

THUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS DECEMBER 2011

Photo: Marcie Frishberg



Marcie and Larry discovered this scene in the filthy, wet alley.

Photo: Larry Marion



The three rabbits were packed in like sardines, surrounded by mud and debris.

RESCUE AND REHAB

Thanksgiving Comes Early for Three Rabbits

The following account was compiled by Larry Marion with Marcie Frishberg and Mary Ann Maier.

It was two days before Thanksgiving when several local volunteers received this email from Davida Kobler, a House Rabbit Society chapter manager in Utica, N.Y.:

Subject: URGENT SITUATION WITH 3 ABANDONED RABBITS in BROOKLYN: NYC/LI RESCUERS PLEASE RESPOND

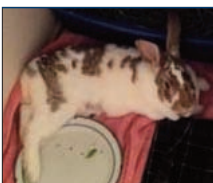
I just received a phone call from a lovely lady named Ashley...I am copying all of you in the NYC and LI area who are on the HRS listings because I do not know who is closest or who is most available tonight. Ashley was looking at a property this afternoon in Brooklyn on Beadel Street and discovered three domestic rabbits without food/water in a makeshift enclosure without adequate shelter...

One of those who received the urgent request for help as darkness fell that

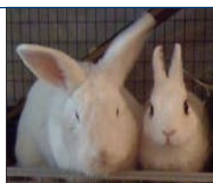
Tuesday night was Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group volunteer Mary Ann Maier, who widened the circle by sending an email to local bunny-owner listserv, nycbuns: "Three rabbits abandoned in makeshift cage on abandoned property in Brooklyn. Left for dead, essentially. Details emerging now. If anyone can take these three poor rabbits, we will assist with cages, spay, neuter, etc."

Mary Ann had no room for another foster rabbit on Long Island, let alone three. But this case, although not unusual, was particularly troubling because, for one, the rabbits were trapped in a cramped container (as opposed to being free to roam), and two, they were without food or water. Additionally, it was likely they would start to breed and proliferate in the neighborhood.

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Angela Changed Her Name, Started Over And Went to U.K.
Pages 3-6



Great Gift Idea

What's the best holiday gift for your bunny? Another bunny! Wouldn't your bunny like a friend to snuggle with?

Email Cindy Stutts at bygolyoly@yahoo.com

or Mary Ann Maier at altitude8@yahoo.com to set up a speed date for your rabbit.

Gentle Fred, our masthead bunny, was found limping among vans in a commercial parking lot. Rescued by Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, he underwent surgery to remove a huge abscess that was crippling his leg. He is recovering beautifully in a foster home in Bethpage, and URRG is seeking donations to help offset the cost of his surgery. Original watercolor art by Kathie Rokita (lovinganimalportraits.com), based on a Mary Ann Maier photo.

Thanksgiving Comes Early

(Continued from page 1)

Making matters worse, the rabbit cages at Animal Care & Control were completely full, too. So Mary Ann discussed the AC&C situation with Cindy Stutts and LIRRG's Nancy Schreiber and they hatched a plan: If Mary Ann and Nancy could take two spayed/neutered, healthy and adoptable rabbits from the shelter into LIRRG, Cindy could squeeze the Brooklyn three into the shelter.

Rabbit Rescue volunteers Larry Marion and Marcie Frishberg set out to rescue the rabbits. They drove to the industrial area of Greenpoint, far from their Park Slope residence.

They found the rabbits in a dark, garbage-strewn alley around 7:30 that night. It was raining hard, and as soon as they stepped out of the car and into the alley, Marcie slipped and fell into mud.

Whoever had abandoned the rabbits had put a wire shopping basket upside-down on top of them and placed a large piece of glass over it, with a decrepit carrier balanced on top of that.

Because it was dark, Larry and Marcie were afraid one of the bunnies might get spooked and make a run for it. So they surrounded the wire basket with a puppy exercise pen, removed the piece of plate glass and then gently lifted off the basket.

They could see the three frightened bunnies huddling together. It was impossible to know how long the rabbits had been out there without any food or water. The bunnies were covered with mud and their own feces, and Marcie said she'd never smelled anything that bad.

They put the rabbits into pet carriers that they'd brought along and drove as fast as they could to the Manhattan AC&C shelter. Freezing rain notwithstanding, they left the car windows open to help them breathe amidst the stench.

The rabbits arrived at the East 110th Street shelter and gobbled up all the greens offered to them. The two white

Photo: Larry Marion



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt

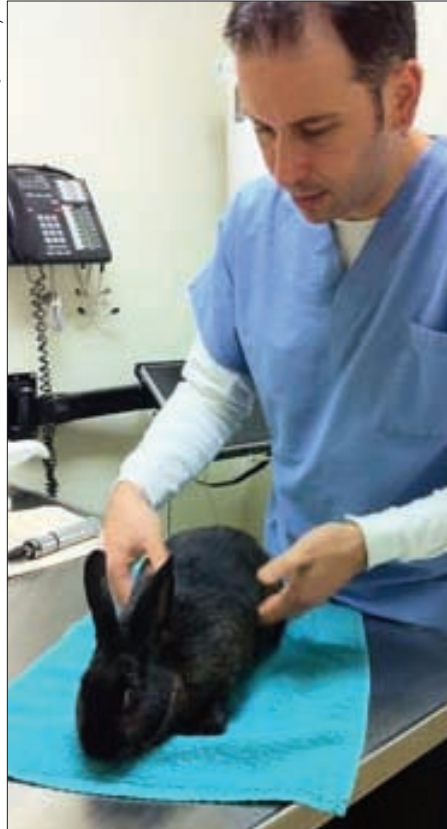


Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Top, safe at last: the three rabbits devour fresh greens. Middle, Dr. Anthony Pilny examines Jackie. Bottom, Venus and Serena in their hide box at AC&C. Right, AC&C bunny Edith makes quick work of charming her adopter Rebecca Parisi (shown with boyfriend, Paul).

girls were estimated to be four- to six-month-old sisters and it was assumed that the larger dark brown rabbit was their mom. The mom was given the name Jackie; the sisters became Venus and Serena.

