

THUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS • FEBRUARY 2010

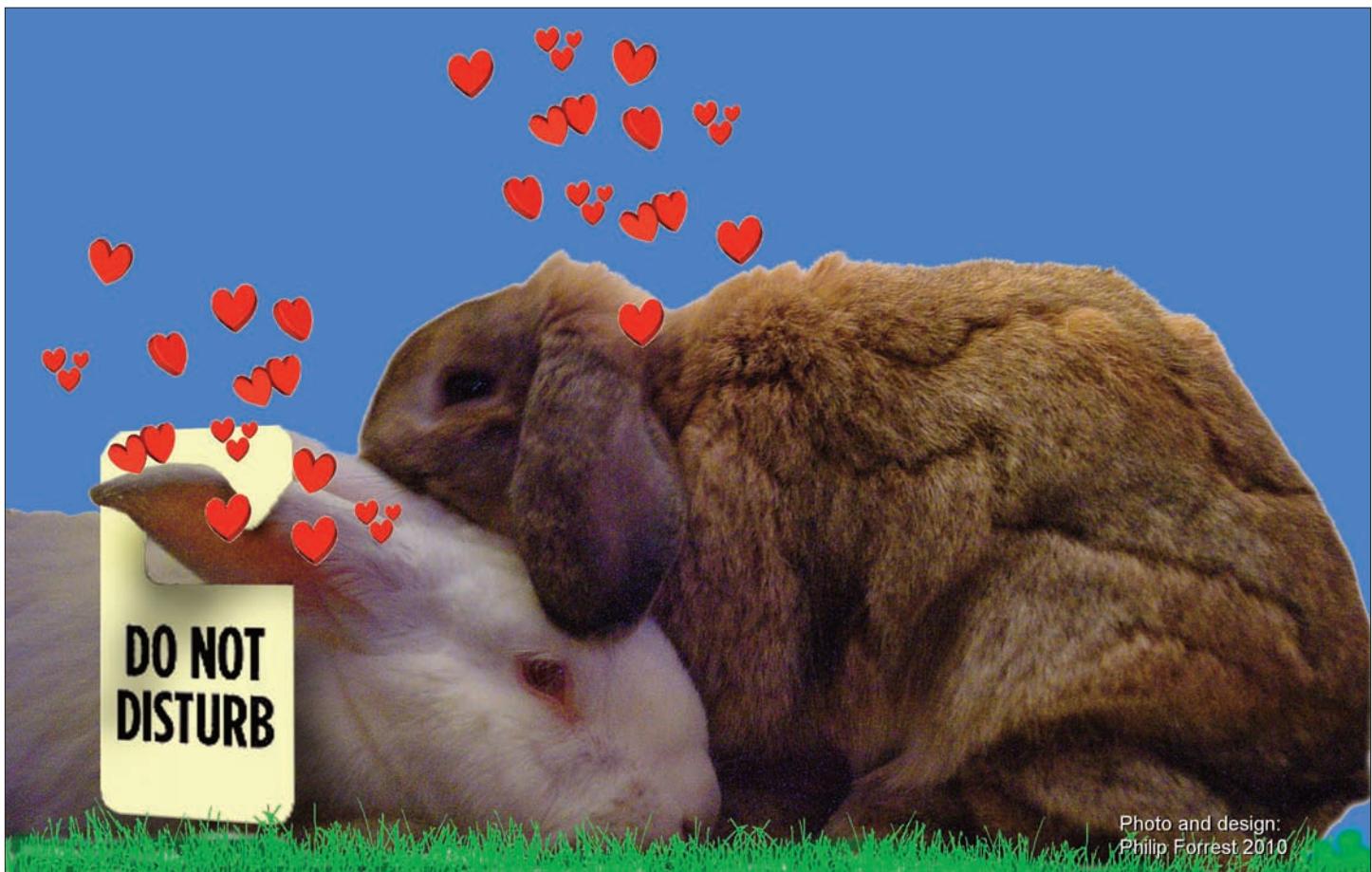


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Irving and Filli Ott.

Photo: Erin McElhinney



Mocha Jane and Tadpole share a snack, Page 3

Photo: Mary Ann Maier



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Common Concerns About Adopting a Partner Bun

By Kerstin Aumann

Please note: Rabbits meeting each other for the first time will often exhibit aggression, and can inflict very serious – and sometimes life-threatening – injuries on each other. Bonding rabbits is a tricky process, and not all rabbits will bond. Occasionally, bunny introductions go smoothly and easily but more often than not, skilled help is essential. Before deciding to adopt a partner for your bunny, please contact your nearest licensed HRS educators or NYCACC rabbit volunteers for information, advice and assistance. There is no charge for this service.

"February is Adopt a Rescued Rabbit Month!" But for those of us who already have adopted a rabbit, why not also make February "Adopt a Mate for Your Rabbit Month?" It is the month of Valentine's Day, after all.

When I adopted my first rabbit from the NYC House Rabbit Society, I wouldn't even consider adopting more than one bunny, in spite of being encouraged otherwise by the HRS educators who helped with the adoption. After all, I was a broke graduate student living in a tiny studio apartment. Where would I find the space, the money and the time to care for more than one little furry roommate?

So, I proceeded to adopt just one little guy – Schnucki – and developed a very close relationship with him that lasted many years. Schnucki had a good life with me – the run of my apartment, a good diet, lots of affection and regular checkups by a rabbit-savvy vet. I never thought there was anything missing from Schnucki's life.

It wasn't until Schnucki was well into his senior years and I had started volunteering in the rabbit room at the NYC Animal Care & Control shelter that I took the plunge and brought home a second rabbit – Bella, a beautiful Siamese dwarf girl. Schnucki and Bella liked each other instantly and were ready to live together

as a fully bonded pair only three days after Bella's arrival.

Boy, was I surprised about the difference Bella made in Schnucki's life! It was as if years had been taken off Schnucki's age – his energy, appetite and health rebounded. It was so much fun to see the two of them interact – like little lovebirds sometimes, and like an old married couple at other times. In a very short amount of time, Bella had taught me that adding a second bun to your home doesn't just double the pleasure, the love and fulfillment of owning a pet rabbit – it increases it exponentially, with mental and physical health benefits for all parties involved.

Since my first bunny-bonding experience, I've become an HRS educator myself and seen countless bunny matches and relationships. It is clear to me now that no bunny should live without a bunny friend in his or her life. Below, I'd like to address some concerns that adopters – like me – might have about adding a second (or third) bunny to their home:

Myth: Two rabbits need more space, require more work and are more expensive than just one bunny.

