observer. She knows which rabbits are more likely to bond and

which couples are destined to be enemies. If their body language indicates that one may act aggressively toward another, Cindy is ready to separate them before either bunny can be injured. Almost three years ago, Cindy convinced Petco to support rabbit adoptions by hosting homeless rabbits in some of their stores, and most recently, Petco agreed to provide a designated weekend speed-dating venue at its Columbus Avenue (at 100th Street) location.

Since the Saturday dating events are popular and require logistical planning, prospective adopters must make an

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Our masthead bunny, Tory, was abandoned outside an apartment complex in Astoria, Queens, with several other bunnies. She was hungry, dirty and very frightened, but is now radiantly healthy and enjoys watching TV on the couch with her foster mom. Would you like her to come watch TV with you?

She is available for adoption at www.LongIslandRabbitRescue.org.



Adult supervision.



Alex's friend is respectful and curious about Snowball.

FAMILY LIFE

Bunnies and Kids

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popular beliefs, rabbits aren't a good fit for families with very young children.

Fortunately, there are ways to make family life work for both bunny and baby. I know this from personal experience: When our son arrived, our family already included two bonded pairs of buns and, in the beginning, we had to make this work in a one-bedroom apartment in the city. We now have more space in our suburban home, but I found that many of the challenges remain the same. There never seems to be enough room or time, and there's no substitute for managing boundaries and relationships.

This article shares some of the questions, concerns and problems we've encountered along our parenting journey. Time and space were the biggest challenges, especially in the beginning. As our son grew from baby to toddler with his own social life, other issues rose to the surface.

1. **No room!** Yep, this problem is probably universal to all expecting parents – rabbit owners or not – in the New York area, where real estate comes at a hefty premium. As any good bunny parent knows, rabbits

need room to roam and play. But what if you don't want bun-bun to jump into your newborn's crib? Or chew up your baby's favorite blanket? Or get into a tug-of-war over a teething toy?

— **Each to his own.** Incidents like those described above can be prevented with careful planning and organization. First, it's important that baby and buns each have their own space, a place the other party cannot invade. If you have more than one room, declare one room as a "bunny-free, babies-only" zone. In our city apartment, this space was the bedroom. When we moved to our new home, the bunnies got a room of their own, just like our son.

This separation of space is as important for psychological reasons as for safety or hygiene. Adjusting to a new family member can be hard for everyone in the home, parents and pets included. With the psyche of a prey animal, rabbits always need a safe haven to which they can retreat for some peace and quiet.

Now, what if you only have one room? Chances are, you've been thinking about or looking for a bigger place since you first learned the news about your pregnancy. Moving to a new home is a great opportunity to think about ways to organize your new space around the

needs of all your family members. Sounds great, but what if you can't afford to move any time soon? Well, that's going to be tougher, but still workable. Give your rabbit as much space as possible with some toys, a hay-filled litter box and a hide box, and be sure to allow for daily exercise stints. Neat Ideas Cubes (used for shelving and storage) are a great low-cost choice to create a customized rabbit space to fit your home, and puppy pens can create effective room dividers. During exercise time, make sure all baby items are out of bunny's reach.

It may be difficult to provide as good a home to your rabbit as you want in a small apartment with a new baby. Maybe it breaks your heart to confine your previously free-roaming rabbit, or give her less space and exercise than you did before your baby. I certainly felt that way when I had to boot two of my buns out of the bedroom and made them share the living room with "the other bunnies." But your rabbits will gladly adjust to less room and attention, as long as it means they get to stay with you. Being put up for adoption or abandoned at a shelter is far more stressful and frightening for them than new boundaries or a crying infant in your home.

Also, when you have a baby, everything becomes a phase (e.g., colic, teething, crawling, says "no" a lot). In other words, life with an infant keeps on changing, and your family is likely to outgrow its "not enough space" phase eventually. Your rabbit may actually be waiting for an end to this phase more patiently than you; she just wants to remain part of the family she knows and trusts.

2. **No time!** That one's old news to parents everywhere, whether there's a pet in the home or not. Getting used to the fact that I was no longer in control over my schedule was a tough one for me (and many other new moms I met).

— **Divide and conquer.** This approach to time management has worked well for us. My husband took responsibility for cleaning the rabbits' condo, providing fresh water, hay and the all important breakfast pellets, while I tended to our

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Speed Dating

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appointment through nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com, and all bunnies must be spayed or neutered before they can participate. Cindy arranges for eligible homeless rabbits – residing at the public shelter, other Petcos or in foster homes – to be transported to the Columbus Avenue location for the Saturday sessions. Cindy always cautions that it is the rabbit, not the human, who chooses his or her friend.

On a recent Saturday at the store, interested bystanders congregated as bunny bachelors and bachelorettes waited to start their speed dates. First up was the beautiful Coco Lapin, daughter of Natalie Abell. Coco is under two years old and was looking for romance. She loves to dance, which is good since she has a weakness for dried papaya. Coco is fun-loving, but no pushover. She likes to throw things around, so she needed a boy who would complement her personality. Natalie was hoping that Coco would like bachelor Cecil, an adorable tiny bunny with a sweet disposition.

Cindy allowed the many eligible bachelors and bachelorettes to inspect their dating turf before the dates began. After each bunny had his or her own time in the penned area, Cindy put Coco and Cecil together. These two single bunnies delighted everyone by having a great first date. Cecil seemed to think he was the boss, as he presented his head to Coco to groom. Luckily, Coco wasn't put off by Cecil's assumption that he should get a first-date kiss, and she complied by kissing his little forehead. This duo appeared to be destined to be together, but Cindy recommended that Coco play the field a bit before she took Cecil home as her life partner.

Coco then met Louie, a black bunny with white feet, and Joseph, an athletic brown bunny known for his ball-playing talent. Coco was a little lady and kind to all her suitors, but it seemed that her



Photos: Natalie L. Reeves

Nervous mom Natalie Abell talking to Cindy about Coco and Cecil.

heart belonged to Cecil. Natalie adopted Cecil and reports that he is doing well in his new home. Coco and Cecil have not yet bonded, but, as with human relationships, often the most lasting marriages are those that proceed cautiously.

Bunny bachelors were in luck because there was another beautiful girl waiting to be courted: Cassidy, who was chaperoned by her dad, Dave Orna. Cassidy is a black-and-white lop who made an appearance at the October rabbit conference in Westchester. At that time, her parents were trying to bond her with their other two rabbits, so they brought all three bunnies to the conference for an attempt at bonding a trio. Unfortunately, the three never bonded and Cassidy remained single and looking for love.

Like Coco, Cassidy is an accomplished dancer who specializes in crazy binkies. Her dad said she pouts when she is lonely, and that she watches the two other bunnies in her house through a Plexiglas divider. On this day, Cassidy wasn't destined to find her true love. She was angry and thumping so strongly that Cindy didn't introduce her to other bunnies because doing so would have been dangerous. Perhaps Cassidy is



Cassidy.

happy as a single girl in the city, but Cindy told Dave not to give up hope. After seeing Cassidy's reaction, Cindy didn't feel like the bachelors in attendance were suitable – but as the consummate matchmaker, Cindy told Dave she had other potential suitors in mind.

If you have a single rabbit, consider making a speed-date appointment. The dates and expert matchmaking advice are free and could bring lasting love to your bunny. Just like real life, not every bunny will find his or her true love that first day, but most find companions whom they eventually will love forever. It takes patience, but the result is worth the effort.

Bunnies and Kids

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son. I served the dinner salad and a treat before bedtime. Doesn't sound like a fair distribution of labor? Well, initially the responsibility of caring for our newborn fell largely on me. As our son grew older and more independent, our responsibilities shifted and rabbit-care responsibilities were renegotiated – again, think of everything as a phase. I never truly understood the phrase “they grow up so fast” until I had a child.

You'll want to savor those early years with your child. But you're busy being a parent, making a living, etc., and the last thing you need is to make sure bunny's litter box is clean and filled with hay, right? Understandable, but that doesn't make it okay to simply eliminate rabbit-care responsibilities from your to-do list. You may be able to pick up some valuable, timesaving tips from fellow rabbit owners and parents. For example, line the litter box with old newspapers and put hay on top. To clean, simply roll up the whole mess in the paper and throw out. By the way, did you know you can order bunny supplies, including Oxbow hay and pellets, from the same website where you order diapers? (Simply click on the “wag.com” tab while shopping for baby supplies at [diapers.com](#). With a shared shopping cart and free shipping on orders over \$50, stocking up on supplies for your family can hardly be more convenient.)