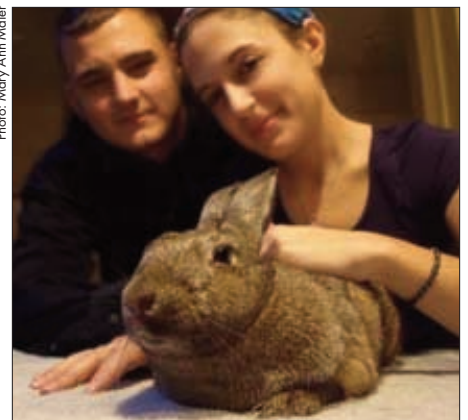
Jackie, it turned out, was pregnant and was taken to the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine for an emergency spay the next day. Jane O'Wyatt, who brought Jackie to CAEM, arranged for Venus and Serena to be spayed at AC&C by Dr. Alemnesh Terefe. Jackie is being fostered by volunteer Amy Odum. Serena and Venus are currently at AC&C.

Davida Kobler, the HRS chapter manager in Utica, emailed the volunteers just after 1 a.m. Wednesday to say, "Thank you all for your amazing rescue. I received an email from AC&C with a photo of the horrendous setup, just as Ashley described. I hope whoever did this does not plan to get more buns and keep them in this location. Thank goodness they are warm and dry and fed and safe tonight."

The two shelter rabbits chosen by Cindy Stutts to go to Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group were Shadow and Edith, and they were delivered there the day after the Greenpoint rescue. In a happy turn of events, Edith was adopted into a loving home three days later!

(Editor's note: Larry returned to the Greenpoint area a week later during daylight hours to look for any other rabbits who might be there, or for evidence that a male was in the area. However, he found no additional bunnies and nothing that would indicate that another rabbit was living there.)

Photo: Mary Ann Maier



The Incredible Journey of Angela, Who Changed Her Name to Nutmeg and Started Over

By Jane O'Wyatt

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Angela at AC&C. The abscess's weight is pulling her dewlap down.

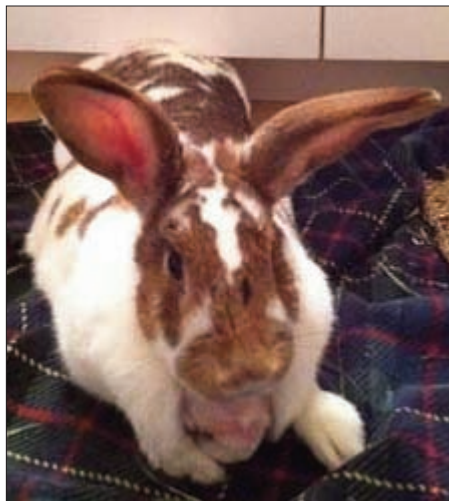
Angela's Abscess

Jan. 21, 2011. Angela makes her first appearance on the AC&C rabbits listserv, where she is described as a sleepy Mini Lop mix with a healthy appetite. The next day's volunteer notes nervousness and "overly enlarged dewlap." When I meet Angela on Jan. 24, I find that her dewlap contains a large, firm mass (abscess? tumor?). If Angela were human, the weight and volume of this lump would be like that of a softball dangling from her lower jaw. What caused this mass? How long had it been developing? Why wasn't it treated? How and why did Angela wind up at the shelter? We know nothing of her history.

Abandonment in its many forms, along with the unfamiliarity of the shelter's rabbit room, has a dampening effect on the personalities of most new arrivals, and Angela is no exception. Evicted from her former home for who knows what reason, she is now surrounded by the scents and sounds of strange rabbits. She is made anxious by the barking of dogs in a nearby ward and startled by preemptory announcements on the shelter's PA system. Angela docilely allows me to move her from cage to puppy pen, where she hops around sniffing and

chinning. Although too worried to binky, she allows me to pet her and leans into a cheek rub.

Except for the mass in her dewlap, Angela appears healthy. So on Feb. 3, with Cindy Stutts's blessing, I take Angela to Veterinary Internal Medicine and Allergy Specialists (VIMAS) to be examined by Dr. Anthony Pilny. He decides on surgery to remove the mass, and, while Angela is anesthetized, he will spay her. A few hours later, Dr. Pilny reports that the mass was "part abscess" and had been there a relatively long time. The mass was vascular, connected to one of the jugular veins. It also involved some salivary gland tissue, which Dr. Pilny excised. Because the skin of the dewlap was loose, Dr. Pilny put in three "skin stitches," to be taken out in about a week. Surgically removing this mass was important, he said, because of its bacterial and necrotic aspects and its involvement with the jugular vein.



Angela post-surgery.

After spending the night at VIMAS, Angela comes home with me so she can recuperate in my bathroom. This room has been a bunny ward before, and Angela reveals her awareness of this by sniffing and correcting markings left by Francis, who spent time there recovering

from post-neuter scrotal hematoma. (I wasn't thinking like a rabbit when I cleaned the bathroom after Francis left, but his scent seems to reassure Angela.) What a sorry sight she is! Her shaved dewlap is pink and pendulous, with black sutures that look like graffiti.

Angela settles in for a few days of "cage rest." At first she spends a lot of time lounging in the litter box, which nestles in a small alcove, roofed by shelving. She hops out to eat greens and pellets and then hops back in. As her post-op discomfort recedes and she gets used to her environment, she lies out in the open, where she graciously accepts physical and verbal caresses. (Beyond the bathroom, cats Virginia and Amelia O'Feral seem uninterested in our patient, for which I am thankful.) The morning of her departure, Angela stretches vigorously and yawns, nudges my ankles and does a binky.

Angela goes to Cindy for a few more days of foster care, and then returns to the shelter. On March 21 she moves to the Petco store on Union Square, where rabbit volunteers report that she is eating well, has good litter-box skills and is hard to get out of her cage. Once they get her into an exercise pen, Angela is an active binkier and dramatic flopper. She has begun to display feistiness and *joie de vivre*, but she is still rather reserved with strangers.

Angela's Adopters

Jas and Harpal Karlcut and their daughters, Gurpreet and Mandeep, 11 and nine years old respectively, are passionately attached to their house rabbits in India, where Harpal's employer previously posted him. Having made meticulous arrangements for their rabbits' care by family members in India, the Karlcuts had recently moved to Manhattan for Harpal's current four-year job posting.