Fact is, even a single rabbit requires a fair amount of space. If you already give your rabbit the recommended amount of

space (e.g., free-range in a bunny-proofed room, a puppy pen or a double/triple-level bunny condo), he or she can comfortably share this space with a mate. It is only during the initial bonding process, when the rabbits are gradually getting to know each other, that some extra space may be required to house the rabbits side-by-side until they are ready to share the same territory.

Fact is, also, that bonded pairs or groups are much less likely to get bored and into trouble. Many bunny owners report that it is actually *easier* to care for a group than for a single.

Once bonded, your rabbits will share the same space and the same (large) litter box, food dish and water bowl. Virtually no extra time is required. The extra expenditures for hay, pellets and veggies are nominal, especially when you buy in bulk. (To save on bedding materials, use old newspaper rather than commercial bedding.) The only place where you'll notice some extra cost for a second bun is at the vet's – but if all goes well, this, too, is limited to the cost of a second office visit.

Myth: Adding a second bunny to my home will affect my relationship with my first rabbit, maybe making it less close.

(Continued on page 3)



Couch potatoes Bella, at rear, and Schnucki.

Mocha Jane and Tadpole – An Enduring Love

By Erin McElhinney

Some rabbits seem to carry themselves with an impossible majesty; everything about them is perfectly delicate – their milky doe eyes, the silent beauty of their chest rising and falling during a twilight nap, even the way they determinedly rearrange hay in their litter box. But this is not a story about my other bun, Ginger Madeleine, so let me share with you how my Mocha Jane clawed, scratched and nipped her way into my heart and home.

Dumped at the shelter with her hus-bun, Thaddeus Joseph (Tadpole), just about 48 hours before giving birth, MJ made the most of her situation from the get-go, living in a cage of eight squirming babies – five of whom survived into adulthood. The decision to separate her and Tadpole was made for logistical reasons mostly. The cages were simply too small to fit a whole lop family, and without 24-hour supervision, who knew what kind of father Tadpole would be?

During playtime at the shelter, MJ would lay her furry body down, pressing against the cool concrete floor. Her babies, meanwhile, delighted in movement and zoomed around every which way, binkying like fluffy popcorn kernels, their lop ears flying out to the side like pigtails. Like all the other volunteers, I was smitten with this wonderful family and would catch myself beaming on the train just thinking about them. I pored over every shelter email update detailing their shenanigans, sometimes calling my boyfriend at the time to read it aloud to him. I remember laughing heartily at their antics while he remained thoroughly unimpressed. “You never say Thaddeus’ name,” I said to him once. “Thaddeus,” was his flat, unamused response. But to me, the love story of these two proud parents was captivating.

One Saturday at the shelter, I decided to set up MJ and her kids in one pen, with

(Continued on page 4)



Photos: Erin McElhinney
Top and middle photos: Mocha Jane, at right in both photos, tending to Tadpole when he was under the weather; bottom photo: spooning together after messing up the cage.

Adopting a Partner Bun

(Continued from page 2)

Your relationship with your first rabbit is unlikely to change as a result of bonding him with a mate. You are still an integral part of his “warren” – he will continue to look to you for food, pets and attention. And he’ll enjoy the extra attention he gets from his girlfriend! Adopting a mate, *for some*, may be the best gift you can give.

Myth: *My bunny is so close to me, gets so much attention, he doesn’t need – or want – a rabbit friend.*

Rabbits are hardwired to live in social groups – a solo bunny would not survive the perils of being a prey animal. Rabbits look to each for safety and support in numbers. This hasn’t changed just because your rabbit has lived most of his life without rabbit companionship. Human affection cannot replace having a mate

(or several) who shares the same instincts, natural behaviors and communication patterns. Try as you might, you’ll never be as fluent in “rabbit” as another rabbit. While your rabbit might certainly need to get used to rabbit company after years without it and probably needs to brush up on her social skills, chances are, she will adjust quickly and learn to appreciate company of her own kind. Rabbits whose bonds with particular humans are so fulfilling that they are uninterested in bonding with other rabbits are rare.

Fact is, you’ll never know until you try – it’s very difficult to predict how any rabbit will respond to a new rabbit in his or her life. That is why we facilitate “bunny speed-dating” sessions at the shelter. Set one up for your rabbit today!

Myth: *I understand the benefits of having a bonded mate, but I’m afraid my rabbit is*

too old now . . . the bonding process would be too stressful.

Fact is, it’s never too late for love. We often see rabbits find new mates late in life (sometimes after losing an earlier mate, sometimes for the very first time). In Schnuki’s case, he was probably close to 9 or 10 when he met Bella. While it’s true that the bonding process can be mildly stressful, if it is well managed, it’s a good kind of stress – with excitement and curiosity, more than fear or anger. And the rewards are undeniable!

Our HRS educators and NYC AC&C rabbit volunteers are happy to coach you through a safe and constructive bonding experience. You and your bunny don’t have to go through it alone.

So, what are you waiting for? Make February “Adopt a Mate for My Rabbit Month” and let us help you find a Valentine for your bunny!

Enduring Love

(Continued from page 3)

Tadpole in an adjoining pen. I had heard that some of the other volunteers had tried this and that Thaddeus would just try to kiss his way into the pen with his Mocha Jane. He did not disappoint. He immediately hopped out of his own pen and jammed his blocky head through the gate of the other pen, licking his kids gathered around him. Mocha Jane lay on the concrete, her eyes riveted on the scene but cool as a cucumber.

And then one day, as is the way at any animal shelter, a round of musical cages ensued and rabbits got shuffled around. Tadpole was adopted by a young lady in a trendy financial-district apartment who promised to adopt and rebond Mocha Jane once she was done nursing her babies. The babies went into foster care, but Mocha Jane kept producing milk, so some kids were brought back to continue nursing. And then she was really done nursing, but her intended home said Thaddeus was enough of a handful by himself, and Mocha Jane was not welcome there. Reading the email updates on the disintegration of this family – *this* family – was too much to bear. Next thing I knew I was picking up MJ to foster until we found the right home for her.

Like I said earlier, some buns scratch and claw their way into your heart and MJ wasted no time. On the weekends she would jump up on my bed – and nibble my then-boyfriend's hair like straw. Paralyzed in fear, he would try to wake me without making any movements himself, whispering insistently, "get her off of me!" MJ would see me stir and walk over his face as if he weren't even there, making sure to nip at me in case I had forgotten she hadn't had breakfast yet! When guests came and stayed on an air mattress on the floor, MJ would jump on my bed and dive-bomb them, her 6.5-pound body landing on their faces. On at least one occasion she got up on her hind legs – I am not exaggerating when I say this – and slapped a very

shocked Ginger Madeleine across the face! The tougher it was to love MJ, the more I came to love her.