As a conscientious parent, you may feel guilty about spending less time with your rabbits in favor of time with your baby, and vice versa. I've been there, too. Trust me, your rabbit is okay with less time and attention, as long as his basic needs are met. He may be bored, so consider getting him some new stimulating toys – or better yet, adopt him a partner rabbit. Given that rabbit bonding can be a time-consuming and challenging process, it's best to do this before your baby arrives. Once baby is

born, you'll want to hold off on adding any new family members, including a friend for your bunny, for a while.

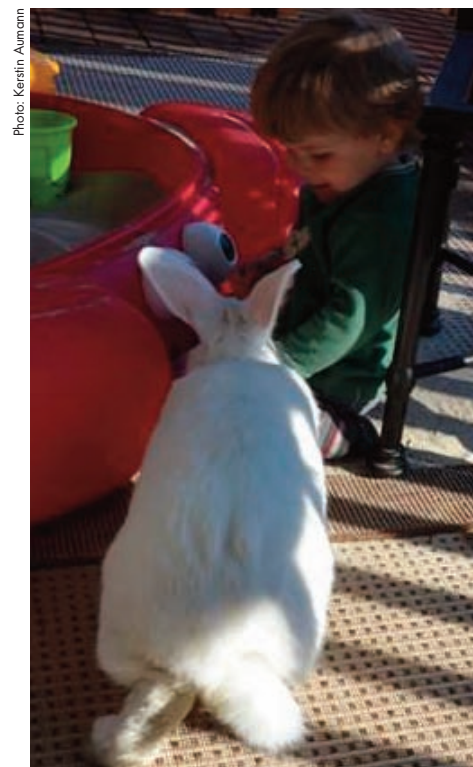
3. No money! Raising kids is expensive. Covering bills for both the pediatrician and the vet can quickly add up, in addition to ongoing costs like diapers and hay. Plus, you're probably trying to save money for college or for that bigger home.

— **Find opportunities to save.** Buying in bulk saves money on diapers, baby formula – and bunny food. You can order hay and pellets in bulk. For example, we buy a bale of Timothy hay and break it up into smaller chunks for storage. If you know other rabbit owners in your neighborhood, you may be able to share bulk quantities of hay and pellets. You can save at the supermarket by asking for discarded, still-fresh greens (e.g., carrot tops). There's no need to buy special bedding for the litter box; old newspapers will do just fine and make the clean-up process easier. There's also no need to purchase expensive bunny treats – they do more harm than good – or fancy toys. A toilet-paper core filled with hay is a cheap way to entertain your bunny.

It helps to establish an emergency fund for your rabbit to cover unexpected vet bills. A little bit can add up to a lot, if you collect your spare change for the bunny fund. The same, of course, goes for the college or “new home” fund. The key is to start early and be consistent. That way, even small savings can grow into a respectable college/new home fund over time.

4. Rabbits and children don't mix! You may worry about your child, or her friends, getting bitten or scratched by your rabbit, but the fact is that injuries are more likely to be inflicted by kids to rabbits (accidentally or otherwise). Rabbits have frail bone structures that are no match for a toddler's energy and enthusiasm.

— **Supervise your toddler (and his friends).** This will come as no surprise to any one who has parented a young child.



Snowball approaching Alex, tickling his hand with his whiskers.

Toddlers seem to have an amazing knack for attracting trouble and injuries, whether there is a rabbit in the home or not. Supervise your toddler at all times he's around rabbits. Lead by example and teach him to be gentle. Our 20-month-old son loves our rabbits. He knows them by name and loves to offer them snacks. He always tries to imitate what we do and he easily picks up on our cues about how he should interact with the rabbits. As a result of close supervision and role modeling, our rabbits and our son have become very comfortable around each other. Our rabbits always have a safe hide-out when our son is around them, which gives them an opportunity to let their curiosity guide them in getting to know our son. Our son has learned that the rabbits will approach him on their own terms.

When other children visit our home, we apply the same combination of supervision and role modeling. Kids love to learn new things and they absorb information like sponges, even if you think they're not ready to understand. We explain

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why bunny gets scared when you chase after him, or why she may bite when you stick your finger inside the condo. I was surprised to learn how quickly even very young children “get it.”

— Leverage your bunny-proofing skills.

As a savvy rabbit owner, you know about the importance of bunny-proofing your home. Those efforts and skills come in handy when it’s time to kid-proof. In fact, a bunny-proofed home is a pretty good starting place for a kid-proofed home.

In sum, as your family grows, be thoughtful about managing boundaries, time, resources and relationships. As a bunny parent, you’re already ahead of the curve in the parenting game and your ever-evolving family responsibilities. As a parting thought, I encourage you to reach out to your local rabbit community for support and advice on making family life work for you and your rabbit. The Rabbit Rescue & Rehab volunteers are happy to share tips and experiences, and can connect you with other bunny and baby parents.

Help Needed!

We are looking for volunteers to help out at the Union Square and Lexington Avenue Petcos. Bunnies living at the stores come from the Manhattan shelter and will be adopted out to good homes. Every day a volunteer comes in to clean the cages, exercise and feed the buns, and talk with the public. There are two buns living at each Petco. We will provide training. All that is required is enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and the ability to make a commitment of about two hours each week. If you want to help, please contact Marcie at mfrish57bun@yahoo.com.

Photo: Robert Kulka



Lolita.

Bunny Profile of the Month – April 2012 Lolita

By Robert Kulka

This month we are speaking to Lolita. Lolita is a rabbit currently residing at the Petco on 86th Street and awaiting adoption.

Hello Lolita. Thank you so much for talking to us today. We have some profile questions we are going to be asking you so that our readers get to know you a bit better.

Lolita: Hello. I am very excited to be selected for the profile. I must admit I love the attention.

Where are you from?

Lolita: Well, my family was a bit large and we moved around a bit. The last place I remember was being on Staten Island. Of course, it was a bit scary there for my brothers and sisters and me. We were living outside and things were a bit challenging.

You do know where you spent your early years?

Lolita: Not really. I think I am about a year old now. I am not even sure where I got my name. I like my name, don’t you?

It is very pretty and suits you.

Lolita: Thank you.

Where are you living now?

Lolita: Right now I live in a condo on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. That is only a temporary arrangement. I expect to find a forever home any day now.

Tell us a bit about your likes and dislikes. What are your favorite foods?

Lolita: I love greens. Almost any kind of greens. I particularly like Brussels sprouts and basil and dandelion. But I do like the occasional carrot bits and, for dessert, a little slice of apple or banana. But I don’t eat too many sweet things. I must keep my figure.

What is your favorite pastime?

Lolita: By far, I love to run and binky the most. I like to see how high I can jump and how fast I can run around. I have a lot of energy and when I have exercise time out of the condo, I really enjoy it. But I do like a nice nap where I can just flop over on my side and rest.

What would you like to accomplish in your life?

Lolita: I really don’t aspire to fame and fortune, you know? Lots of other buns

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Interview: Lolita

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might want to be stars or celebrities. I just want to love someone and have them love me back unconditionally.

Tell me about your eyes.

Lolita: Oh yes, pretty aren't they? They are like rubies sitting in sapphires. And here is a little secret. When I look at the world, it all looks beautiful to me. Like I was looking through rose-colored glasses, I think is the phrase.

What would be your ideal home?

Lolita: Nothing too special. A place that is comfortable and safe where I can rest, eat, sleep and play without fear. A place where I can watch the rest of the family and socialize with them. Mostly, if the home is filled with love I would love it.

What about bonding?

Lolita: Well, I come from a large family, so I am used to sharing. I am also pretty brave usually. So I would like to live with another bun and have a buddy. That would be nice.

What would you like to tell the readers?

Lolita: I guess if I were to tell the readers something, it is don't judge me based on things you have heard, or made-up stories about rabbits. Truth is, we are really great to be around and provide so much fun, enjoyment and lots of giggles for just a little bit of effort on the part of our human partners.

What advice have you gotten in the past that was important?

Lolita: Well, my friend Franklin (he is being adopted and I am so excited) told me not to give up hope. When the right forever home is available for me, it will be wonderful. So be patient, keep a good attitude and before you know it, you will be home with someone who loves you. I think he was very smart. He was almost five years old, you know, so he has lots of life experience.

What is your favorite book?

Lolita: I think I would have to say I have two. "Stories Rabbits Tell" by Susan

Photo: Robert Kulika



Lolita lounging.

