



Rabbit Tracks

Newsletter of the New Mexico House Rabbit Society

Issue Number Two

Volunteer Opportunities

Petco

Help socialize bunnies with petting and love!

Contact Bill Velasquez

Bill@rabbit.org

CABQ City Shelter

Help with intake

Contact Cathy Sweeney

guineapigmom@earthlink.net

Watermelon Mtn. Ranch

Help with daily care

Contact Dennell Sandoval

Dennells2002@yahoo.com

NMHSR

Help behind the scenes, with outreach events, or fostering

Contact Bill Velasquez

Bill@rabbit.org

March Hare Madness:

Have Tea with the Bunnies!

Albuquerque Animal Care Center
8920 Lomas NE

Sunday, March 20th, noon – 4pm

For more info contact

Criss Starr

crisstarr@hotmail.com

NMHSR Easter Bake Sale

Saturday, April 23rd

10 AM to 4 pm

Location: Sunflower Market

San Mateo and Academy

Albuquerque

For more info contact:

Matt Wasson

MSW476@aol.com

Chapter Information

New Mexico House Rabbit Society
A 501(C)3 non-profit organization
Information available and donations
accepted at:

www.rabbit.org/newmexico

Newsletter submissions may be sent to:

nmhrsnews@googlegroups.com

Giving Credit where Credit is Due!

We have completed our first year as a chapter of the House Rabbit Society. Looking back it is sometimes easy to think that this all just happened. However, there are so many that came before us and contributed to our success. There are long time volunteers Lori and Joel Korngut, and Beth Wagner who, along with adopters like Randi Malach, have supported HRS in New Mexico since when there was a chapter here before.

There are many more volunteers, adopters, supporters, and independent rescuers who have given so much to the bunny community in Albuquerque and New Mexico. Some like Dorothy Jones have worked in remote parts of the state against every imaginable obstacle, saving bunnies for longer than some of us have had bunnies. We can't forget those who laid the groundwork for the mission we continue. They have spent long lonely hours caring for so many bunnies. Our current chapter has the luxury of the support of many and we do sometimes take this for granted.

I am also extremely grateful to those such as Guy Miller and Ginger Larkin who have been volunteering with us since we started as a few volunteers at local Petco stores. We have come a long way since those early days four years ago. Along these lines it is important for me to correct a statement I mistakenly made in our previous newsletter. I stated that NMHSR was solely responsible for the spay/neuter program at the CABQ shelter. In reality it was the work of Dr. John Romero and Kim Lalley who made the program possible. It continues today only with the continuing support of the CABQ shelter staff and the dedication of current shelter volunteers.

We have received so much support from National HRS. They have gone out of their way to help us every step of the way and for this I am unimaginably grateful. There are also mentors at the national level such as Chapter Managers Judith Pierce and Nancy LaRoche, whose guidance and advice lift me when the weight seems heavy.

Some of you had questions about our membership fees. I realize that they are a little confusing and I want to help explain this. Because of the great support we receive from national HRS, \$15 from every regular (non volunteer discounted) adoption goes to national HRS for a one year membership. Additionally, \$15 of all membership dues donated during our annual fundraising drive (this newsletter) goes to national HRS and also includes a one year membership. Other "non-regular" donations given throughout the rest of the year do not include the national HRS membership and all such funds are used exclusively by NMHSR. The support and guidance we receive is invaluable and I hope you appreciate it as much as I do. We are a small organization and I hope that you understand that we do not have the resources to send out membership reminders to everyone exactly at their one year mark. Therefore, we rely on this newsletter as our reminder to everyone. We have also decided to extend every adopter's membership through this year in appreciation of your support.

I could fill this entire newsletter with the names of volunteers, supporters, and adopters who have contributed so much of their time, love, and resources to our small organization. I hope that each of you know how much I appreciate all that you have given. I also hope you know how many bunnies are living in such great places because of you and how happy they are to be house bunnies! You have made this possible and you share in our successes! I hope that we can count on your continued support as we enter our second year as a chapter and fifth year of volunteering in our current form.