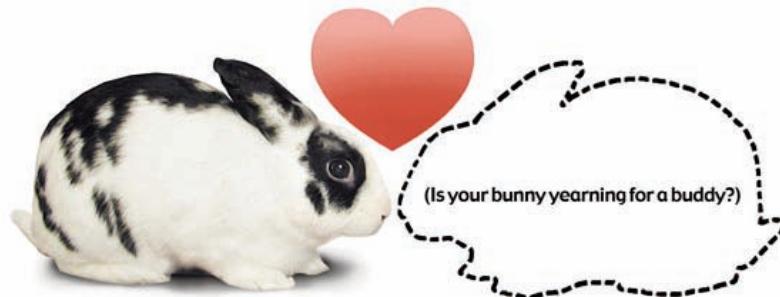
And then I got the call about Tadpole. His owner was moving away and would I take him from her and try to reunite him with Mocha Jane after nearly a full year apart? And just like that, my crew grew from two to three and I welcomed him into my home. Mocha Jane, however, was not as welcoming. She had not forgotten the year spent nursing and raising five kids on her own and then living in a studio as a foster bun.

During the first attempted bonding session, they staged a great escape from my grasp – Tadpole took off for under my bed with Mocha Jane hot on his heels. There were thumpings and fur flew. As I bent down to pull them out, they emerged and weakly flopped down side-by-side

next to their cage. It would seem as if they had fought it out, and Mocha Jane forgave him. That was almost two years ago, and they have been inseparably bonded ever since.

To this day, when something spooks them, the two buns run out and meet up in the middle of my studio. They press their bodies together and, without skipping a beat and without a second glance, run together to some predetermined hideaway. They are in tune with each other, body and soul, and rarely are outside of each other's sight lines. I sometimes age them by the number of boyfriends of mine they have outlasted (two, along with four really bad first dates), but when I see the tender way they look out for each other, I know what true love looks like, and I wouldn't settle for anything less than the love of a Tadpole!

February is Adopt-a-Rescued-Rabbit Month!



This month, match your bunny—or yourself!—with a rescued rabbit.
Nothing can match the love.
Please visit www.rabbit.org today!



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

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Long Island Rabbit Rescue: A Peek at What We Do

Photos: Mary Ann Maier



The Uniondale rabbits were living here.



Rescuers secured exit holes.

By Mary Ann Maier and Nancy Schreiber

Although we are all one organization, rabbit rescue on Long Island is different from rabbit rescue in New York City. We receive several calls a week concerning stray rabbits. Since we do not have a physical shelter building, we foster in our homes, and rarely have space. Therefore, our ability to actually go and capture stray rabbits is conditional on having a committed fosterer at the time of the rescue. We provide the fosterers with supplies and hands-on setup assistance, emergency medical care as needed, and help with finding suitable adopters.

Many people do not feel ready for the commitment and, sadly, the rabbits they call us about go unrescued. However, some people who find stray rabbits not only foster, but actually keep the bunnies we help rescue. Here are some of the success stories.

Uniondale

In November, we were called by one of our adopters and HRS member Nancy Sullivan, who reported two stray bunnies roaming the grounds of the school where she is a teacher. Nancy was willing to foster these two bunnies, which made it possible for us to try to rescue them.

These rabbits were apparently released by one of the families in the neighborhood. A male and a female, they had been kept in a small, cramped cage. After the female had several litters and killed the babies (likely due to stress), the owners became disenchanted, and released them outdoors.

This proved to be one of our more difficult roundups. The bunnies were reported sighted over an area of several blocks, which included the grounds of the school where Nancy is a teacher, and its surrounding neighborhood. They were often sighted exiting holes in the foundation space under the temporary classroom where Nancy teaches. We set Havahart humane traps, but to no avail. We were concerned because we assumed the female was pregnant and it was only a matter of time before she would have a litter in the wild. In addition, the neighborhood had the usual predators found in a typical suburban area – raccoons, dogs and cats. The rabbits were also crossing busy streets daily.

Over a three-week period, we went many times to look for the rabbits. We would pack up all of our gear in two cars, and we would walk up and down the streets, check our four traps, canvas the school grounds, stalk the rabbits' known hideouts,

and talk to neighbors. The reported sightings by others were becoming less frequent, and when seen, it was impossible for anyone to get near them; the buns, initially friendly and trusting of humans, had now become afraid because they'd been chased by the schoolchildren so many times.

Finally, we had success: the male entered the Havahart trap that we had set up on the property of his original home. However, another week went by without a reported sighting of the female, and we feared the worst.

Our hopes dwindling, we took a drive through the neighborhood one late afternoon as the sun was setting, which is when rabbits like to come out and graze. And we sighted the female! She was on the front lawn of the house directly across the street from the school. Our team of four (Nancy Schreiber, Mary Ann Maier, Nancy Sullivan and Carol Olivie) came up with a plan to herd the bunny toward the school fence with which the rabbit was familiar. It was her access into and out of school grounds.

To prepare, we closed up all of her access holes in the fence with netting, and placed exercise pens strategically to help

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Long Island

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guide the rabbit into a corner, where we could catch her safely with a hand-held net. We slowly and quietly approached the rabbit from the sides opposite the fence and urged her to head in the direction of her familiar fence. We figured she would readily see this as her escape route, because she knew how to get past the fence.

Instead, she darted under the car parked in the driveway of the home where she had been grazing, and wouldn't come out. This presented a real challenge at first, so we changed tactics: we retrieved our pens from their positions by the fence and instead used them to surround the car. Now it would be easy, right? Wrong. It is very difficult to get a net under a car to catch a rabbit. The only other way is to get a rabbit to run out from under the car, which was now surrounded by rescuers, who were surrounded by linked exercise pens. If we could get the rabbit to run out, we had a few seconds to try to net her. If we missed, she would run back under the car, more frightened and even more unlikely to come out again. This endeavor took us about two hours.

It was dark and cold by now, and we had to lie on cold pavement and mud for most of the time. To make matters worse, the owner of the house wanted to go somewhere, so he needed to take the car. He wasn't too pleased with this intrusion onto his property, but we had to plead with him to wait for us to finish. Finally, after much coaxing, the bunny came out from under the car and we netted her!

Nancy Sullivan had both buns spayed and neutered (no pregnancy!), and is now planning on bonding them and adding them to her family. She currently has HRS rescued bunny Natalie, a widow who lost her 15-year-old mate, Tibbar, earlier this month.

Wyandanch

On Nov. 17, we received a call that five rabbits had been abandoned by someone

in a park in Wyandanch. The caller, Jo Ellen, walks her dog in that park every day, so we knew that the rabbits had been left there within the preceding 24 hours. Some of the bunnies were so tame that Jo Ellen was able to pick two of them up. She called us for help with the two she had caught, and for assistance catching the remaining ones. We met her in the park and scoured the area looking for the remaining rabbits, but couldn't find any, so we proceeded to Jo Ellen's to set up the two rescued rabbits in cages. We determined that they were a male and female, so we had to arrange an urgent spay.