Davis and Margo Demello. But I also love to read "The Runaway Bunny" over and over. It is so lovely.

What is your favorite movie?

Lolita: I should probably say "Hop." But really I love "Who Framed Roger Rabbit." You know, "I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way."

Favorite song?

Lolita: I love Michael Bublé. I think he is so dreamy. Almost anything he sings. But mostly, "I Haven't Met You Yet."

Favorite TV show?

Lolita: I love TV. I really like most of anything on National Geographic Channel or Animal Planet. But I would watch NCIS on USA Network around the clock if I could.

Who would you like to meet someday?

Lolita: That is hard to say. I guess maybe my mom, but I don't think that will happen. I have to realize that who I am is so much a part of my mom, and that when I look at myself, I see her in me.

Now a few quick but harder questions.

Lolita: Okay. Fire away.

Treasured possession?

Lolita: I think I would have to say my hidey house. I love to stretch out inside it.

Secret Pleasure?

Lolita: Sweets. But as I said, I have to be careful with my weight.

What do you dislike about your appearance?

Lolita: I like myself mostly. But if I have to say, my bunny butt looks big from certain angles.

Living person you most admire?

Lolita: Meryl Streep and all the Rabbit Rescue Volunteers.

Greatest Fear?

Lolita: I will be forgotten.

Motto?

Lolita: Have a dream and don't let anyone tell you it won't come true.

Thank you so much for talking to us and for your honesty. Hopefully people will better understand you and your other eligible adoptees.

Lolita: It was my pleasure. I really enjoyed it. Will I have a picture with the interview? I would like final say on which one, if so.

A Bronx Bunny Tale – Trapping Rabbits

Photo: Mary Christine Basile



Dave setting up mini corral to catch Zeus among the trash.

Those of us who regularly read the nycbuns postings on Yahoo aren't surprised when we see, "Bunny on the loose. Help needed." Many read that and wonder, "Boy, catching those 'liberated' bunnies must be difficult and require special skills."

It can be a daunting task, but with the right tools and people it is possible to rescue abandoned rabbits in these problematic outdoor situations. The latest Bronx rescue operation started in late January when an ASPCA representative alerted Mary Cotter to a sighting of four to five rabbits near Exit 5 of the Bronx River Parkway South. The temperature was plunging and snow was falling. Who could help and how?

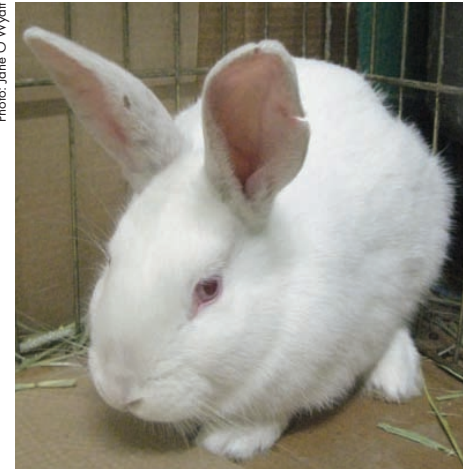
This is a true story about four determined bunny advocates, who with the help of their friends and relatives, formed an 11-member team for a bunny-saving expedition in the Bronx. Vivian Barna of Queens spearheaded the effort in collaboration with Holly Gruskay, Menyten Marques and Mary Christine Basile from Westchester County.

First, we surveyed this forsaken spot. It is an extensive shoulder off the Bronx River Parkway leading down to train tracks, with thorny vines, garbage and hundreds of places for bunnies to hide. Amid this surreal scene, we brainstormed and plotted our next step. We decided to create a central feeding place, and we left hay and veggies in the same location on several visits.

Our options for catching the bunnies included using either pens or traps. Our first efforts with makeshift pens didn't work, so we borrowed and set five live Tomahawk humane traps. We took turns checking the traps every few hours. During Menyten's afternoon shift, she encountered the first of the four buns to be rescued this way. The rabbit, a gorgeous gray chinchilla, was given the name Marlow. Lots of hope and excitement followed, but despair quickly set in two days later when the traps were stolen.

So we moved on to Plan B. The group met on a Sunday to catch the bunnies, armed for success with multiple pens,

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Zeus at AC&C.

carriers and fresh greens. Two buns appeared! A tremendous group effort ensued to surround and corral one of the buns using multiple linked pens, and then Mary Christine's boyfriend, Dave, braved the thorny bushes with his unfortunate gloveless hands to pick the bunny up. We had caught Sheridan, a lovely white-and-gray male who spent a few days in Holly's office rehabbing (and eating everything in sight) before heading to Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C), where he was neutered. He was adopted only a few days after arriving at the shelter.

In all of the excitement surrounding Sheridan and his capture, the third bunny on the scene, a small white rabbit with red eyes and a torn ear, saw the commotion and disappeared. A week later, while searching for this third little guy for over an hour, empty-handed and dejected, we were just about to leave when we checked ONE LAST spot. The white rabbit appeared. Five pens, eight people, some banana, a few commanding yells here and there, maneuvering, a standoff (while he chomped on some leaves) – and then one hour later, BINGO, into the carrier he went. This was Zeus, the Wildman.

Over the next few days, various search missions were undertaken at the site.

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Trapping Rabbits

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There was still at least one more rabbit to capture, but we couldn't find any clues leading us to this bunny. We figured that if there were another rabbit, he or she could have gone down the hilly area and onto the train tracks. Leaving no stone or empty beer can unturned, we went across the train tracks to a Verizon yard, thinking that it was a long shot, but we had to try. Two days later, a caring employee called us. Bunny No. 4 existed. We went back with newly purchased traps, which Vivian secured with locks and chains. A few days later, Snow White was caught. She was a beautiful big girl who is now living with a family in a brownstone on the Upper West Side. Eventually all of the four bunnies rescued from this area were adopted into loving homes.

What our team can attest to is that this effort succeeded because of group cooperation and perseverance, even when the chips were down. For anyone interested in trapping abandoned domestic rabbits we advise:

1. **Do research and be prepared:** Scope out the area first. Rabbits will usually stay within the same vicinity, but are most likely hiding when not feeding. Always arrive with greens, banana, carriers and pens, just in case you spot them. You don't want to lose an opportunity because you were missing the necessary tools. Go easy on the banana. The foremost health problem may be dehydration, so provide lots of water for the bunnies – at the spot and after capture.
2. **Have a strategy/plan:** If working in a group, always set the rules and strategy in advance. Confirm who will do what and when. Be prepared to shift the plan midstream as necessary. To avoid confusion, have one leader who will be in charge of the operation.
3. **If setting traps:** Set out food in the same place for a couple of days. If you



Dave and Snow White.

have the luxury, withhold food for a day or half day to make the food left in the traps more alluring. Set a trap or two (chain them to something stationary and lock them) in the feeding area. Cover most of the trap, except for the entrance, with a towel or blanket. Bait can be food balls made from a small piece of banana mashed with pellets, greens and hay. This is placed in the back of the trap. Don't leave traps unattended for long periods of time; you have to ensure the safety of the trapped rabbit by rescuing the animal without delay.

4. **If using pens:** If the rabbits come out regularly and you can spot them, work in a group and always bring lots of pens. It is best to connect pens together and have sets of connected pens to use when surrounding a rabbit within a large area. Have banana in hand as well as a carrier at your side. Plan in advance to whom and where the bun will go. Do not scare the rabbits with loud yelling or chasing that will cause them to run off. However, you can gently shoo the rabbits toward the pens, while others holding the ends of the pens can surround the rabbits safely.

5. **Never give up or leave any stone unturned:** If our group had ended our

efforts when we were discouraged, we wouldn't have caught all of the rabbits.

If you wish to borrow Tomahawk humane traps, email vivianbarn@gmail.com (\$100 refundable deposit) or you can purchase them directly from Tomahawk. They are very easy to use.

Holly Gruskay, Mary Christine Basile, Vivian Barna and Menyten Marques contributed to this article.

Forever Homes Found!

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Flower Pot, Beauty, Ruby, Haley, Happy, Sheridan, Madison, Bambam, Milton, Marlena, Hunter, Amber, Thorndike, Elsie, Marlow, Gretel, Jocelyn, Leandra, Norton and Trixie, Pia, Joulie, Glenn, Snow White, Caramel, Eli, Chloe, Jellybean, Heather, Cecil, Bonnie, Wilma, Joseph, Bluebelle, Lin, Kale, Tito, Allegra, Bun Bun, Caroline, Franklin, Delilah, Share, Honey and Tandy, Starbuck, Patience, Cookie, Deniro, Leslie.