(Continued on page 4)



RESCUE AND REHAB

Incredible Journey

(Continued from page 3)

They miss their rabbits very much, they tell rabbit volunteer Marcie Frishberg when they come to Petco Union Square for a bunny fix. They, especially Gurpreet, want to adopt Angela. Marcie quizzes them about their experience with rabbits and observes their kind and respectful behavior toward Angela – and her behavior toward them. The Karlcuts look at other adoptable rabbits, but they keep coming back to Angela, who tactfully discourages other would-be adopters because she has already made up her mind. On April 9, the Karlcuts adopt Angela, whom they rename Nutmeg. On April 13, after they buy and set up a new Leith triplex condo and a spacious, Connect-A-Mat floored exercise pen for her, Nutmeg, f.k.a. Angela, moves into her new home.

Because I am now her bunny-sitter, I stay in touch with this revived rabbit, whose family absolutely adores her. Nutmeg runs and binkies when I come to care for her. She demands cheek rubs and neck-and-shoulder massages, and, every time she is out of her pen, she munches naughtily on a large sea-grass rug nearby. This formerly fearful, tractable bunny is now overtly affectionate, high-spirited, energetic, mischievous and bossy!

Nutmeg's Journey

In September, Harpal Karlcut's employer tells him that he is being transferred. Harpal and his family will have to move back to the U.K., where current animal immigration policy dictates that Nutmeg must be quarantined for six months.

But no, wait... U.K. rules have been revamped to conform with European Union regulations. On Jan. 1, 2012, the U.K.'s six-month quarantine requirement for cats and dogs entering the U.K. will be lifted and quarantine facilities

(Continued on page 5)

Top, Jas and Gurpreet Karlcut with Nutmeg, f.k.a. Angela, at Petco Union Square on the day she was adopted. Bottom, Nutmeg at home in Manhattan.

Incredible Journey

(Continued from page 4)

closed. However, since language about pet rabbits isn't included in the new policy, Nutmeg theoretically will still have to be quarantined for six months. If she is brought immediately from the U.S. to a quarantine facility in the U.K., by Dec. 31, 2011, she will have been there for less than four months out of the required six. Then where could Nutmeg go?

In response to Nutmeg's situation, the AC&C rabbits listserv buzzes with exclamations of disbelief and frustration, along with both reliable and erroneous information. While trying to solve a conundrum that Lewis Carroll might have devised, rabbit volunteers are also thinking about air travel for Nutmeg. Since many airlines have been uncooperative about rabbits flying in the main cabin with human passengers (and not in the hold), it is essential to find an airline with a clearly articulated, rabbit-friendly policy. Someone knows of someone who moved to the U.K., taking her rabbit with her in the cabin on a Finnair flight. Good, except that without a special dispensation or *deus ex machina*, Nutmeg cannot go directly from the U.S. to the U.K.

Enter rabbit volunteer Cathe Rekis, who suggests that Nutmeg might be able to fly to Paris and then travel to the U.K. via the Eurotunnel, or "Chunnel," from Calais, France, to Folkestone in the U.K.

Cathe makes dozens of phone calls to find out if this can be done legally. Her research involves calling airlines to inquire about traveling with a rabbit on transatlantic flights and on flights between Paris and London. She sends countless emails to Eurotrain, Eurotunnel and the U.K., French and Finnish governments to learn vet requirements and rabbit travel restrictions. Cathe prints out the required form for U.S.-France travel, and makes visits to the British and French embassies in New York. She searches the Internet for personal experiences about travel with rabbits and for information from agencies that handle pet travel. "There's no way to count"

the total number of emails and calls, says Cathe, who adds, "I sent out so many emails that I'm still getting replies!"

Cathe, on the basis of her exhaustive inquiries, is able to tell Harpal that he indeed would be able to fly to Paris with Nutmeg and then legally bring her to Britain by taking the Chunnel.

Harpal, an experienced, prescient traveler and frequent business flyer with a biometric passport, then makes a reservation on Finnair. (By this time, Harpal and his family have moved to the U.K. so that his daughters can start the new school year. In their absence, I visit Nutmeg every day.) His daughter Gurpreet eagerly compiles a list of supplies and equipment that Nutmeg will need for the trip (Oxbow Botanical Hay, greens, bath towel, water bottle, etc.) and Harpal collects the stuff.

On the day before her departure, I bring Nutmeg to see Dr. Pilny, who removed her abscess nine months ago. The physical exam includes palpation of Nutmeg's now-normal dewlap. "Nothing going on here," Dr. Pilny says with a smile. "This bunny is in excellent health," he says. Although she is free of parasites, she gets

Top, in Manhattan, Cathe, Harpal and Jane celebrate Nutmeg's successful journey to U.K.
Middle, Nutmeg, seen with Mandeep and Gurpreet, on arrival in her Birmingham, U.K. home.
Below, reunited, Gurpreet and Nutmeg pose for the camera.

an injection of Ivermectin. Dr. Pilny fills out duplicate copies of the French Annex 27 form for veterinarians. He also supplies a signed USDA form attesting to Nutmeg's health and writes a letter confirming that she has no physical signs of Viral Hemorrhagic Disease or Myxomatosis. "Please let me know how her trip goes," he says, as he herds Nutmeg back into her carrier.

Harpal Karcut's account (on page six) continues this story, which ends happily. How many people in his situation would have thrown their hands up and dumped their rabbits? Most, I believe. Harpal is a hero, not only to his family, but to everyone who cares for abandoned rabbits.



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Photo: Harpal Karcut



Photo: Gurpreet Karcut

Nutmeg's Long Hop to Europe Required Much Planning, Research

By Harpal Karlcut

Nutmeg arrived safely in the U.K. She is settling down very nicely and is getting used to U.K. hay, salad and pellets. Although she has a new cage and pen somewhat smaller than what she was used to in N.Y., she doesn't seem to mind.

While Jas and I were uncertain whether we could get Nutmeg to the U.K., the kids loved Nutmeg dearly and were adamant that a way had to be found to bring her across. They reminded us that we had adopted Nutmeg and we should make every effort to look after her.