Bill Velasquez
NMHSR President



Adoptable Buns

Ben



Ben has had a rough start in life. He was born in a backyard and lived with a small group of rabbits where he was picked on and beat up. His next stop was a shelter but not having lived among people before he was passed over for adoption due to his lack of social skills. From there he moved to another situation but one of his caretakers did not understand rabbits and he was inadvertently harassed. By this time Ben was a bundle of nerves and grunted, charged and batted anyone who came near. Now Ben is in a quiet foster home where he is finally learning that people are not so bad. He is enjoying being petted and held and even gets excited when people come to visit him. He only occasionally grunts and bats when he is unsure of things. Ben has come a long way and now he is looking for a quiet forever home where he can continue to blossom. In the past he has been aggressive with other rabbits so he will need to be firmly settled into his new home and gain confidence before he can be introduced to another rabbit. Ben will also do well as an only rabbit as long as he gets plenty of love and attention. Due to his past experiences Ben cannot be in a home with children.

Garner



Garner is so very special. He will approach you to pet him and sit still until you stop. Then he will approach anyone else that may have missed their turn to pet him. He loves a good cuddle too. Who can resist this cutie? He is small, happy and friendly....what a wonderful package! Please come visit with Garner at Petco on the westside. You will fall in love with this wonderful little boy.



Nicholas



Nicholas is so sweet and friendly. He is just the happiest fellow around! And he is a big boy too...10 lbs, but it is all because he is big boned. He loves to toss his toys to you so you will play with him. He says dogs have nothing on him...he can play just as good. You have to come visit Nicholas at Petco on the westside, he will brighten your day. If you adopt him, he will brighten your life

Alice



Alice is very sweet and curious. And quite the beauty too. Alice is looking for love so please come visit her at Petco Lomas. it will be love at first sight.

Boots and Bandit

These two little brothers are just too cute for words! Bandit is sweet and relaxed. Boots is the opposite. He is nervous and looks to his brother for comfort. Boots will require attention in a loving home before he relaxes and feels secure. Both boys are working on their litter box habits. But with how cute they are, you love just looking at them. Boots and Bandit cannot be adopted separately, they are a pair.



Many other rabbits are looking for their Forever Home. More adoptable buns can be seen at www.rabbit.org/newmexico. Links to bunnies available for adoption through the CABQ shelter can also be found there. All rabbits adopted through NMHRS and CABQ are spayed/neutered.



Vet's Corner

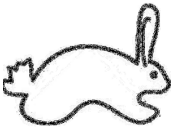
By Dr Holly Edwards, DVM

Bunnies, just like people, can get upper respiratory infections. Luckily, bunnies and humans do not usually share their illnesses with each other. However, as is the case with people, getting to the bottom of the infection can aid in ensuring a speedy and successful recovery. Here are some important facts to help you when you have a sneezy bunny in the house.

The term "snuffles" can be used to describe any upper respiratory infection in bunnies, however one common cause is a bacteria called *pasteurella multocida*. Bunnies suffering from this version of snuffles will usually show clear nasal discharge at first, though often it will change to a white or yellowish, thick discharge. Owners may notice the discharge crusting around the nose and notice the fur of the front paws becoming matted and yellow grey from bunnies grooming. Bunnies may also have noticeable sneezing fits or congested sounding breathing. These signs may disappear but the infection can continue to cause a problem, affecting the nasolacrimal duct (duct that helps with tears that goes from eyes to nose). This causes some bunnies to develop conjunctivitis (infection/inflammation of eyes) where owners will see increased tear production and potentially scalding, hair loss, and infection of the skin around the eyes. Further complications include progression of the infection from the nose to the middle ears. If this occurs owners may notice their bunnies scratching at their ears, or if infection has progressed to the inner ear, bunnies can have a head tilt and ataxia (move like they are drunk or have abnormal balance).