Jo Ellen continued to look for the remaining buns over next few weeks but never found any. We assume that they were either killed or picked up by people. One person in the neighborhood reported seeing a dead rabbit in the busy street that was adjacent to the park. The good news is that Jo Ellen's buns are doing very well, and she most likely will keep at least the spayed female. She is considering keeping the male and bonding him to the female.

Glen Oaks, Queens

In December, we were informed of four stray rabbits on the grounds of the Queens County Farm Museum in Glen Oaks. The origin of these bunnies was a mystery. The farm staff denied having released the rabbits, but we knew the farm had rabbits at one time and no longer had any in captivity. Complicating matters, there is a petting zoo on the other side of an adjoining fence that at the time had many rabbits, and people were known to occasionally abandon their pet rabbits on the grounds of the farm. Ultimately, though, where the rabbits came from didn't matter as much as the fact that they faced all kinds of outdoor dangers. We also knew they immediately would start breeding.

We didn't have space for four strays in our rescue, but the person who had contacted us had a fosterer for at least two, so we decided to go in and round them up.

The rabbits were scattered around the farm. One was in the goat pen and one was in with the cows. We needed the assistance of the staff to catch them, but the roundup was relatively easy: three females and one male, all docile and friendly. They received immediate vet care, which was essential not only to ensure that they were in good health, but to determine if any of the females were pregnant. The three females were in fact pregnant, and underwent emergency spays. This is necessary and standard to avoid adding to the rabbit overpopulation problem.

Two of the four have been placed in a loving home, and the other two, Maisy and Bradley, are available for adoption.



Uniondale waiting game: Nancy Sullivan, left, and Angela daSilva helped in the rescue operation.

Other Long Island News:

An in-store Petco rabbit-adoption program for Long Island is in the works. We are working with Petcos in Garden City Park and in Levittown to have adoptable rabbits living in the stores, just like the New York City arrangement. We will start with one rabbit in each store, but may increase that to two in the future. This program should be up and running in February, just in time for "Adopt-a-Rabbit" month.

We will need volunteers at both stores to tend to the rabbits, bring them greens, exercise them, help educate staff and customers, pick up the adoption applications, and share your enthusiasm for pet rabbits. Please contact Nancy Schreiber at nschreibmd@aol.com if you are able to help.

Super Pet and Kaytee, After Outcry, Halt Campaign Promoting Small Animals as Gifts

By Nancy Schreiber

In November 2009, Central Avian & Small Animal, which sells the Kaytee and Super Pet brands of pet supplies, began a Web campaign encouraging the purchase of small animals as gifts for children. This was clearly timed to coincide with peak Christmas season sales. The campaign, "No Batteries Required," suggested that animals are good, lower-maintenance toys for children because "no batteries are required."

Mary Ann Maier initiated an email and letter-writing campaign by the recipients of this newsletter, to let the company know that we were horrified that this campaign encouraged the irresponsible purchase of live animals as gifts for children, while abandoned pets die daily in shelters.

Mary Ann also brought this issue to the attention of Margo DeMello, president

of the House Rabbit Society. Ms. DeMello wrote a letter to Central Avian & Small Animal, describing the campaign as "irresponsible and reprehensible."

In her letter to the company, Ms. DeMello also said, "Making matters worse, your care pages are loaded with misinformation. For example, grass hay, not chew toys, is required for rabbits' dental health. And your 'Things To Do' tip to 'Host your own wrestling match'? This suggestion demonstrates such a lack of understanding of how children interact with – and injure – small animals that it boggles the mind."

Shortly after the letter-writing effort began, the company withdrew its "No Batteries Required" campaign.

Ms. DeMello, in an email to HRS members on Dec. 8, said, "Because of your emails, phone calls and letters, I am happy to

announce that Central Avian and Small Animal, owners of Kaytee and Super Pet, have withdrawn their ill-informed 'No Batteries Required' campaign which encouraged the purchase of small animals as holiday pets."

Mary Ann Maier, meanwhile, also has voiced concern about the company's Web site, PetFundango (www.petfundango.com), which includes statements such as "Small animal pets love classrooms," encouraging teachers to get small pets for their classrooms, as well as promoting the purchase of small animals by parents for their children. The Web site was addressed in earlier letters to the company, but the misinformation hasn't been corrected. Please visit the Web site and email comments to the company.

Sweets for Your Sweet

By Natalie Reeves

Do not forget your bunny this Valentine's Day! Consider baking cookies for your bunny that he or she will love. I baked cookies for my bunnies on Christmas, following the recipe below that I found online at

<http://www.rabbit.org/fun/biscuits.html>.

I had to purchase a blender and a coffee grinder just for the purpose, but it was worth it to see the pure ecstasy my bunnies experienced when I gave them their cookies. Keep in mind that these are treats, and you need to limit them. I break one into tiny pieces and give ½ to 1 small cookie (about the size of a bottle cap) to each bunny per day. I have scoured the Internet for bunny-safe treat recipes, but I found very few.

Brenda's Homemade Bunny Biscuits

(This article, by *Kirsten Macintyre*, is on the House Rabbit Society Web site.)

This recipe came to us from our friends "North of the Border." Brenda Plaxton, the kitchen whiz who invented it, lives on Salt

Spring Island in British Columbia, Canada. Brenda originally created these treats for her own buns, Finnegan, Fiona and Satchmo (her border collie, Brodie, rather likes the biscuits, too!). Brenda shared her own recipe with another Salt Spring Island rabbit lover, Libby Hughes-Klokeid, who then sent it to us.

Remember, these are treats, so give them sparingly.

1 small carrot, pureed
1/2 banana, mashed until really creamy
1 tbsp honey
1/4 cup rabbit pellets, ground finely in a coffee grinder
1/4 cup ground oats, ground finely in a coffee grinder

Mix pureed carrot, banana and honey in a medium bowl. Add pellet powder and ground oats. Mix until blended. Knead in your hands for 1-2 minutes. Roll out the "dough" in 1/8- to 1/4-inch thick layers between sheets of plastic wrap. Cut into small cookies (about ¾-inch across). Place cut shapes onto a parchment-paper-covered cookie sheet. Bake at 325 degrees for

about 30 minutes (check to make sure they are not browning too much). Turn off the heat and let the cookies sit in the warm oven for an hour or so.

I had a few problems with the recipe above. I did not know how much water to add to my blender, so I tried with different amounts. My dough was not easy to work with. It was a little easier to deal with after I refrigerated it for about 30 minutes. My cookies were chewy, rather than crunchy, but my bunnies loved them this way. I kept them in the refrigerator.