Our initial calls to DEFRA [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/> in the U.K. weren't very productive. Rabbits flying directly into the U.K. from U.S. would need to be quarantined and we were told we should get in touch with a local quarantine center. However, with the quarantine laws changing on Jan. 1 so that cats and dogs no longer needed to be quarantined, the centers weren't keen to take in rabbits, as the quarantine period would run into 2012.

We tried contacting a couple of the companies advertising online as door-to-door shipping services for pets but got poor responses, so we decided not to use these.

Through Cathe Rekis and Jane O'Wyatt, we learned that it was possible to bring the rabbit in through France with the appropriate paperwork, and then it would be far more straightforward to get from France to the U.K., as pets traveling within the EU didn't need a quarantine period.

Having made the decision to fly Nutmeg to France, we decided it was best to have rabbits travel in the main cabin rather than the hold. However, not all carriers offer this service. We learned that Finnair was one of the carriers that does, and that also flies New York to Paris.

Even though Finnair generally provided good service, we had to make a number of attempts in order to find out the requirements for flying with a rabbit. We managed to get the right phone number and booked the ticket with the additional cost of flying with the rabbit being \$139. We were initially told that the maximum dimensions for the rabbit carrier were 14" x 12" x 10" but this was much too small, and it was only when we contacted the U.S. Finnair help desk that we got more reasonable dimensions (22" x 18" x 10").

We found a suitable carrier online and assembled the other essentials for travel. With the help of Jane and Cathe, we also got the necessary paperwork from a local vet.

On the day of the flight, I think Nutmeg and I were both apprehensive. We left in plenty of time for the airport. Checking in was no problem and Finnair already had assigned me a seat toward the back of the plane where Nutmeg could be safely stowed under the seat. The first test was getting Nutmeg through security. As I took Nutmeg out of her carrier to take her through the scanner, we lost most of the hay and although I used a towel to pick her up, I was told that the towel

had to go through the scanner separately. This caused a bit of queue behind me. Fortunately, there were a couple of very helpful security personnel who helped me collect my belongings and get Nutmeg back into her carrier in a quiet corner.

There was a wait for our flight, but Nutmeg was well behaved and I had a chance to feed her and give her some fresh hay.

The flight to Paris was via Helsinki and unfortunately the flight was completely full, so I spent a good deal of the time shielding Nutmeg's carrier from the feet of the young boy beside me.

By the time we got into Helsinki, I decided a complete change of bedding was needed, so I found a large washroom. Nutmeg and I had some fun there (or at least she did) as she was determined not to come out of the carrier. It took me six or seven attempts before I finally got the bedding changed. Nutmeg had clearly become attached to the carrier!

After all the apprehension, the flight to Paris was a breeze and no checks were needed because it was an internal EU flight. From there, we got into my car and drove to the Eurotunnel station at Calais and on into U.K. All that remained was the final leg to our home in Birmingham.

The kids were delighted to see Nutmeg and we put her into her new pen. We mixed her U.S. hay, salad and pellets with the U.K. ones and she soon was okay with the U.K. food.

It was a long journey but one that we were happy we made. The journey wouldn't have been possible without the help of the rabbit volunteers.

Nutmeg's Journey: Times and Distances

Leg 1: JFK to Helsinki • Duration of flight: 8-plus hours • Distance: 4,000-plus miles

http://maps.google.com/maps?client=safari&rls=en&q=New+York,+NY+to+Helsinki,+Finland&oe=UTF-8&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=8aO6Tir2BYLn0QHvuaHcCQ&sa=X&oi=mode_link&ct=mode&cd=3&ved=0CCQQAUoAg

Stopover in Helsinki: approximately 3 hours

Leg 2: Helsinki to Paris • Duration of flight: approximately 2 hours • Distance: 1,000-plus miles

Leg 3: Paris to Birmingham, U.K. • Duration of drive: approximately 6 hours • Distance: 300 miles

Sometimes It Takes More Than a Rescue to Save a Bunny

By Astrid Hesse

Part of my work for the Second Avenue subway project involves surveying nearby buildings. One day in mid-October, other inspectors told me they had seen a rabbit loose on the first-floor back roof of a building. I asked the obvious questions: Did the rabbit seem to be cared for? Was there any shelter? Food? The workers only said they thought the rabbit was cute.

Since our schedule was tight that week, I didn't have time to return to the building. I wasn't even sure I'd be allowed access. I technically had no right to go back unless I received the owner's permission. The week after, I returned. I was dressed in my full work gear – hard hat, boots and safety vest – and must have looked pretty official. I entered a first-floor restaurant and mentioned a rabbit on the roof. The staff whisked me through the kitchen and out the back door. They pointed at a ladder leading to the roof.

To my surprise, I found not one but two rabbits. There was no visible shelter, and there was rabbit poop all over the place. The only food was a small handful of sad-looking parsley and an almost empty water bowl. I saw a hooded cat litter box that I presumed might contain hay, but it was empty. There were exposed wires. Parts of the roof led out to a fire escape, and the rabbits could easily have fallen off.

The rabbits themselves seemed curious enough about my presence. So I sat down and waited. Very slowly, one, and then the other, came closer to investigate. Of course, the second I tried to pick them up, they went flying. It took a bit of chasing, but I was able to determine their sex. The two girls weren't totally emaciated, so someone was clearly feeding them, but they were matted and caked with feces. It was heartbreaking to have to leave them behind, but I knew I needed to get more information.

I couldn't reach the building superintendent by phone, so I went back to the



Above, rooftop where the two rabbits were found. The white arrow points to Niamh, f.k.a. Nancy. Right, Niamh and Nellie on roof.



building and rang doorbells. The first-floor tenant said the rabbits weren't his, but that he had seen someone feeding them. Apparently, that person had tried several months ago to find a new home for the rabbits. I thought this might be my chance. I couldn't just take the rabbits away, but maybe the owner would willingly hand them over. So I left my name and number.

Within a few minutes I got a call from the owner, who said he had no intention of surrendering the rabbits. I tried explaining that the rabbits weren't being properly taken care of, but he disagreed and even invited AC&C over to see the rabbits. I contacted Cindy Stutts, who went to check a few days later. It was agreed that it would be in the best interest of the two rabbits if they were taken into the care of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab.

I offered to foster the two girls, Nancy and Nellie, at my home in New Jersey. Despite being nervous, the girls seemed to settle in nicely on their first night.