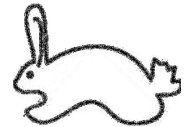
Bunnies can have acute or chronic infections. Some may even be carriers spreading the disease without having any symptoms. Chronic or severe cases can lead to even more serious complications including pneumonia, pericarditis (infection of the sac around the heart), even sudden death. Early treatment with antibiotics is the key to preventing more serious cases. In chronic or more severe cases, prolonged antibiotic therapy may be necessary.

It is important to realize that though *pasteurella* is a very common cause of a sneezy bunny, other bacteria, viruses, cancer and even allergies can be to blame. Therefore, at any sign of a snuffly, sneezy, bunny, you will want to take your bunny to see a veterinarian to ensure an accurate diagnosis and proper treatment.



Volunteer profiles

Volunteers are an integral part of NMHRS, and to honor them, we will introduce a different volunteer every issue.



Criss Starr

By Kat Cox

As the vice-president of New Mexico House Rabbit Society, Christine (Criss) Starr has quite a lot on her plate. From organizing the annual yard sales, replying to emails and answering the phone lines, to transporting rabbits to the vet, Criss' days are full. Let's not forget her work at ABQ shelters, local Petco stores, and anywhere else there's a bunny in need.

Criss is a vegetarian who can't hide her love for all animals. She started out as a mother to rats, and moved onto rabbits, whose life spans are three to five times longer than those of large rodents. Criss has five dogs and two cats in her home in addition to her four rabbit friends, and all the animals benefit from her experience as a trained animal groomer.

Criss found NMHRS the way many do – when she was looking for a new companion rabbit.

Criss had lost a beloved angora named Harriet in December 2008. When a friend urged her to adopt her next rabbit, Criss found Tucker at Petco Lomas. It was love at first sight. Later, Criss met Deb Schaefer and Bill Velasquez, who helped her bond Tucker to Harriet's former mate, Taffy. Criss was so grateful for the new love, she started volunteering at Petco right away.

Her favorite toy to give a rabbit is a radish. "A radish is a treat and a toy!" she explains. "Most buns love eating them, and sometimes they run around with them in their mouths, which is adorable."

Criss' love for the smaller mammals is nothing new. In high school, she found a domestic rabbit hopping around lost in a neighborhood. She took him home and put him in with her guinea pigs. Her three little pigs would line up and sleep on his back when he sprawled out.

You may have heard by now about the "March Hare Madness: Have Tea with the Buns" event at the Albuquerque Shelter on March 20th, and you might not be surprised to hear that it was Criss' idea.

"I love *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*," Criss says. "In many myths, rabbits are viewed as a creature capable of passing between worlds, and in the Alice books and movies, Alice follows a white rabbit into a world of mystery and wonder." Criss' rabbits have led her to similar places, full of love, self-discovery, and the kind of peace only the quiet love of a rabbit can bring.

You can meet Criss in costume on Sunday, March 20th at the "March Hare Madness" event from noon to 4pm at the Albuquerque Animal Care Center (8920 Lomas NE).



Buns On the Road

By Kerrie Bushway

You just got that new job on the other side of the country. Or maybe it is time to visit family for an extended period of time a few states over. Possibly you are packing up after a divorce and moving on. A long trip on the road is onerous enough for humans, but how can you make the move easier on Bunny?

Car travel is always a stressful event for a pet, and rabbits are no exception. Rabbit owners don't have to deal with the vomit and diarrhea of a terrified dog, or listen to the unearthly sounds of a caterwauling feline for miles. A quiet, clean-smelling car for an extended trip seems rather pleasant! But a stressed-out rabbit presents a different class of concerns and dangers and the most important thing you can do is reduce the stress level as much as possible.

The best way to transport Bunny is in a pet carrier. This is ideal for shorter trips or if you're overnighing in hotels, when Bunny will have time to stretch his legs and hop around at the end of the day. A carrier provides an enclosed, darker environment where Bunny can feel safer – almost like a burrow. Consider the type of litter arrangement you will use. A towel system will work well in a smaller carrier. If you go with a litterbox system, the carrier will need to be large enough to accommodate the box. (Remember to bring a garbage bag to hold the soiled towels. Litterbox contents can be disposed of at rest area garbage cans.)