Niamh and Nellie: Second Chance at Love – And How a Little Girl Learned to Stand on Her Own Four Feet

By Astrid Hesse

Rough Beginnings

Niamh and Nellie were rescued in November from a Manhattan rooftop. The situation was so stressful that one of the girls almost died (see December 2011 Thump, pages 7-8).

The beginning of their recovery was bumpy. Not being used to much human interaction, both girls were skittish. Niamh was the more outgoing of the two; within days, she came to love being petted. If I stopped, she would shove her head underneath my hand or tug on my clothing asking for more.

Nellie, on the other hand, didn't want to leave her hiding place. When she did, I felt like holding my breath, afraid to make a wrong move that would send her flying back into hiding. Little by little, she started to enjoy gentle head scratches. It took several more weeks before she would tolerate full body massages.

Initially, handling either one of the girls for necessary grooming was out of the question. Nellie had badly matted fur when she was found, but it seemed best to give the girls time to adjust to their surroundings before attempting anything. Even though they both had become accustomed to being gently petted, they were terrified of being handled. While in my arms or lap, they would frantically dig and bite at everything within reach. Little Nellie would go into such a panic that she even whimpered and cried. After two or three weeks I slowly started pulling the mats out of Nellie's coat and clipping the girls' nails – doing a little at a time to keep stress at a minimum.

Adjusting their diet proved to be another challenge. They had been fed a poor-quality seed-pellet mix and they didn't enjoy the switch to Timothy pellets. Even after I had manually picked out all

the worst bits and mixed their old pellets with the new, they knew how to separate one from the other. It took almost a month before they accepted the high-quality pellets.

Luckily, they weren't picky when it came to fresh greens. They ate everything put in front of them, and they certainly didn't need to be taught what treats were! The first time the girls heard the rustle of a plastic treat bag, both came flying at me. I wondered whether their obsession with food, especially high-caloric items such as treats and seeds, could be a consequence of their life on the roof. They may not have had a regular feeding schedule, and possibly went from periods of not having food to times when food was provided, during which they needed to make the most of what was offered.

Going Separate Ways

As Niamh became more comfortable, her larger-than-life personality took over and she started bullying Nellie more and more. Niamh never bit or hurt Nellie, but constantly chased her. It had taken Nellie seven weeks to gather enough courage to set a foot outside her pen, just to be chased right back inside by Niamh.

The harassment got to the point where it seemed as if Nellie might be better off

on her own. So I decided to separate the girls. Meanwhile I had been playing with the idea of bonding my five-and-a-half-year-old bachelor, Shlomo, with an eligible friend. In the past, I had unsuccessfully tried to bond him with my other boy (now happily bonded to a girlfriend), and then, more recently, with a young, energetic lady. Thinking the third time might be the charm, I decided to give Niamh a try. To my surprise, Shlomo and Niamh got along almost right away. In the beginning, Shlomo made a few faint-hearted attempts at nipping, but Niamh was quick to counter with pacifying grooming "attacks." From that point on, it took very little to convince Shlomo that the concept of having a girlfriend wasn't such a bad idea after all. The big "firsts" of bonding still made me very nervous – the first night together, the first day together while I was at work – but all went well.

Now Niamh and Shlomo are adorable partners in crime. As if she wasn't already causing enough mischief on her own, Niamh also has picked up a number of Shlomo's less desirable habits. They rarely leave each other's side and frequently indulge in mutual grooming and snuggling sessions. Niamh has retained

(Continued on page 10)

Niamh and Shlomo.



Photo: Astrid Hesse



Nellie.

RESCUE AND REHAB

Second Chance at Love

(Continued from page 9)

her bossy attitude but somehow Shlomo seems to know that it's mostly for show. Curiously enough, she presents that same "brave bunny" show toward humans. A stretched out hand is always greeted with what seems to be an attack: lunging with a stiff body, ears flat, tail up; but once she reaches it, she usually re-evaluates and instead presents her head for petting. She will often sit on the floor next to me, or sometimes even visit me on the couch, and blissfully drift off into dreamland as I am petting her, demanding more if the petting stops. If I haven't spent one-on-one time with her in awhile, she'll follow my every step – and more than once I almost tripped over her trying to get from point A to point B. She is a delightful rabbit to have around, and one who comes with an endearing amount of diva attitude.

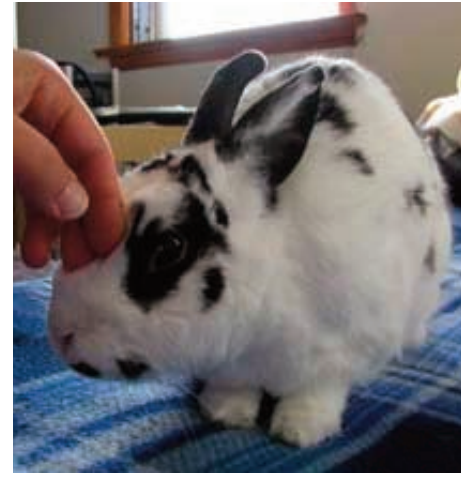
Nellie Explores the World

Separating the two girls hadn't been an easy decision. A rabbit who is distrustful of humans often finds a sense of security by having the company of another rabbit. The constant intimidation by Niamh, however, had made little Nellie fearful of her partner. Often she would run away as soon as she saw Niamh approach, or she would sit frozen to the spot with her eyes bulging in fear.

Not having seen Niamh and Nellie interact before their rescue, it is hard to tell whether their relationship was harmonious to begin with. Maybe the roof they had been living on just happened to be big enough to suppress feelings of territorialism in Niamh, or maybe the newfound comfort of a home with predictable routines and regular feedings was just something she wasn't quite willing to share. Luckily, Nellie took the separation in stride. Within a day or so, she was roaming her room freely, sniffing and chinning everything, and making a few feeble attempts at binkying. When a week or two later, Niamh managed to sneak through my feet into Nellie's room, the formerly shy and timid girl chased a visibly stunned Niamh right back out.

Nellie has adjusted to household routines. She will impatiently rattle the door of her pen to be let out in the mornings and afternoons, and perform happy dances as soon as I return with pellets or salad. Taking advantage of her obsession with treats, I trained Nellie to touch a target stick – or so I thought. In reality, it was probably Nellie who had tricked me into giving her more of her beloved treats, as the following story shows:

I had been trying to get Nellie to put on some weight. I provided her with unlimited Timothy pellets, but she would never consume more than one-quarter cup in a 24-hour period. I decided to add higher-calorie alfalfa pellets to her diet. In the mornings I put



the bowl of Timothy pellets in front of her, as before, and then offered her some alfalfa pellets from my hand. Nellie has since turned this into our morning routine and made this her example of "how to train a human." She will excitedly greet my arrival with the bowl of Timothy pellets, give the bowl a disapproving sniff, and then nudge my hand as if to ask, "Don't you have anything better to offer?" Obliging, I walk over to the container with her alfalfa pellets, with Nellie dancing around my feet. As soon as I sit down, she puts her front paws in my lap and leisurely finishes her special serving.

Nellie now also enjoys being petted, or just sitting close to me. She is still quick to run for cover when I first approach, but she is just as quick to come out of hiding when she realizes there is nothing to fear. She isn't shy about begging for treats and will go to great lengths to obtain the desired object, including jumping onto the couch, pawing at my clothes, and grunting at me. She always keeps her escape route open, just in case that treat may have been intended as a trap, which I have to admit, it sometimes is. After all, nails need to be trimmed and her coat brushed every so often. Nellie still is not, and likely never will be, comfortable with being picked up. Yet she has come a long way in the few short months she has been with me, and I am thankful for every ounce of trust she is willing to give.

February Was a Great Month for Our Rescued Bunnies

Our February adoption events at several Petco stores were a resounding success. February was Adopt a Rescued Rabbit Month, so we made a special effort to organize events that would educate potential adopters and find homes for our foster bunnies, as well as the rabbits at the Manhattan shelter and at Petco locations.

The first big event, on Saturday, Feb. 11, took place at the Upper East Side Petco store on Lexington Avenue between 86th and 87th streets. We posted signs in the store for this “rabbit rally” and also publicized it on Facebook (Big Apple Bunnies and volunteers’ personal pages), our rabbitcare.org home page, and via the nycbuns Yahoo listserv.