Based on my research, I have found that people who cook for their bunnies start with Brenda's recipe or something similar and vary it in endless ways. If you cook for your bunny, please share your recipe with me, or if you make the cookies based on the recipe below, let me know how your bunnies enjoyed them. We can print other recipes that are popular in future editions of this newsletter. I am looking forward to your ideas. You can email me at NatalieLReeves@yahoo.com.

Robert's Near-Spay Experience

By Jane O'Wyatt

Brooklyn shelter dropped off a brown-and-white bun, Dumbo (A786611), who they say was neutered. Sweet guy ... loved the greens.....

— rabbit volunteer's Manhattan shelter report, 10.28.2008

Dumbo: Left scrotal sac inflamed, swollen (right normal). Dr. B. examined, said "Not bad." Treatment: monitor, give Metacam for pain.

— rabbit volunteer's report, 10.30.2008

Dumbo is a lively, personable young adult male. Although he was found on a street in Queens (and not a chichi part of Brooklyn), he is so immaculately clean and well mannered that he could not have been outside very long. This perfect house rabbit, medium-size, alert and playful, enjoys having his head and cheeks rubbed. Dumbo has been neutered and is litter-box trained.

— Blurb sent to Petfinder
— 10.30.2008

Since NYC Animal Care & Control intake workers often give generic, cartoon or storybook names to abandoned rabbits who have been picked up outdoors and brought to the Manhattan shelter, Cindy Stutts, manager of the NYC/AC&C rabbit program, gives the Fluffies, Bugsies, Snowballs, Rogers and Peters who arrive in the rabbit room new, distinctive names that suit their personalities. While the rabbit named Dumbo was recovering from a post-neuter-surgery condition called scrotal hematoma, Cindy renamed him Dominick. When he was adopted on Nov. 11, 2008, his new guardians decided to call him Robert.*

Robert's adopters were determined to take excellent care of him, and because they occasionally hired me to bunny-sit, I

can say that they have done a great job. Robert is an energetic, friendly, contented bunny whose home base is a large, open cage within a fenced-in area; he has lots of free-range time every day. He is provided with two large litter boxes filled with Farmer Dave's first-cut timothy hay (one box is a bed, the other a latrine), a diet of fresh greens and timothy pellets, cardboard for chewing, safe bunny toys and sisal rugs.

So it came as surprise last fall when I received an email from Robert's family saying that a local vet had told them that Robert was a girl, not a boy. "Maybe we should call the bunny Roberta instead," they said. I emailed back asking who their vet was, and asked fellow rabbit volunteer Kerstin Aumann to double-check Robert's medical history in the NYC Animal Care & Control database. Kerstin quickly replied:

"Hm, it'd be good to know who the vet was... the shelter records indicate that he is a boy, was neutered on 10/25/08, given Metacam on the days following surgery and had a scrotal hematoma that was noted on 10/30 and 11/2."

(Scrotal hematoma, a rare post-operative complication, is an accumulation of blood in the scrotal sac. This blood comes from the leakage of vessels cut and sutured during the removal of the testes. Although in many cases the condition resolves on its own — the body resorbing the hematoma — hemorrhages and infections can also occur.)

After emailing the medical data from Kerstin to Robert's family, I received an email from them saying that Robert was scheduled for spay surgery at Brooklyn AC&C that same day! Yikes!!

I grabbed the phone and reached Robert's people at home just after they had dropped him at Brooklyn AC&C for spay surgery. I told them that Robert was definitely a male and begged them to go

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Robert at home

and retrieve their bunny ASAP! They resisted, saying that the nice vet in their neighborhood was certain that Robert was an unspayed female. What finally convinced them was the information from AC&C's medical record about the scrotal hematoma following Robert's neuter surgery. Guessing that they might have to stand in a long line before they could speak to anyone at Brooklyn AC&C, I called Kerstin, and Kerstin called Cindy Stutts. Cindy, through her AC&C contacts, was able to put a halt to the surgery. When the medical staff stopped, Robert's abdomen had already been shaved — in preparation for spay surgery that would have revealed that he was a male.

What had prompted Robert's guardians to take him to that particular vet? Because the practice was in their neighborhood, and they had noticed pinkish urine, which they thought contained blood, in Robert's litter box. This vet examined Robert and said that his urine showed a little blood because it was "her time of month." Nothing serious, the vet said, but Robert should be spayed, and the cost would be \$300. Fortunately, this was too much for Robert's humans, who decided to have Brooklyn AC&C do the spay. It would be done free, they were

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

(Continued on page 9)

Robert

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told, because Robert had been adopted from AC&C.

Polito's family was reluctant to reveal the name of the vet, whom they liked and trusted. They said, "he seemed to be a very caring and good vet. I think it's just rabbits happened not to be his specialty."

Indeed, many vets may be very caring and good – for cats and dogs – but since companion rabbits are not among the species routinely covered in veterinary medical school, many vets are not aware of the following essentials:

- 1) How to distinguish a male from a female rabbit.
- 2) How to distinguish an altered male from an unspayed female rabbit. (Sexing neutered males can be difficult, but informed rabbit people know how to extrude a neutered male's penis.)
- 3) That unspayed female rabbits do not have a "time of the month." Their reproductive organs differ in structure and function from those of cats and

dogs. Unspayed female rabbits are *induced ovulators*, and don't have a true estrous cycle as seen in other mammals. Ovulation occurs *as a result* of having been mounted/inseminated. (Unspayed female rabbits can get pregnant the day they give birth.)

- 4) That the color of normal rabbit urine can vary from yellow to pink to orange to tobacco-juice brown, etc.

Other rabbits and their owners have had experiences with vets who do not specialize in rabbits, and many have not been as fortunate as Robert and his family. Some rabbits have even died at the hands of vets who were not knowledgeable about rabbits.

On the Rabbit Rescue & Rehab Web site and in each issue of NYC Metro Rabbit News/THUMP, a list of rabbit-savvy vets can be found, but publishing this list does not eliminate the threat to rabbits posed by vets such as Dr. X. I discussed Robert's case with Mary Cotter, chapter manager of Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. What can be done, I asked, to protect rabbits from vets like Dr. X? Mary replied that in a well documented case (with the client's permission), a rabbit-savvy vet – probably a member of House Rabbit

Society – might contact the vet in question. In such an intervention, the rabbit expert would cite the case, provide relevant information about rabbit anatomy and physiology, recommend rabbit-savvy vets to whom the vet could refer rabbit owners, and offer mentoring in rabbit medicine. With respect to the latter, Mary said, "A few years ago, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab arranged for a number of veterinarians who work at AC&C to learn about rabbits, particularly spay/neuter surgery, from local vets with rabbit expertise. Rabbit-savvy vets in the area are happy to share their expertise with colleagues whose professional training has focused primarily on cats and dogs."