However, if you travel on the cheap like I do and sleep in your car at truck stops on your 4- and 5-day cross-country trips, there are no spacious hotel bathrooms to hop around at night. Bunny will need that extra leg room, and a cage or kennel crate unit would be more comfortable. (If you have bonded groups, this is probably the only option since there are no carriers large enough!) The downside, of course, is more space for Bunny to be tossed around and injured in the event of an accident. After several multi-day cross-country trips with no mishaps, I personally prefer to give my rabbits some hopping room over a continuous 5-day confinement in a carrier. One solution would be to put Bunny in a harness and leash and let them stretch their legs at rest stops. (Pardon me while I wipe away tears of laughter.)

No matter which living accommodations you use, both are better than none at all! A carrier can be fastened down with a seatbelt. A crate can be cushioned and stabilized with bags of clothes or other possessions you're transporting on your move. A freely roaming rabbit will be not only severely injured or killed in the event of an accident, but can cause an accident by getting under the gas and brake pedals. And stick shift drivers have the clutch to worry about, too!

Housing is just the first part. The list of items to bring for Bunny can be long, but with a little planning and forethought you can reduce Bunny's stress and make the move easier on both of you. Your primary concern is making sure that Bunny continues to eat. This isn't as vital for trips of up to 1 day in length, but on multi-day journeys it is absolutely vital that Bunny's eating habits remain stable. If he has never been in a car before, start taking him for short rides about 1 month prior to Moving Day. When that day arrives it will still be a scary experience, but not as terrifying as the First Ride and will have less potential to affect his appetite. In order to keep eating habits as normal as possible, bring bags of the hay and pellets that Bunny likes and is used to. If you have the space, a cooler with a ready bag of Bunny's favorite greens will be invaluable if you need to tempt him to eat. If Bunny is used to drinking from a bowl, make sure he knows how to drink from a bottle. It took my guys a couple weeks to learn that the bottle was a source of water. If you're traveling in the summer, Bunny will need water to help stay cool.

Speaking of summer, this is perhaps the most difficult time to travel and requires even more advanced planning. Make sure the interior of your car is already cool when you put Bunny in. It will take several minutes before the AC begins to bring the temperature out of the danger zone and could be fatal for Bunny if it is not fast enough. Tinted windows help cut down the heat of the sun's rays beating down on Bunny's carrier or cage, but I have found that those small screens that attach to the window with suction cups make a huge difference. If Bunny is in a cage rather than a carrier, draping a light-colored sheet over it will help reflect the light. This also will give Bunny a safer, closed-in feeling.

Another accessory that I find helpful is a small car fan that plugs into the cigarette lighter. During my first move, my car was so full of stuff that the AC simply could not reach the back of the car where the bunnies were. It took some creativity, but I situated and anchored the fan in such a place where it could funnel some of the cool air towards them and help counteract the heat of the southwestern sun.

During summer travel it is absolutely essential that you do not leave Bunny in the car any longer than necessary. On long trips, rest area stops are inevitable. Even though you'll only be a few minutes, find a parking spot in the shade. If there are none, then wait until the next rest area to get something out of the vending machine. For times like this, having that cooler with some extra snacks and drinks for yourself comes in handy! Keep your food stops to drive-thrus or a quick buy at a gas station rather than sit-down restaurants when you're at the mercy of a potentially busy (and delayed) wait staff.

One of the most difficult tasks I have faced during multi-day trips was finding more greens. Gas stations don't stock them, and the iceberg pulled off the ham sandwich you just bought won't do. After the first frantic trip of trying to figure out how to get to the grocery stores I saw from the interstate (stressful for anyone as directionally challenged as I am!), I bought a GPS with a database of POIs (points of interest). When it's time to buy greens, I do a search for grocery stores nearest my current location and voilà! These days the price of such units is so low and the benefits are so high that there is no excuse to not have one, especially when it means that Bunny can be munching on cool leafy greens to keep that vital gut operation moving!