When I got up the next morning, however, Nancy was shivering and seemed lethargic. Her body temperature had dropped to 94.8 degrees (the normal temperature for a rabbit is 101-103 degrees). From HRS conferences and articles I remembered that anything as low as 99 or 98 degrees was already considered an emergency. GI stasis was the first thing that came to my mind. There was a deadly silence in Nancy's stomach and it felt bloated. I applied all the available home remedies: I administered simethicone and Metacam, and tried warming Nancy up with a heating pad. I anxiously waited for my personal vet's office to open. Just before leaving the house, I took Nancy's temperature again, and saw that it had fallen to 93 degrees.

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More than a Rescue

(Continued from page 7)

We drove to the Rutherford Animal Hospital, where my vet, Dr. Tracey Cantamessa, admitted Nancy to the hospital and started trying to stabilize her with pain medication, gut stimulants and fluids. An X-ray showed a large mass in Nancy's intestine. Throughout the day I kept calling my vet for updates. Nancy wasn't improving. The team hadn't managed to raise her temperature and the mass in her abdomen wasn't moving. Late in the afternoon, Dr. Cantamessa suggested that immediate gastric surgery might be our only option. She was concerned that Nancy might not make it through the night. A consulting vet recommended euthanizing Nancy because her chances of recovery, even with the surgery, were slim. I was devastated. Here we had just rescued this rabbit from years of neglect, and now she was in danger of dying a day later because her fragile body couldn't handle the stress of the sudden change.

Heavy-hearted, I went to the clinic to discuss Nancy's prognosis. It was 8 p.m. when I was finally called into the exam room. I was told that, against all odds, Nancy had started to improve. Her temperature had reached a more respectable 98 degrees, the mass in her intestine had finally started to move and Nancy was trying to get around. Apparently the little girl had gotten so annoyed with her catheter that she bit right through it. She was sent home overnight with a dose of injectable pain medication, and I was to drop her off for observation at the clinic the next morning. At home, Nancy made a timid attempt at nibbling parsley, and made it clear that she had every will to live. The next day the little miracle girl continued to make progress.

In the weeks following, Nancy has developed into a delightful high-energy bunny who loves food, petting, and

Photos: Astrid Hesse

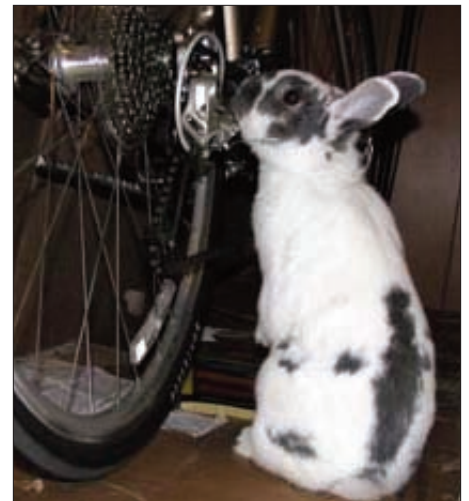


Top, the bunnies' foster home. Nellie is in the foreground.

Middle, Niamh inspects Astrid's bicycle.
Bottom, Nellie plays with a favorite toy.

exercise time. She explores every nook and cranny, and literally climbs mountains (or chairs, desks and shelves). Her friend Nellie has adjusted to the new circumstances as well. She continues to be cautious, but enjoys company if she is approached with patience and given space to build trust on her terms.

In honor of Nancy's incredible recovery, I renamed her Niamh, meaning "radiant" or "bright" in Gaelic. Coincidentally, "Nellie" has a similar meaning. My hope is that both girls will have a bright future.



A Little Girl Bunny, Left Out With the Trash

Photo: Anthony Pilny, DVM



Bunson at Dr. Pilny's office.

By Sari Krieger

On Wednesday, Oct. 26, I got a call from a concerned bunny parent I had met while rescuing a bunny named Baxter. She said another bunny needed my help.

Apparently someone had left a rabbit and her cage outside with the trash in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx.

A neighborhood woman brought the bunny to a local Petland Discounts store. I called the store the next morning and found out that they planned to send the rabbit to their warehouse to be checked out and then possibly put on sale. The store manager said he would give the bunny to me as a member of a rescue group, but only if I came down to the store that day.

I sneaked out on my lunch break, traveling in the rain to the Bronx from my job in Yonkers, after Cindy Stutts asked me to bring the bunny to Dr. Anthony Pilny. The store manager had told me the bunny looked sick so Cindy thought it best to bring her to a vet, not the shelter.

I found my way to the pet store and an employee brought me a small, terrified-looking black-and-white rabbit in a filthy cage. The store employee had tried to give the rabbit some water, cut-up apple and pellets, but it looked as if nothing had been touched. There was no hay.

I put some soft classical music on the car radio for this nervous little girl as we drove into Manhattan together. I had never driven alone in Manhattan before, so I was nervous. But I delivered the little bunny to Dr. Pilny, who reported that she was about six months old and in stable condition, despite missing spots of fur. I named her Bunson.

Bunson found a forever home with a friend of Dr. Jennifer Chaitman at Veterinary Internal Medicine and Allergy Specialists.

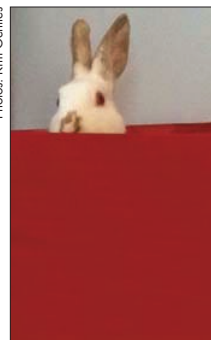
Playful Young Bertie Gets a Home

Kim Gentles and her family adopted a rescued rabbit in September. The rabbit they adopted, four-month-old Bertie, was one of seven kits born to Xena, a rabbit fostered by volunteer Cathy Zelonis, who also cared for the five surviving babies.