The Feb. 11 event began in the early afternoon, with foster bunnies transported to the store and placed in 10-12 large cages set up just inside the front entrance, where cat adoptions usually take place. We talked with store customers about rabbits as pets and we distributed literature for potential adopters to take home. (To make room for our bunnies, the Anjellice Cats Rescue volunteers spent the day at another Petco location.) Volunteers who helped with the bunnies were Will Leung (who brought a huge bag of Oxbow hay), Jennifer Case, Cathy Zelonis, Maddy DeLeon, Susan Lillo and Nora Beard, who came early to help set up. Cindy Stutts and Amy Odum, meanwhile, supervised bunny speed dates in two large puppy pens at the back of the store.

Six rabbits were adopted. Bambam, Madison and Marlana were adopted as partner bunnies (for Ellie, Pajamas and Moses, respectively) and the others adopted were Hunter, Amber, Marlana and Milton. Hunter went home with a civil court judge who also has some horses and who used to have a TV show in Canada, and Milton was adopted by to a family in Brooklyn who had been in contact with Cindy. Marlana went home with Claire Gollick, and Amber’s adopter was Amanda Cunniff. One

friendly couple at the event, Wendy and Craig Giuffre, agreed to foster five babies.

“It was a very busy, bustling day,” said Cathy Zelonis. “Many people had questions or just enjoyed looking at all the bunnies. Some of the kids wanted to pet the rabbits, and other kids just wanted to look. One little girl insisted that she didn’t want to stop petting the rabbit, and she was never going to get tired of doing it.”

Many store customers went home with information that they might use in the future.

“One woman from Europe was with her son, who was about nine years old,” Cathy said. “They were lovely people, and she was telling me about her sister who is still over there. She and her family have a rabbit who won’t come out of the cage. The way they get him out is to lift him out by the ears. I explained that it shouldn’t be done; it hurts the rabbit, and he doesn’t want to come out because he’s scared. She was very receptive to this, and she said that she would tell her sister. I gave her Thump and showed her the address of rabbit.org, so her sister can check it out. She’s going to send the information to her.”

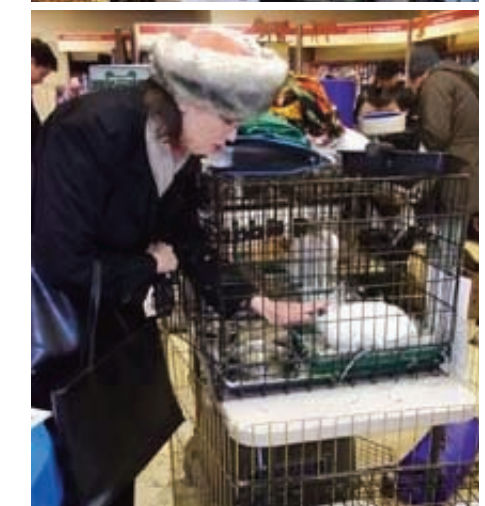
Cathy also met a couple who had just moved to New York from Philadelphia and have an 11-year-old rabbit. “They wanted to know a good vet, so I gave them advice about that.”

Jennifer Case called the Feb. 11 event “an enormous success and a whirlwind of emotion.” She added, “As a relatively new volunteer, it was my first time being around that many bunnies. It took me a few minutes to get past that excitement so I could talk to customers. Even then, I still snuck into pens for snuggle breaks.”

In the first hour, Jennifer’s foster bun, Marlana, was adopted. “Even though I had prepared for it emotionally, it was

(Continued on page 12)

Top, Jennifer and Will; below, visitors petting the bunnies.



Petco Photos: Susan Lillo

February Was a Great Month

(Continued from page 11)

hard to say goodbye,” she said. “The bunnies who didn’t get adopted still had many admirers and were very cute and well-behaved, giving rabbits a good reputation and everyone a better chance at a home next time.”

The highlight for Jennifer was spending over an hour with a 10-year-old boy and his father while the boy petted the bonded lionheads, Trixie and Norton. “The family had been planning to adopt a dog. Even if they end up rescuing a dog instead of a rabbit, I think it was wonderful to show this boy and his dad how cute and fun rabbits are. I always look forward to introducing people to the joys of bunnies.”

Because her foster bunny was adopted, Jennifer took home a pair of white lops to foster, Marshmallow and Mochi, who were part of a group of 13 rabbits rescued over the summer in Clove Lakes Park on Staten Island.

Other rabbit rallies took place the following weekend at the new West Side Petco store at Columbus Avenue and 100th Street, and also at the Union Square store and at Petco’s Unleashed store on Seventh Avenue in Brooklyn.

Marshmallow and Mochi spent the day at the Brooklyn store, along with Veronica Formus’s foster bunny, Snowball. Jennifer Case was on hand to help with the event. Mindy Jackson said, “We had some visits from past adopters who also may be

Petco Photos: Susan Lillo



Lexington Avenue Petco Manager Mark Bonner-Kehn, Cindy Stutts of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab and Assistant Manager Lee Domaszowec.

in the market for a bond at some point, and also a nice visit from a family whose bunny passed away after 14 years. It is too soon for another bunny, but they will most likely get in touch in the not-too-distant future and also the mother would like to volunteer at some point.”

At the Union Square store’s “rabbit rally” on Feb. 18, Amy Odum and Larry Marion introduced rabbits to the store customers. Larry said, “Amy and I set up four pens and, in addition to Shortcake and Joulie, Vivian Barna came by with her fosters, Asia and Becca, and Sue came by with her fosters, Norton and Trixie, who had a seriously interested adopter waiting to meet these two adorable lionheads. It was love at first sight and the woman, who is an experienced bunny mom, adopted them for their forever home!”

Meanwhile, at the Columbus Avenue location, Cindy Stutts said, “We kicked off the new location with a bang: three



The rabbit-loving dog Jack wore bunny ears to visit with Franklin at the Lexington Avenue Petco.

adoptions.” The three – Jocelyn, Gretel and Leandra – were all adopted as partner bunnies. Helping with the adoptions were volunteers Loraine Kopf, Nora Beard, Genevieve Hannon and Abigail Taylor.

The Columbus Avenue store has ordered rabbit condos so that rabbits can be there on a permanent basis, just as they are at the Upper East Side and Union Square stores. In addition, Cindy has begun scheduling Saturday speed dates at the Columbus Avenue store.

Sunday, Feb. 26, was another good day for Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. The Lexington Avenue Petco managers presented Cindy with a check from the Petco Foundation. Other groups receiving checks were Long Island Bulldog Rescue, Zani’s Furry Friends Pet Rescue, Social Tees Animal Rescue and Anjellicle Cats Rescue. The store’s assistant manager, Lee Domaszowec, said that he hoped to double the number of animals adopted at the store in 2012.

When a Female Rabbit Arrives at AC&C with a Young Litter...

She may already be pregnant with *another* litter because she can become pregnant a half hour after giving birth.

Before she is spayed, we verify that her kits are able to eat hay, pellets and greens and to drink water.

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Lara and her kits Chai, Perla, Arabelle, Bianca and Cappuccino were abandoned at a local Starbucks.



From top, Dr. Susan Brown, practicing clicker basics, attendee Amy Sedaris receives birthday cupcakes from Mary Cotter, dice and beans used in training.

Clicker Training, Taught by a Pro

About 20 rabbit volunteers and others gathered on a recent Sunday afternoon for a four-hour workshop on animal behavior and clicker-training basics.

Dr. Susan A. Brown, who is focusing on animal behavior and training after a long career as a veterinarian, flew in from her Chicago-area farm to lead the workshop. Introduced by Mary Cotter, Dr. Brown spent the afternoon discussing basic strategies for behavior modification. Her slide presentation was followed by group role-playing and practice in using clickers.

Dr. Brown said trainers should encourage animals to “make conscious choices for appropriate behavior.” She said her personal goal is to empower people and companion animals, adding that “animals thrive when they have some personal control over their environment.” Positive reinforcement is the best training tool, she said. She demonstrated these concepts using slides and videos of many animals she, and others, have trained, including alpacas, llamas, pigs, dogs, cats, chickens, ferrets, parrots, rabbits and tortoises. She talked of building trust with animals and learning their body language, in order to minimize fear and anxiety.

Punishments, on the other hand, teach an animal what you don’t want them to do. “We tend to focus on what we don’t want, and forget to reinforce what we DO want,” she said. “This leaves the animal forced to decide for himself how to get what he wants.” As a result, “Using punishment or negative reinforcement alone is a very poor strategy for behavior change, damaging the bond you have, creating anxiety, and leaving the animal guessing what will work.”