When contacted by a local rabbit-savvy vet about Robert, Dr. X said that he did not recall having encountered him or his guardians, and he did not respond to his colleague's invitation to learn more about rabbits in a clinical setting. He did, however, ask about experts to whom he could refer rabbit owners. If, as a result of his discussion with a rabbit-savvy vet, he decides to refer rabbit cases to rabbit experts, the intervention can be considered a success.

Photos to Make Us Smile

Photo: Kerstin Aumann



Victor Sinansky created a Snow Rabbit during a December visit to Germany.

Photo: Anita Belew



Reuben, a Cavalier spaniel, right, kisses the head of Jack Bunny, who is blind. Note: Rabbits and dogs can get along, but their introductions should be careful and controlled, and their interactions should always be supervised.

Love Letters From Adopters: a Sampling

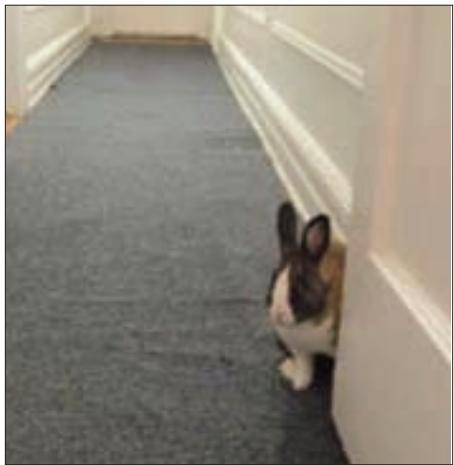
Arnie, previously known as Amsterdam, was adopted in the fall. His adopter, Alistair, sent us this update in early November:

We have had such fun with Arnie playing and running all around the long hallway, the dining room and the large living room – lots of great exercise, and only once I remember him getting tired and voluntarily returning to his room for a rest. He has stretched out full-length in various places and that suggests to me a degree of comfort and security, which feels very good...I'll keep in touch. I am so delighted and grateful to have this wonderful bunny in my life. I'm also conscious that by comparison he is a very special bunny.

Best wishes to you in your work and care for bunnies.

Arnie sends his love,
Alistair

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Arnie

Photo: Catina



Bugsy

Bugsy, formerly called Brock, was adopted in December 2009 by Catina and Mike, an animal-loving couple in Queens. We received this update from Catina.

Hi, guys,

We are in love with Bugsy, who was found in the streets of Brooklyn and who now is part of our family. As you know, Mikey set up the adoption on Christmas eve as a wonderful Christmas present.

I just want to let you know that Bugsy had his first doctor's appointment so he could get a basic checkup. I asked for his nails to get clipped, ears cleaned and to show me how to take his temperature. The vet LOVED him! She said I was taking great care of him, he's in perfect health and that he had personality... Bugsy was running to me when she was trying to check him. She said to him, "Wow, you already know who your Mommy is!" I'm a proud Mommy! Thanks! Hope all is well with you and all your furry family.

Good night. Xoxo
Catina

P.S. You can share my story with the WORLD if you like! My Bugsy is priceless and I would feel honored for you to share my story with others. Thanks for showing interest in Bugsy and my first-time motherhood.

Mork and Mindy, now called Homer and Harper Lee, were adopted in October 2009.

It's been three months since we adopted Homer and Harper Lee, a bonded pair of mini-lops, and things are great. Getting to know their personalities and finding a way for all of us to live together peacefully has required adjustments, like any relationship. I may be a zoo veterinary technician who has worked with rabbits, but Homer and Harper are my first pet rabbits. I am learning everyday!

We are filled with gratitude for how sweet and affectionate they are. They spend their unsupervised time in a two-tiered Leith abode with a puppy pen attached for more space. When we are home we open the pen and they freely roam the apartment, checking out everything. We have found that rabbit-proofing and keeping them safe is not a one-time effort; it's a daily effort. Homer, especially, is small enough and curious enough to get into everything. They are very people-oriented and greet us, as well as follow us from room to room. When we sit down, they like to sit on our feet. If we have socks on, they may rub against our toes and give a few soft nibbles. They are always ready to be petted and brushed, and even tolerate being picked up and hugged, as long as we don't overdo it. Harper is fastidious in every way except in the litter box, where she

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Photo: Berni Klickner Lechy



Homer and Harper Lee

Love Letters

(Continued from page 10)

often decides to dig and rearrange and eventually push everything out. After much trial and error, we discovered putting their hay in a large sweater-box-turned-litter-box works well, giving them lots of room to be in there together, burrowing into high piles of hay. We may have to do a lot of sweeping and scooping of that mess, but we remain grateful that they are both so trained that they will make it back to the litter box when they must, no matter where they are in the apartment.

We were told their background has included multiple homes, and that they passed through the rescue and rehab service many times in their three to four years of life. Yet it seems to us that bunnies this healthy and this good natured have been cared for well and cared for lovingly at every turn, whether it was a foster home or what turned out to be a temporary home. We therefore thank everyone who has so kindly cared for them in the past, and especially we thank Marcie, who fostered them many times, knew they were special, and worked hard to find them a permanent home. We very much appreciate the trust that has been placed in us, and we're having much fun here!

Berni

Jenner, now called Chewie, was adopted in early December 2009.

Hi Marcie,

How are you? Sorry it has taken me this long to give you an update about Jenner. He was very shy the first two weeks but now feels right at home.

He is even beginning to follow me around the apartment and, of course, has figured out where I keep his food!

Jenner has also been nicknamed Chewie because of his ear and love for greens. I have attached a few photos of him.

Happy New Year!

Barbara

Kirby was adopted in November 2008.

King Kirby's Kiss

Dearest King Kirby of black and white fur,
Have you heard of this silly rumor?
They say that it is possible to remove a bun,
From the throbbing heart of someone.

I really do not think that it can be true,
That I can be rid of a royal bun like you.
You thumped deep into my soul,
Without you, I wouldn't be whole.

Your majestic whiskers tickle my face,
Your brown eyes my mind can't erase.
High-hopping binkies make me smile,
Also when you flop into a soft pile.

On Valentine's Day, would you please
be a dear,
If you can spare a moment from cleaning
your rear,
Is there a bunny kiss you are willing to save,
Just for me, your forever bun slave?

Helen Chen



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt
Chewie



Photo: Helen Chen
King Kirby and Helen



Photo: Francesca Heller
Pete

Pete was adopted in August 2009.

Life with PETE!!!! (WATCH OUT.
HERE COMES TROUBLE!!!)

Timid, calm, quiet...These are but a few of the words that one may conjure up when describing a typical bunny.