A longtime animal lover, Kim Gentles has had many pets over the years. When she was in Tottenville High School on Staten Island, she had a class in animal care. There were many animals in the classroom and each student was assigned one. Kim's animal was a rabbit named Trixie, who came home with Kim on weekends and holidays. On one of those weekends, Trixie had babies. One of the babies survived. Kim and her family cared for the baby and kept the bun alive with kitten formula. The bunny lived for a long time, and grew to be a very large rabbit. Kim has been in touch with volunteer Cathy Zelonis regularly and here is a bit of her recent email about Bertie:

"Bertie is doing great. Our daughter, Talia, brought in pictures of him to school for show and tell to show him off! We just love him so much. He finally decided to start eating his pellets. But now he has also decided that they are his favorite over his hay and alfalfa. Now when I feed him and clean his cage in the morning I feed him his hay/alfalfa and veggies first; then before I leave the house I give him his pellets, which he only gets once a day. We let him run around as long as we are home and if he chooses. Sometimes he just enjoys staying in his little hiding area at the bottom of the cage. It is very cute how Talia just enjoys spending time with him. She goes in the room and talks to him, brushes him and sometimes practically lays her body in his cage if he doesn't feel like coming out. I hope you were able to finally view the last photos I sent. I attached some new ones. The pictures of him in the American Girl

Photos: Kim Gentles



bag were taken one day when he was running around and discovered that bag, which is where I keep his extra hay, and he jumped in the bag. It was very

funny because every time I would say "hey, Bertie, what are you doing?" he would pick his head up and look out the top of the bag. Have any of his siblings found a home yet? I hope all is well with you. We will keep in touch."

Top, Bertie peering out of a shopping bag. Bottom, Talia and Bertie.



Veterinarian and Behavior Expert Teaches 'ABCs' of Rabbit Behavior

By Natalie L. Reeves

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Dr. Susan Brown.

Rabbit guardians spend too much time trying to figure out why their rabbits do certain things, according to Dr. Susan Brown, former health director for the House Rabbit Society. Dr. Brown delivered the keynote lecture on animal behavioral issues at the annual rabbit conference sponsored by the New York metro chapter of the House Rabbit Society.

As an exotic animal veterinarian for more than 35 years, Dr. Brown observed that approximately 80% of the diseases she saw in her animal patients were the result of husbandry problems, including the failure of guardians to properly observe their rabbits' behavior or provide sufficient stimulation. This behavioral connection to disease intrigued Dr. Brown, and she left her full-time veterinary practice to found the Behavior Connection, which seeks to educate caretakers on how to improve their relationships with their animals.

Since the exact cause of a rabbit's behavior is complex and we cannot read our rabbits' minds, Dr. Brown believes that we should focus our attention on observing behavior as it is and changing it, instead of worrying about the underlying cause. All animal species focus on staying safe and getting what they want, and their behavior is usually linked to these impulses.

Dr. Brown said we should start by learning our "ABCs." In this context, "A" stands for antecedent, which is the stimulus that signals the behavior. "B" is the behavior itself, and "C" is the consequence of the behavior, or whatever happens after the behavior that is contingent on the behavior. Learning the ABCs is important because it helps us remember that we cannot change behavior directly. What we can do, however, is change the antecedent or the consequence.

Most of us like to label our rabbits' behavior. For example, we might say a rabbit is

smart, stupid, funny, aggressive, etc. Dr. Brown cautioned that this tendency to label is a mistake because when we believe labels, we change the interaction we have with our rabbits.

Dr. Brown demonstrated her theories through slides and videos. One slide showed a golden retriever with his tongue hanging out. She asked the audience to describe the dog. Most people agreed that the dog looked happy and relaxed. Although these were the responses that Dr. Brown expected, she

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Below, Mary Cotter demonstrates how to build a trust account with a rabbit. Bottom, a bonding demonstration.



'ABCs' (Continued from page 10)

instructed audience members to curb their impulse to describe animals' feelings. Instead, we should be objective, such as by describing the position of the dog's ears, his posture, his eyes (completely open or half closed), etc.

Avoiding labels is particularly important when you describe your rabbit's symptoms to his or her veterinarian. If you tell the veterinarian that your rabbit is depressed, you may or may not be right, but the vet will be better equipped to diagnose your rabbit if you provide a better description of what observations lead you to believe your rabbit is depressed. For example, is your rabbit sitting in a different position? Are his eyes running? Are his normally upright ears in a different position?

If you wanted an artist to paint your rabbit in the position you are describing but cannot show the artist a photo of your rabbit, think of how specifically you would describe your rabbit to the artist. This type of specificity is helpful to vets who are not in your home and able to observe your rabbit's behavior themselves. Eyes are important – look at the shape of your rabbit's eyes. Is your rabbit's nose moving more quickly than normal? What is the position of the ears?

Just as you may prepare for your future by building a savings account, you should build for your future with your rabbit by building a "trust account." You can build a trust account with your rabbit through high repetition of positive experiences.

Mary Cotter demonstrated how to build a trust account with a rabbit. The rabbit Mary worked with was known as an aggressive rabbit who bit everyone he came into contact with, making it difficult to clean his litter box or to have any interaction with him. Mary developed trust with the rabbit by working with him slowly so that he would understand that human hands would not hurt him. She touched him lightly and then moved her hand away numerous times. Her patience and repetition of the exercise



Photo : Susan Lillo



Photo : Susan Lillo



Photo : Jane O'Wyatt



Photo : Susan Lillo



Photo : Susan Lillo



Photo : Jane O'Wyatt

Clockwise from lower left: Natalie Reeves with straw hat; rabbit-themed jewelry from Sequin; conversation about rabbit enrichment; conference attendees with an adoptable rabbit; Nancy Schreiber adjusts projector; Will Leung shows his rabbit litter box.

resulted in the bunny allowing her to pet him. He had learned through her slow, light touches that her hands were not to be feared.

You can learn more about Dr. Brown's programs and ideas at www.behaviorconnection.com.

Why Does My Rabbit Eat Hay?

By Lisa Carley

Hay is a key element of your rabbit's diet. In fact, fresh green hay should be available in unlimited quantities all the time. Not only does it keep rabbits' digestive tracks in working order, but it keeps their teeth in line as well.

Rabbits' teeth continue to grow throughout their entire lives. If they don't get enough hay, or if they have genetically bad teeth, you may find yourself with bunny dental bills. These dental bills will far exceed the cost of a lifetime's worth of hay.

When I adopted Wabbit, my now 10-year-old Jersey Wooly, I knew nothing about rabbit nutrition. On our first trip to a House Rabbit Society-approved veterinarian, I brought along a little bag

of (shall we say) refuse. When the doctor looked at them, she felt they were a bit small, even for a two-pound bunny.