Dr. Brown talked about how she has made her many animals regard her as a “person of interest,” so that they want to be with her. She will call to them out in the field, and they quickly run to her, hoping for some kind words or a treat.

“Treats are powerful for training, especially in the beginning,” she said.

In introducing the basics of marker-based training, which can be achieved with a clicker, whistle, light or your voice, Dr. Brown mentioned the importance of reinforcing a particular behavior that you might want a rabbit to learn. The idea is to use a clicker when the behavior occurs, and then to offer a “reinforcer,” like a treat (very small piece of raisin, soft dried banana, food pellet, piece of vegetable), within one to two seconds.

The rabbit volunteers were paired at tables to practice the mechanics of clicking and then dispensing a small “treat” (in this case, beans) to their partners. Since time is of the essence in this type of training (the clicker is regarded as an “event marker” to signal to an animal that a certain behavior is desired), it’s important to master coordination of the clicker and the food reinforcer.

The next step was to learn ways of shaping a behavior by using a series of steps. Volunteers again worked in pairs, using clickers and small objects to pick up. Dr. Brown provided a number of videos as examples, showing, for instance, a rabbit that was being taught to jump into a basket or onto a small platform. This type of training can be achieved with a “target stick” – a type of wand with a plastic ball attached to one end. Later, an animal can be taught to produce a certain behavior when a cue is given.

Dr. Brown told the group that she hoped they had come away with “a few pearls to start to tweak your thinking a bit and look a bit differently at how to relate to your companion.” She added, “And above all, have fun with your companions. They have a lot to teach us about being present and enjoying the moment.”

Her website is [www.behaviorconnection.com./](http://www.behaviorconnection.com/)

Why Should I Adopt a Bonded Pair of Bunnies?

By Lisa Carley

Rabbits are very social creatures. Rabbits should live indoors with their human family and, ideally, a rabbit friend.

Don't get me wrong. A rabbit who lives in a one-bunny home can have a wonderful life. Some rabbits don't want another bunny in the house. Take, for example, Wabbit (my two-pound Jersey Woolly). He is the most dominant alpha male rabbit I've ever seen. He feels a profound sense of ownership over me. He feels it's his job to protect me; he doesn't even like human males coming into our house (too bad for him). I couldn't bond him to another rabbit, but he has a five-pound dog brother. They happily ignore each other – or Wabbit pushes the dog out of his way. (It is, after all, Wabbit's house.)

Most rabbits, though, are not Wabbit. They are animals craving attention and touch. While they certainly get that with a loving human family, they get it in a more recognizable form with a partner bunny.

I can't tell you how often an adopter comes to the shelter, and wants one

bunny. That same adopter often comes back a few months later, and wants a partner bunny. We applaud that, and happily do bunny-bonding sessions to facilitate it.

The down side is that the adopter now has to spend weeks developing that bond while the rabbits live in separate hutches. Soon enough they are "one," but it would have been so much easier, if the person adopted what they thought were "two."

There is nothing sweeter and easier on your conscience than a bonded pair of rabbits. Think of it as cuteness cubed, while effort is halved. Bonded rabbits live in the same space, eat from the same food and use the same litter box. And when you're not home, you know they're happy together.

So when you see a bonded pair available for adoption, think of it as less work for more reward. Spread the word to your not-so-bunny-savvy friends. They'll thank you for it.

(For more on partner bunnies and bonding, see pages 6-7 of the October 2009 Thump at rabbitcare.org.)

Below, Cosette and Sandrine (the runway models of the bunny world) were adopted together. Right, from top, Boomer and Athena, Venus and Serena, Jack and Janet, Brownie and Snow.

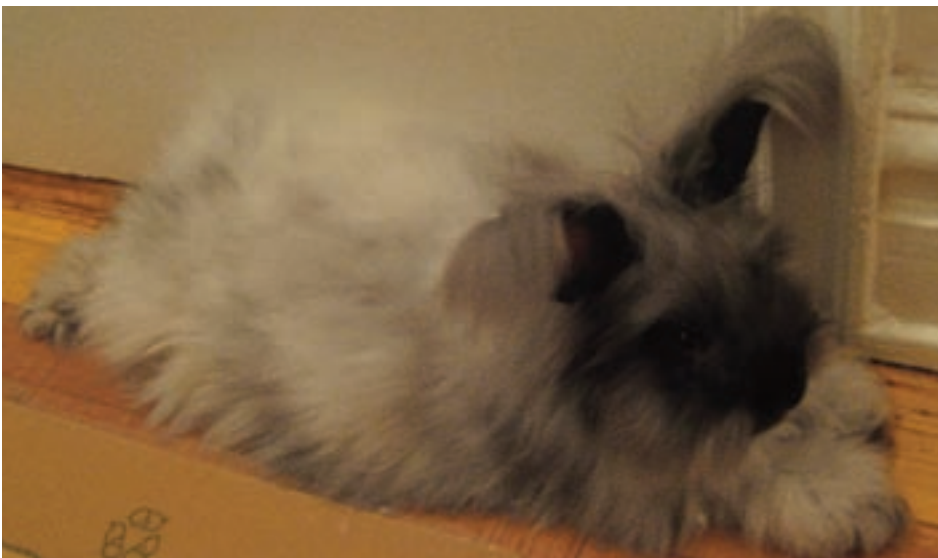


Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Photo: Lisa Carley





GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

RIP: Ariel, Stuart, Lavender

By Loraine Kopf

My 10-year old mini rex bunny, Ariel, passed over the rainbow bridge in mid-February from what we think was renal failure.

These past few months have been very difficult ones. I lost my four-year-old bunny, Stuart, in November, and then my beloved Lavender a month later. Both of them were so young, and it broke my heart to lose them.

I first saw Stuart, an English angora, at the Manhattan shelter. I was going to foster him, but he was adopted before I could do so. When he was returned, I simply had to bring him home. It was meant to be. Because I spin, I collected his hair when I groomed him three times a week. He liked to be groomed, and he would sit patiently on my lap, not moving, until I finished. I still have bags of his hair. He was 4 1/2 when he died from a stroke, Dr. Deborah Levison thinks.

Beautiful Lavender was an oyster-colored lop with the face of a Holland lop, but was much bigger. She was a smart girl who knew her name in three days. But she was also very feisty, and I spent a year bonding her with Abbie, another

feisty female. Lavender died at the age of 6 1/2 years from heart failure.

Ariel, meanwhile, was a very easygoing rabbit, and he had a good life. I found him as a three-inch baby in a pet store in Riverhead, Long Island, on Dec. 14, 2001, before my annual pre-Christmas dinner for close friends, and couldn't resist him. He was the most patient and lovable rabbit I ever had, kissing me whenever I groomed him, and never nipping at all.

Ariel was very good with his mate, Abbie. They were always grooming one another simultaneously, and it was cute to see them together, taking care of each other. As an old bunny, he was still climbing on Abbie, until a week before he died. (Bunnies will always be bunnies!)

When I came home after work on Feb. 16, Ariel was gone. Abbie was sitting next to him, mourning him. She and I will miss him. He was such a sweet rabbit.

I know that Ariel's life was a rich one, but I am saddened when I think of Stuart and Lavender, who were too young to die. Thank you to all the volunteers who have contacted me to offer their condolences.

Top, Ariel; middle, Lavender; bottom Stuart; bottom right, Lavender, Abby and Ariel.

Letters

Elijah

Taylor adopted Elijah in January. Here is an update on how he is doing.

Since I adopted Alijah, I have decided to change the spelling of his name to Elijah and I call him Eli for short.

He was a little scared at the beginning but is getting better! I have a big cage

for him in my vanity room, which is attached to my living room. So Eli is always the center of attention :) I let him out every day and have been getting him used to sitting on the couch with me. Yesterday he and I watched "Jurassic Park" together for awhile. He's such a sweetie and I can't wait to see how our relationship is going to grow!

Taylor



Photo: Taylor Mateman

Elijah.

Happy

Amy adopted Happy in early February, and sent us this update.

We wanted to give you an update on Happy. She has been with us for a week, and we honestly can't imagine our lives without her.

She is such a funny, inquisitive and, well, happy bunny! She is still going in her pen at night, but during the day she has the whole run of our place and has investigated every last nook and cranny. She isn't too fond of being picked up, but she likes to cuddle on the couch, and she has hopped into our laps several times (especially if we're eating carrots!).