None of these, however, may be used to describe PETE! Pete is an acquired taste. He has livened up the household beyond belief!

We adopted Pete in August. He did not take too long to assert his presence! Pete has been running things here from the start! He is very active, hopping away, running amock, extremely curious.

He follows me each morning at the crack of dawn to the kitchen, often hopping into the crisper drawer as I select his fresh vegetables. He also loves to jump into the garbage, especially when items from Entenmann's boxes have been discarded! Did I mention his chocolate obsession? If you even smell like chocolate he will pounce upon you while you lie peacefully on the sofa!

He has jumped into my showers, only to pounce right back out when realizing that they are very wet areas in the home! He has eaten Christmas tree branches, sequins off the Christmas tree skirt, buttons off remotes, rubber treads from sneakers!

Trust me, Pete is endearing though! He is loving, affectionate and loyal. He greets me

(Continued on page 12)



Wally

Love Letters

(Continued from page 11)

from work each day, follows me around the house, and loves to be stroked behind the ears. He brings a smile to my face and makes me laugh daily.

My two daughters love him as well! Pete even has a Facebook page created by my older daughter (You Bunny Pete is his name), and he has a cult following! Check him out! We simply are smitten with this sweet bunny. Pete is the best pet I have ever had.

Francesca

Romeo (now Wally) was adopted in December by Josh and Ellen, who sent us this update just before Christmas.

Romeo is such a fluff ball. He is also an eating machine and loves his timothy hay. I think our quiet apartment is a welcome treat for him. He's been exploring and marking all day. Kirstin was so wonderful and very accommodating.

Ellen and I can't thank you enough for your help and for the amazing work you all do. Thank God there are people like you out there helping rabbits find a home.

Please forward on our (and Wally's) love and thanks.

Happy holidays,

Josh and Ellen

Taran was adopted in early December. We received this update from his adopter, Nancy:

Just wanted to thank you for your excellent recommendation. Taran came home with us last night. What an active and friendly little guy. He is PERFECT!

After meeting his new family members he spent his first night exploring his new surroundings by sniffing and chin-marking



Taran as a juvenile at shelter

just about everything – including us! He entertained us with endless binkies after which he would flop on the floor in exhaustion.

He knows what he wants and is not afraid to give you a firm nudge when he wants his head or cheeks rubbed and will gently give you a sideways “gnaw” when he’s had enough. He even obliges us with some quiet lap time where we can leisurely pet his silky coat.

Oh, he is quite the groomer, too, always washing his face and ears and back. Guess he wants to look nice for us :).

An empty food bowl and disappearing greens tell us he’s got a healthy appetite and he’s working on improving his litter-box skills. Not bad for a preliminary report, huh?

Thanks again for all your assistance.

Nancy

Hanna, now Toffee, was adopted over a year ago.

Hi Cindy,

I can't believe that it's been over a year since we've adopted Toffee (formerly Hanna) with your help! It's been the most joyful year, and since we've recently moved into a much bigger apartment, my fiance Joe and I think it may be a good time to bring in a friend for Toffee :)

(Continued on page 13)



Toffee at Christmas



Joanie's in a rush!

Love Letters

(Continued from page 12)

I've read up on bonding, and spoke to the wonderful volunteers from the AC&C at the Union Square Petco one Saturday, who told me about bringing Toffee in for speed-dating. Before we proceed, I have a question about feeding: do we feed multiple bunnies from the same bowl? Would there be an "uneven feeding" situation if one rabbit ending up eating more than the other?

I look forward to hearing from you! And in the meantime, I've attached our Holiday card from this year :) (Teddy & Franklin are our hamsters!)

Best,
Ruby (and Joe, and Toffee)

Joanie, previously known as Toni, was adopted in late December by Ellen.

Joanie likes running around the house. She is very fast. She is also very curious, going through everything she can.

She loves jumping on the bed and on the couch.

What is most interesting is the amount of affection she demands. And if she does not get it, she goes crazy.

Joanie does not like to be alone. When we turn off the lights to go to bed, she starts biting the bars of the play pen.

She loves to sit around with us in the living room.

We don't have kids yet, and she often feels like our own child. Sometimes it hurts me to leave Joanie alone in the house. We love her very much.

Ellen

Adopted buns Uma and Lars are inseparable.

Lars and Uma are two loveable, snuggable, adorable bunnies and I'm blessed to have them both. Lars first met Uma in June 2008 when, a year after I adopted him, I decided to help out the shelter by fostering another.

Little did I know it would be love at first sight again for me and for Lars! I think she was only about four months old, but like a good Indian mom, I knew she was the one for Lars. Before she was spayed, she was chasing him around the apartment and he often hid from her in my bedroom. After we fixed her up, she seemed to want to just snuggle with him a lot more. I'll never forget the day I came home to find them nuzzling for the first time in the middle of the living room. I wondered what happened overnight!

Lars and Uma enjoy their races around the living room each morning. They roam freely around the apartment and enjoy



Uma and Lars lounge in a favorite box.

hiding out in their maze of cardboard boxes. There's nothing better on a Saturday morning than to be enjoying your coffee and watching your little bunnies binky and chew away merrily at cardboard. They also enjoy a good head rub after a big meal.

I often wonder where they came from and who could have let go two of the most darling creatures in the world. I am grateful to the volunteers and caretakers at the AC&C shelter, for providing a temporary home for my babies. They mean the world to me.

Sujatha Vempaty

(Continued on page 14)

For other adopters wishing to share their experiences, please email us at nyc.acc.rabbits.news@gmail.com.



Top: Maarty, the rabbit who is featured in this month's Thump logo on page one, waits for an acupuncture session with Dr. Laura George. (Photo taken at the 2008 NYCHRS Rabbit Care Conference.) Bottom: Beezle, Maarty's partner, gives him a kiss.

RIP

Indomitable: The Mighty Maarty

By Mary Ann Maier

Some readers will remember a fearless little Dutch in a bunny wheelchair at the 2008 NYCHRS Rabbit Care Conference. Maarty was rescued by HRS from the streets of Whitestone, Queens, in 2000, and his life in the spotlight began shortly thereafter when he was featured in an article about house rabbits in Newsday (<http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org/inthenews.htm>). He then went on to do a guest spot on Martha Stewart's "Petkeeping" show and appear as a demo bun at numerous educational events.

In 2007, he became paralyzed with spondylosis. Though he lost the use of his hind legs, he retained his sparkle and zest for life, and he had his partner and trusty sidekick, Beezle, by his side. He immediately adapted to a custom bunny wheelchair and was a guest at the Blessing of the Animals at All Saints Church, where the Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group was presented with an award.