This was perplexing, as I had done tons of research, and thought I was feeding him correctly. It turns out that I was, sort of. When asked if the hay I purchased for him was fresh and green, my answer was that it more closely resembled a paper bag.

Since that was obviously not the right answer, I asked where I could find this fresh green substance of which she spoke. Even as long as a decade ago, Manhattan wasn't known for its working farms.

I was sent to Whiskers Holistic Pet Store on East 9th Street to find Oxbow Timothy hay. I made my way there feeling a little silly looking for hay, and was surprised

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt

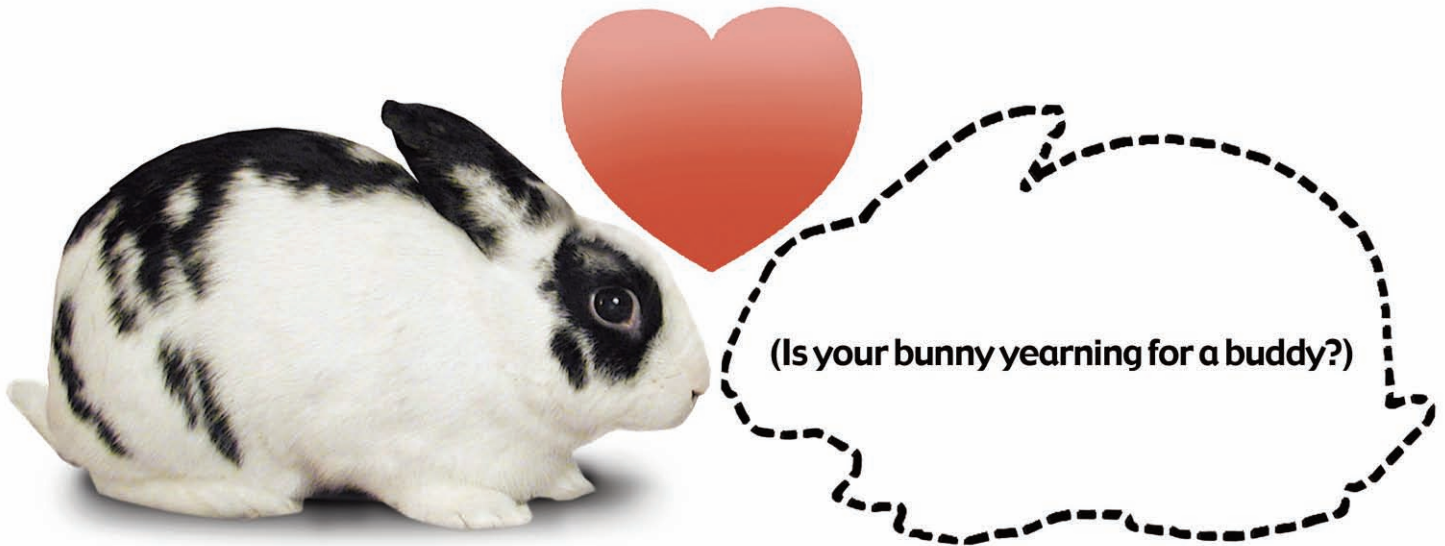


Eating hay at AC&C.

to find a whole section of the store dedicated to it. I chose 40-ounce bags of different types and brought them home.

My rabbit ran up to me and actually started to tear into the sealed bags of hay. I realized then that I had made a good choice. Wabbit so far has not needed any dental work.

Make Your Bunny's Holiday the Best Ever!



This month, match yourself—or your bunny—with a rescued rabbit. Nothing can match the love.

Email Cindy Stutts in Manhattan at bygolyoly@yahoo.com, or Mary Ann Maier in Long Island at altitude8@yahoo.com.

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY



Forever Homes Found!

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Tango, Chauncy and Crystine, Morgan, Mabel and May, Nina, Gelinda, Lillie, Commander, Dora, George, Justine, Java, Edith, Pebbles, Baxter. They all will have a very happy holiday in their new homes.



Justine.



Java.



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.

Letters

Photo: Julie Salazar



Delphi.

Flopsy

Flopsy, formally known as Reilly, was adopted by Louise, who sent this letter to Jane O'Wyatt and Marcie Frishberg in late October.

I just wanted to report that Flopsy bunny is very happy. She LOVES her dried food, and anything green. She practically does a dance at meal times and is also full of fun. She likes to explore with her ears forward like a dog almost crawling forward on her stomach. She is pretty good at escaping but fortunately seems uninterested in wires so far. She is very

Delphi

Julia and her boyfriend adopted Delphi, formerly known as Pepper, in early October. Julia wrote to us a short time later.

Thanks for getting in touch with me. My boyfriend and I adopted Pepper last week and we've already begun to bond with her. We renamed her "Delphi" (there's sort of a meaning behind the name; my old rabbit was named Apollo).

My boyfriend made a little den for Delphi in our bathroom out of a cardboard box (she LOVES to chew anything cardboard), with hay and a warm pad since she likes to be cozy. She has mostly been using her litter box well, too. She likes to play in her new home and in a blanket.

Cheers,
Julia

Photo: Louise Twining-Ward



Flopsy.

hard to photograph as she moves so fast but I got one of her eating breakfast this morning (the only time she is still!).

Thanks again for the great match.
Louise

Photo: Karis Alongi



Honey.

Honey Bunny and Spartacus

Karis and Lillian adopted Amy Odum's foster head-tilt bun, Honey, as a buddy for Sparkles, a three-legged rabbit who had been fostered by Vivian Barna. Sparkles is now nicknamed Spartacus because she vigilantly guards the bedroom and only allows Karis and Lillian to enter. Here is an update from Karis.

It started out as one of those genius ideas you have halfway through a bottle of wine, only this time it still seemed like a great idea in the morning. After much

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Letters *(Continued from page 13)*

“Googling” and “Petfinding” we came across Sparkles, a spotted bunny with special needs. Duh! Of course we wanted her. She only has three legs and we are BOTH special-education teachers. It was obvious that she was meant to be ours.