She also knows her name and comes when she is called, if she's not too busy doing other important rabbit things, like playing with her toys. :)

All in all, we adore her and are so grateful for everyone's help with her adoption, particularly Marcie Frishberg, aka the rabbit whisperer, and Cathy Zelonis, her foster mother.

I'm including a picture of Happy with my daughter Rae. It's pretty obvious to see that both love the camera and each other. :)

Thanks again for all of your hard work and dedication.

Amy Cantwell



Photo: Amy Cantwell

Happy with Rae.

Rumi

Rumi, known previously as Elsie, was adopted by Rosalia in February. She sent this update to Jane O'Wyatt and Susan Lillo.

I hope this email finds you well. I just wanted to give you a quick update to let you know that Rumi is doing so well! He is just the sweetest little thing. I am so in love!! He is very playful and social, loves to be petted, and when I lay down by his cage he pops right out to sniff me and nibble on my toes. He also enjoys sitting on my back when I am lying down! And more recently, he'll run over and around me making soft grunting

noises, which – after doing a little research – I learned means he loves me.

I am surprised by how quickly he has started coming out of his shell, exploring his new home and getting used to all the different sounds my apartment makes. :) He is already very, very spoiled, and very clear about what he does and does not like: For example, he loves kale, carrots and bites of my apple, but does not really care for parsley. Rumi is also not a fan of walking on hardwood floors. He slips a lot when he gets too excited and runs so he usually hops very gently and cautiously. I initially threw blankets down for him to walk on but then got him a rug, as you suggested.



Photo: Rosalia Abreu

Rumi at home.

Attached is a picture of him tucked out after a night of fun. :) It is amazing to finally have him here with me. Thank you again for helping to make that happen.

Have a wonderful weekend!

Rosalia

(Continued on page 17)

Letters (Continued from page 16)

Milton

Milton was adopted in February by Kelly and her family. She sent this update.

Milton is doing great here. He gets along with the cats just fine. He's still



Photo: Kelly
Milton.

getting to know the house and he's a great bunny. :) I made him a little area of his own so that he can be comfortable. He is eating more and going to the bathroom in his box.

Thank you,
Kelly

Photo: Nichole Acosta



Slippers and Pajamas.

Slippers

Slippers, formerly known as Madison, was adopted by Nichole as a female partner for her boy rabbit Pajamas. Here is a brief note on how they are doing.

Thanks for checking in. Pajamas and his bunny, Slippers, are doing well – eating,

playing and grooming in side-by-side puppy-pen areas, and will be for a few weeks till she's fully healed from the spay surgery. Then we'll try a date in my bathroom. I hope to put an online video up on Facebook's Big Apple Bunnies telling about their love story.

Nichole

Photo: Helena Rodies



Lola.

Lola

Helena adopted Lola in January, and sent us this email about her.

Lola has been with me for almost one month now, but it's like I've known her for years. Whenever I come toward her, she binkies all around, and she loves to sit on the windowsill and make her bed on mine.

She loves treats like blueberries and bananas, and loves her pellets. As soon as I met her at the shelter for the first time, I knew that I would take her home.

She seems to understand me so much. One day I came home and let her out, and since I was having a bad day (bullying issues), I started crying. But then she came to me and licked my fingers. I suddenly felt like the happiest girl in the world.

Lola is my best friend, my baby, the one who will always be there. Even if she can't talk, we can understand each other.

Helena Rodies

(Continued on page 18)

Photo: Gabby and Esteban Pena



Bambam and Ellie.

Bambam

Bambam was adopted in February as a partner for a girl bun named Ellie. Liliana sent us a letter just after taking Bambam home.

Right now I'm giving the bunnies time to smell and get to know each other. I plan to go slow with their relationship. I'll keep you updated on their actions. Bambam is so sweet and cute. He already has stolen our hearts. He behaves very well, too. Thank you!!!

Liliana Pena

Letters (Continued from page 17)

Margaux

Amanda adopted Margaux, formerly known as Amber, in February, and she sent us this thank-you letter.

Attached is a photo of Amber, whom I renamed Margaux so that she may start a new life with a new name. I'd like to say thank you to NYC Metro Rabbit, Petco and to Margaux's foster mom for taking care of her.

Margaux is adapting well to her new home with her three new roommates (my roommates Haley and Nadia, and myself). She has the run of my bedroom and claimed it as her own as soon as she first set foot in it (or paw, rather).

She is a bossy but sweet lady with many admirers. She knows that she is a hot commodity so she doesn't just expect

Photo: Amanda Cunniff



Margaux.

love – she demands it with an expectant nudge. I'm very thankful to have her in my life and am very glad that we found each other.

Thank you,
Amanda Cunniff

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Joulie arrived at AC&C as a tiny young bunny.

Joulie

Joulie was adopted in February by Colleen, who sent this letter to Cathe Rekis.

Thanks for checking in. Things are going really well. She seems happy and is getting accustomed to her new surroundings. There is less and less poop outside of her litter box, so I think that's a good sign, too!

I let her run around on my bed this evening and she did the happy "bunny dance." I don't have the rest of my apartment completely bunny-proofed yet, so she hasn't gotten completely free-roam status. She's eating well and seems much more comfortable in general.

My boyfriend, Brian, whom you met on Saturday, was petting her for a while last night and she put her legs out to lounge like a dog!

I will keep you in the loop, and I will be sure to reach out if I have any other questions.

Best,
Colleen Brady

Photo: Lance Madden



Glenn.

Glenn

Glenn was adopted in February by Lance Madden, who sent us this thank-you note.

Thanks so much for your help in this adoption process. Glenn has settled in very nicely. He has a great sense of curiosity! He likes sniffing around the living room.

I made a cage for him, and he's adapted to it nicely. I've been leaving the doors open for him to come out of the cage on his own while I'm home.

He's slowly coming out more and more and exploring more of the apartment. I walked out of the room this morning for a few minutes, and when I came

back he had hopped into my clothes hamper and snuggled in.

Thanks again for all of your help. He's doing great.

Lance

(Continued on page 19)

Photo: Nancy Carbone



Momo and Oreo.

Oreo

Oreo was adopted as a partner for Momo in January. Nancy sent this happy update a month later.

Great news! I can attest to the success of bunny speed-dating.

After arranging a time and date with Cindy Stutts, we brought our female lionhead Momo in to the Manhattan shelter on Jan. 14 to meet some eligible bachelors. Following introductions to about five guys, Momo decided upon a fellow lionhead named Oreo, whom Cindy had initially suggested as a possible mate. He was being fostered by Amy Odum.

It was a perfect match. No other human intervention was necessary to get them bonded.

I am happy to report that 6 1/2 weeks later they are so in love! They are inseparable, sleeping side-by-side in a little pet bed (aka the “throne” for the little prince and princess) and enjoying mutual grooming sessions :-))

Thank you, Cindy, Amy and ALL the other volunteers for making this work.

Good luck!

Nancy, Frank, Colette, Thomas and Binky & Sugar and Momo & Oreo

Photo: Susan and Tim Kemp



Gilbert and Truffle.

Truffle and Gilbert

Truffle, formerly known as Flower Pot, was adopted by Susan and Tim as a partner for their bunny, Gilbert. They sent us this update in mid-March.

Gilbert is a six-year-old black-and-white lop buck who nearly missed his second chance at love because of a broken heart. He’s originally from London, England. He moved to New York with his partner, Grace, in 2010, the two bunnies flying

in their own private cabin on British Airways. The lop of luxury, you might say, and considerably more comfortable than their human caretakers had it.

Grace sadly passed away last summer after an undetected stomach ulcer burst suddenly during a routine exam at the vet. Gilbert took her death bravely, forming a stronger bond with us humans, but it hit him hard. As the nights closed in and summer boiled off into fall he started to withdraw into himself. No

more binkies or running in the hallway for Gilbert; he only wanted to lie under his favorite chair and eat. The pounds piled on and his veterinarian (the peerless Dr. Anthony Pilny) became concerned. Gilbert developed a bad sneezing habit. It was obvious that he needed a distraction and we resolved to get him a new partner to lift his spirits.

We contacted Cindy Stutts at Dr. Pilny’s suggestion. Could we adopt a doe to keep him company? We made plans the following weekend to meet Amy Odum at Petco in Union Square for “bunny speed-dating.” We’ve had rabbits since 2006 so we are used to the strange distortion of reality that seems to surround these wonderful animals, but the idea of speed dating raised a couple of eyebrows, nonetheless.