Energizer Maarty seemed invincible even in early 2009 when an abscess required that his eye be removed. He sailed through surgery and recovery with no problems. But in late summer he went into severe stasis and started to bloat. Dr. Saver and Dr. George at Catnip & Carrots Vet Hospital had no choice but to intervene surgically. It was extremely risky due to his age and overall condition and he was given a 50% chance to pull through. But being Maarty, he did.

It seemed that nothing could take this little soldier down. However, he lost his mate Beezle in October. Play dates with bunnies Donny and Holly helped cheer him some, but Beezle's passing affected him more than paralysis, eye removal and gastrotomy. Maarty decided to join his pal at the Rainbow Bridge on Dec. 2.

Maarty has taught me so much about caring for handicapped rabbits. If anyone would like information about bunny wheelchairs, or would like hands-on assistance with measuring and fitting them, please contact Mary Ann Maier at altitude8@yahoo.com.

RIP

Kelvin Sebastian

By Victoria

Victoria adopted Kelvin Sebastian from Animal Care & Control a little over two years ago. He passed away on Feb. 1.

Victoria's tribute to Kelvin:

He was so loveable and cuddly. My boyfriend and I loved him so much. And he got along so well with my cats. Sometimes, he was bossy with them! Kelvin loved to hop around the apartment and hide

behind the sofa as though he were underground. He waited in front of the fridge for his vegetables. He even followed me around the apartment. He loved the back of his head to be petted.

Kelvin was in a playpen, which I think was better than a cage because he had more room to romp around and jump. Kelvin made a great companion pet for an apartment because he was so quiet and well behaved!

He was a very, very special man indeed! So cute, too!

Love Letters (Concluded)

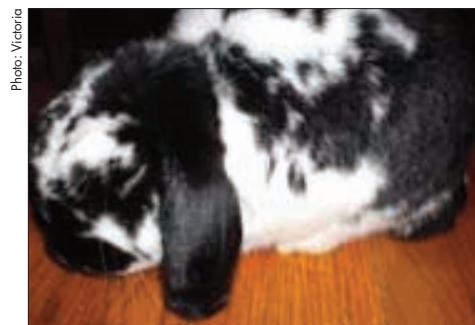
Elmo and Betty Lou were adopted in February and March 2008, respectively.

My Elmo and Betty Lou continue to entertain, intrigue, delight, and hearten me every day. They have the run of my bedroom, full of cardboard boxes, tunnels, and boxes of hay. Both are happy, healthy and still in love. My problem is that sometimes I get so distracted watching them play and sleep and binky around,

that it takes me twice as long to complete whatever task I'm working on.

They are wonderful together and perfectly matched. Betty Lou keeps watch so Elmo can nap, they have a nightly chase game, and they both always are more relaxed and confident when they're next to each other.

I have learned a lot about caring for these amazing creatures and with my Vet Tech training I hope to learn much more. I



Kelvin Sebastian

I miss him so much. My life is so empty without him. There is a hole in my heart.

have found that there is an automatic bond between rabbit people, and anyone who has a rabbit loves to brag about how wonderful they are. I cannot wait until I can adopt more of the guys, and get a warren going. I love being a rabbit person.

Thank you for bringing Elmo and Betty Lou into my life.

All my best,
Laurifer Abrams

Rescue Story of December

The group email went out to AC&C volunteers on a frigid Monday night in early December. Kirsten Ott and Katelyn Belyus, in a quick alert to the group, wrote: "Babies! We have a mother with three babies at the shelter. They were found in a box outside a building." The mother, a black lionhead, eventually became Leann, and the three kits – two brown and one white and about three weeks old – became Snow, Taylor and Jojo. Kirsten emailed that she gave the rabbits a bowl of water, and they "kept deciding to jump in and were splashing the water all over the place."

The following day, Jane O'Wyatt picked up a small water bowl that could be affixed to the bars of the cage at the shelter. A plastic igloo was put in the cage for the four rabbits, and Cindy Stutts suggested that a cardboard fence be attached to the cage door to keep the kits from slipping out between the bars.

Leann and the kits were delivered to Anita Belew, their fosterer, on Dec. 15. Anita, who also has a Cavalier spaniel named Reuben and a blind rabbit, Jack Bunny (see photo on page 9), reported that the young rabbits were eating and growing: "They all come running over like little horses when I say hello, hoping that I brought them something yummy." She added, "The babies, I think, have doubled; they don't fit in one hand anymore...They are super cute."

Lorraine Kopf, another volunteer, took Leann to Symphony Vet to be spayed and then, a few days later, brought her to the 86th St. Petco, where she took up residence. She was adopted by a Manhattan family on Jan. 17. The kits, meanwhile, were transferred to foster mom Cathy Zelonis to care for until they are old enough for adoption.

Stats: Just for the month of December alone, there were many adoptions at the shelter and at the two Petcos that are helping to find homes for shelter buns. Our 36 volunteers exchanged 285 group emails for the month.

Shelter photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Photo: Anita Belew



Photo: Anita Belew

Some Happy Tales: Other buns adopted in December and January were (listed by their original names at the shelter): Taran, Chewey, Jenner, Dino, Robinson, Toni, Samuel, Max, Francine, Brock, Beverly, Kara, Bridget, Bo, Daniel, Lucky, Roberta, Minnie, Jessie, Bella, Pancake, Thumpet, Oreo, Tatiana, Minnie, Hailey, Jonathan, Bess, Mack, Milo, Peter, Rodney, Chris and Rev.

Medical Matters: Some issues that were dealt with included, along with all the spaying and neutering at AC&C: Symphony Vet treated ChiChi for a scrotal hematoma. Our rabbit-savvy vets helped with dozens of medical procedures, including spaying and neutering.

Top left, taken Dec. 8; top right, taken Dec. 15. Middle and lower right photos taken in late December and on New Year's Day by foster mom Anita Belew.

Rabbit-Savvy Veterinarians

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

Westchester County:

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

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

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

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

Long Island:

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

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

Manhattan:

Becky Campbell, DVM
Symphony Veterinary Center
698 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10025
(212) 866-8000

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

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

Anthony Pilny, DVM
Veterinary Internal Medicine
and Allergy Specialists
207 East 84th St., New York, NY 10028
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Laura George, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

THUMP February 2010

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

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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.

Donations

All donations go directly to caring for our foster rabbits and are tax-deductible. Please help us help them. Checks should be made out to **Rabbit Rescue & Rehab** and mailed to:

Cindy Stutts
512 East 119th Street, #2
New York, NY 10035



Esmeralda at AC&C.

Sunday afternoons to answer questions. There are two rabbits living at each of those stores. A volunteer also spends an evening each week at the Petco at Broadway and 92nd Street.

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 Amy Odum at amy@adoptabunny.info.

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.

To contact us at the Thump newsletter, email nyc.acc.rabbits.news@gmail.com.