Finally, the day came to pick her up from Petco. We got there early so there was plenty of time to pet the other bunnies up for adoption. I even asked to hold one named Honey who had head tilt. Big mistake! I knew as I was holding her that there would be no turning back. No more than a month after adopting Sparkles, I found myself sitting on the R train to Bay Ridge holding Honey in my arms.

Now, almost three months later, three-legged Sparkles is running our household and chasing the cats out of her (our) room. She has some attitude on her! Even though Honey is not allowed in her (our) room either, she pretty much rules the rest of our two-bedroom apartment. We were very determined to help Honey improve her quality of life. We decided to accept her for who she is, the same way we do with our students. We accept them for who they are and strive to give them the freedom and independence they need to flourish despite their disabilities. This is what we did for Honey. We allow her to be free all of the time and blocked off anything dangerous. We take Honey outside on our roof deck where she runs around

happily in the sun. We give her lots of neck and back massages and sometimes hold her head straight for as long as she will let us without hurting her. She took antibiotics for two weeks to treat a cold but she was already improving before starting her meds, so we aren't sure if that played a role or not in her recovery. Today, only about one month later, her head is mostly upright, and she has absolutely no limitations. Honey can stand up on her back feet, groom all parts of her body and is running over to us all the time for love. It's often hard for us to believe that she is the same bunny we saw in Petco three months ago with tangled fur and a crooked head.

Karis

Lil

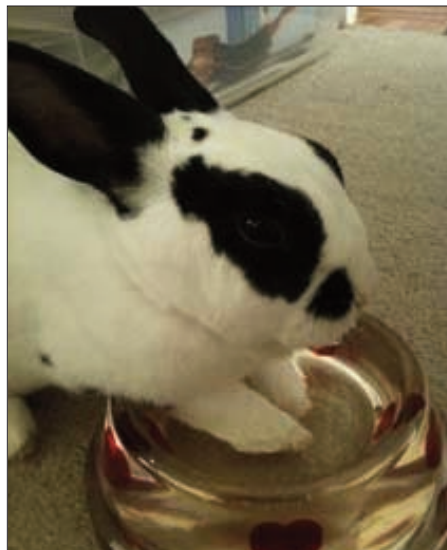
Tiffany Fisher has two bunnies, Lil and Jack. She sent us a letter at the end of October.

I really enjoyed the conference and will hope to get more info on bonding when I get closer to bonding my two buns Jack and Lil. I will probably do this after the holidays when Lil is a little bigger.

I sent a few pictures of Lil, drinking with her paws in her dish. I have tons because she does it 100% of the time! Dr. Quesenberry tells me there is no reason to worry.

Tiffany

Photo: Tiffany Fisher

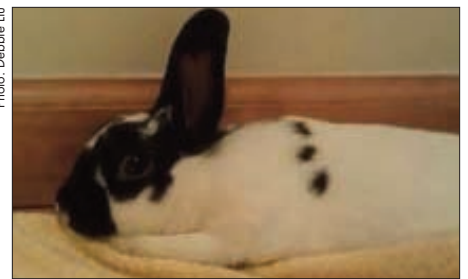


Lil.

Roxy

Roxy, who had been known as Nina, was adopted by Debbie as a partner for her rabbit Charcoal. We received this update in October.

Photo: Debbie Liu



Roxy.

Nina is adorable! She is now renamed Roxy (short for Rorschach because of her pattern and it seems to fit her active personality better), and we are still trying to take a good picture of her because she is extremely curious about the camera and cannot sit still for a moment. She is going through bonding sessions with my other rabbit at home, Charcoal.

I love your shelter volunteers. The rabbits are well taken care of, and Amy and Cindy are lovely and helpful folks. I will definitely recommend your group to my other friends.

Thanks,
Deb

Sammy

Sammy was adopted in early October by Rachel and her fiancé, Andrew, as a friend for their previously adopted bunny Bullet (formerly known as Twinkle). Rachel sent this letter to Cindy Stutts a month later.

Sammy's doing great! He's such a little cuddlebug. He begs for pets from everyone he meets. He's a huge hit with friends who stop by.

Bonding with our resident bun Bullet is going slowly. They get 15- to 20- minute dates every day and switch pens and play spaces daily so they can learn to share.

Photo: Rachel Nash



Bullet and Sammy.

Sammy is such a sweetheart. Every day during their date he walks slowly over to Bullet and puts his nose right by her face waiting patiently for grooming. She hasn't give in yet, but I'm sure he'll win her over any day now! :)

Rachel Nash

(Continued on page 15)



Veronica.

Letters (Continued from page 14)

Veronica

Amber and Adelmo adopted Veronica in late November 2010 as a partner for Thumperino. Amber sent us this email to celebrate Veronica's one-year "adoptaversary."

Hi All,

Last year on the Saturday following Thanksgiving, Adelmo and I adopted Veronica. She and our male rabbit, Thumperino, have been inseparable since.

She was such an amazing addition to all of our lives! She greets each day with a race around the kitchen and a bounce around the breakfast bowl with Thumperino. She had a busy year. She got her therapy license, went on vacation to the Jersey Shore twice, learned to stand on her hind legs and to put up her paws for a carrot, mastered jumping three feet high to sit on the sofa, and visited my office at Rockefeller Center three times.

She has a lot of fans and makes friends everywhere she goes. She especially

likes to play in the chair in our music room. Thanks for introducing her to us and making her part of our family. Hope this message finds RR&R and all the bunnies doing well!

All the Best,
Amber

P.S. I was home and spent the day watching them play hide-and-go-seek with an old cardboard box, binkying and chasing each other around the living room. Bunnies are the best cure for any illness!

Warm Wishes From Our Warren to Yours!



Illustration: ©Kathie Rokita, www.lovinganimalportraits.com.

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

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Chapter Manager, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab,
mec@cloud9.net, (914) 337-6146, rabbitcare.org

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

Cindy Stutts, HRS Licensed Educator,
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Jennifer Saver, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

THUMP December 2011

Newsletter of RRR/NYC HRS
56 West Pondfield Road #5C
Bronxville, NY 10708

www.rabbitcare.org

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Creative Director: Jane O'Wyatt

Masthead Logo Designer: Mary Ann Maier

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation in New York State. Our purpose is to rescue, rehabilitate and find permanent homes for abandoned, abused and neglected rabbits, and to educate the 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.