Then he got sick. Suddenly, without warning, he came down with the worst bout of GI stasis we’ve ever seen. He was in the hospital for a whole week, first a night at the Animal Medical Center, and then, after a desperate search for a taxi in the only snow of the year, to the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine, where the experts would take over. While the nurses and vets worked their magic, we did our best to give him something to live for. Thanks to excellent

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Letters *(Continued from page 19)*

Photo: Susan and Tim Kemp



Gilbert and Truffle.

care and his stubbornness, he pulled through and he was deemed well enough to pick a mate.

Three rabbits awaited his critical eye in the fenced-off pen at Petco, where Amy met us the next Saturday: a Flemish Giant at least three times his size, a tiny elfin white bunny named Gretel with enormous eyes, and a tubby grey doe who looked suspiciously like a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig. The introductions started with Gretel, who paid him no attention at all. Amy assured us this was a good sign, but Gretel was a Park Avenue socialite to Gilbert's Joe the Plumber; they were never going to work it out. Next up was Amber, the titanic sable-colored giant. She laughed at Gilbert's

puny attempts at courtship. To his credit, he kept trying to put his moves on her but he was obviously a little intimidated. So were we, to be honest, plus we'd probably have to use the freight elevator to get her into our building. Strike two, and we were getting worried.

Finally Flower Pot appeared. We first noticed her gorgeous grey coat, made up of individual black and white hairs. It shimmered as she ran (okay, waddled) over to Gilbert. Then they touched noses! After a quarter of an hour, Gilbert was even trying to groom her. He'd chosen, and she'd consented. We renamed her Truffle (for her adorable looks) and signed the paperwork.

The bonding was eventful. Two minutes a day, closely supervised. They started off well, but it always ended the same way: Gilbert would groom her, tenderly cleaning her face while she lay down practically purring with pleasure. He'd then sit back for his turn and she'd lean forward, slowly, with the purest love in her eyes, reaching out to caress him and then SNAP! A savage bite on his cheek, sending him leaping in the air and running for cover. Truffle had never been bonded before, we found out. One day they cooperated long enough to

breach the "Furlin Wall" we'd made from Rottweiler-proof cages and a 300-pound couch; when we got home from work, the entire apartment was covered in a layer of bunny hair. The two combatants were sitting happily together under the dining table with very guilty expressions on their faces. No injuries, fortunately, but it took another two weeks before they finally "got it."

Now that they're bonded, it's wonderful. We have two completely free-range rabbits exploring our new apartment while getting each other into more and more trouble. Truffle is fearless (we once found her inside a rolled-up carpet) and she's rejuvenated Gilbert. He binkies again; he races around the house, and he dotes on Truffle. She grooms him gently in the evenings and they are never far apart. They've both lost a huge amount of weight with all the exercise they get playing together. We were as devastated as Gilbert when Grace died, but Truffle has made our family whole again.

We are so grateful for Gilbert's second chance, and we wish to extend our thanks to Cindy, Amy and Truffle's former foster caretaker, Erin McElhinney, for their help and advice.

Susan and Tim

Photos: natalie abell



Top, Cecil.

Bottom, Coco and Cecil with Cindy Stutts.

Cecil and Coco

Natalie adopted Cecil as a partner for Coco after they had a speed date at Petco. Here is an update.

Cecil has now moved into the top floor of Coco's condo (which has been made into two separate condos for the time-being), and both bunnies have begun looking forward to their brief but happy moments together. Coco has been feeling a little protective of her space, but has begun giving nose bumps through the walls of their adjoining apartments and shows great interest in getting to know Cecil. Both bunnies seem to be eager to spend time together, and have begun eating and resting in synchronicity in their separate quarters.

Cecil is content and peaceful in his new home and is already enjoying lots of hugs and kisses. He had been taken to Animal Care & Control after being found on the street in Manhattan around 192nd Street, and is very happy to have found his forever home.

Coco has lived with me in Brooklyn for a year and a month, and Coco and Cecil are both a little over a year old. They had wonderful chemistry at their speed date, so their bonding should continue to go well over the next few weeks. They are sure to be snuggling and playing in style in no time!

Thanks again,
natalie

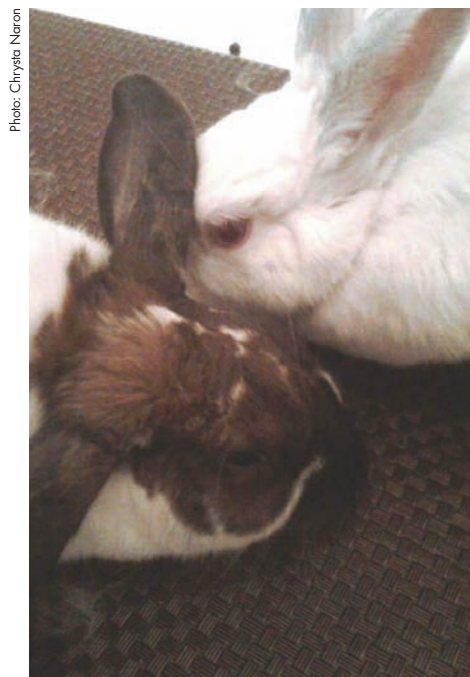
(Continued on page 21)

Heather

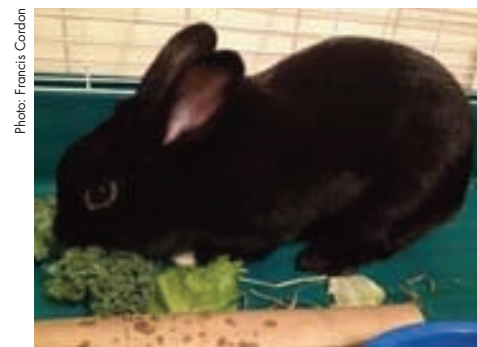
Heather was adopted as a buddy for Apollo in early March. Chrysta sent this update.

Heather started out a little skittish, but now she runs all over the place. She and Apollo are starting to bond, but Apollo gets jealous whenever he thinks Heather is getting more pets than him. Apollo and Heather like to run around each other's cages and nuzzle noses whenever one is in and the other is out. Heather likes to jump on the couch whenever I'm sitting on it and has decided that she wants to type on my laptop whenever I am doing that. We're so excited to have a new happy girl in our house!

Chrysta



Apollo and Heather.



Wilma.

Wilma

Wilma was adopted by Romala and her husband Francis in March. Here is an update.

We both are delighted with Wilma. She is active and friendly and sweet. She adapted very well. She eats more than we imagined she would ;) but it is a very balanced diet. She actually prefers the hay and the fresh vegetables to the pellets.

We are very happy with her and are delighted at the adoption center in Harlem that made this possible and the personnel there (especially Will, who took care of Wilma before we adopted her).

Francis



Kale.

Kale

Kale was adopted in March by Rachel, who sent us this letter.

I am so glad that I adopted Kale (I nicknamed him Pimm)!

He is such a happy and curious bunny. His favorite activities are exploring, binkying and receiving head rubs (always performed in that order!).

We are really getting to know each other. I am learning that he is a delight to be around in the mornings and evenings, but likes time to himself in the afternoons.

He is learning that I often make strange noises, especially in the kitchen, and that I sometimes move "his stuff" (gasp!) but I always put it back again.

I think we are a perfect match.

Rachel

We are grateful to all of our wonderful hay donors. A special thanks to Best Pet Rx and Robin Sternberg for donations of large bales of hay to the shelter. Also, a heartfelt thank you to volunteers and others who purchase hay for our bunnies on a regular basis. Your generosity is inspiring.



Howard and Snow White.

Snow White

Snow White was adopted in February as a partner for Howard. Things are going well, according to Leandra.

The bunnies are getting along fabulously, after a brief period of difficulties. Thanks for all the support from Rabbit Rescue & Rehab.

Leandra

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

Manhattan (continued):

Katherine Quesenberry, DVM

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

Alexandra Wilson, DVM

Anthony Pilny, DVM

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

Shachar Malka, DVM

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

Westchester County:

Gil Stanzone, 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

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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,
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Jennifer Saver, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

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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 mcc@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 **Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C)** 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.

Bunny speed dates take place 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays at the Petco store at Columbus Avenue and West 100th Street. To arrange a speed date so that your rabbit can find a buddy, contact Cindy Stutts at bygolyoly@yahoo.com. The bonding sessions sometimes take an hour or more, so only three speed dates are scheduled each Saturday.

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 mcc@cloud9.net or Cindy Stutts at 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.