Bunny's stress level can also be tied to the radio. It's tempting to crank the tunes to alleviate the eternity of I-40, but remember that Bunny with his highly sensitive hearing might be right next to those speakers! If you can, adjust the balance of the speakers to the front so you can enjoy the music and spare Bunny's ears at the same time. If not, then keep the volume at a tolerable level.

Finally, it's wise to have a first aid kit on hand just in case Bunny does stop eating. Items include: Critical Care, a couple feeding syringes, simethecone drops, heating pad (only useful if you have access to an outlet!), a couple jars of fruit baby food, a can of pumpkin (and a can opener!), spoon, baby aspirin or Metacam (only available through a vet's prescription), thermometer, and a small jar of Vaseline. However, this arsenal of medical supplies is only helpful if you know how to use it! You can find information about what to do in case of gastrointestinal issues on the House Rabbit Society's website (www.rabbit.org/health/index.html#gi) or, if there is an HRS chapter in your area, consult a member who knows about medical issues prior to your move. Finding a rabbit savvy vet on the road will be difficult, so it's in Bunny's best interest to arm yourself with a little knowledge.

Hitting the road with rabbits can be quite the adventure, but it doesn't have to be traumatic or turn tragic. Just a little planning and preparation can make it less of an unpleasant experience for Bunny. After a few trips, my crew have become seasoned travellers and very adaptable to having a car as a home for days at a time.

Love and the Single Rabbit

Being Your Bunny's Best Friend

By Criss Starr

Much has been written on the joys of pairs and groups of rabbits. There is nothing more endearing than two "fixed" buns snuggling together in friendship, sharing treats and grooming each other. But what if you only have one rabbit? In this case, it becomes your job to make sure your bunny is emotionally fulfilled and mentally stimulated.

There are many reasons for having a single bunny. Maybe you have a lone foster bunny, an aggressive rabbit, or a sick bun in quarantine (never separate bonded rabbits, though, even if one is sick). For some the decision to stick to one rabbit may be financial or based on space limitations. Whatever the reason, you will have to take on the role of being your bun's best friend. Here are some tips on how to make sure your single rabbit doesn't feel lonely.

Time: The most important gift you can give your bunny is time and attention. There is nothing sadder than a lonely rabbit stuffed into a cage or backyard hutch all day. This is one of the many reasons we advocate for rabbits to live in the house where they can be a part of the family. Make sure to spend as much time as you can with your singleton. Even when you're not actively playing with your bunny, just hanging out reading or watching TV will let your bun know she is part of the family.

Toys: Make sure your single has lots and lots of fun toys. Cardboard boxes are great for chewing and digging. A toy with a bell in it is a good way to give your bunny a voice. Make sure you change bunny's toys often to prevent boredom.

Games: Play games with your bunny. My first bun loved to burrow under a blanket and wait for me to find him. Try tossing a toilet paper roll towards (not at) your bunny, or roll a ball for her for push around. Foraging is another way to stimulate your bunny's imagination. Try hiding treats such as a small piece of apple, papaya tablets, or a tray of wheat grass in his play area.

Other Animals: Rabbits can develop meaningful friendships with other critters. Friendly house cats make good companions, as do guinea pigs. Rabbits can also make friends with well behaved dogs, though they must always be supervised to prevent accidents.

Hand Feeding: I have a skittish little lionhead bunny who does not like other rabbits and doesn't like to be touched. She was a rescue, and she runs from me whenever I get near. The one thing that has worked to build trust with her is hand feeding. It is the only time I can pet her gently on the forehead. Hand feeding takes time, but it is very rewarding, especially with shy rabbits. Snacking with your bunny should be part of your daily bonding routine, but remember, food is not a substitute for love and attention.

Grooming: One of the joys of having bunny pairs or groups, is watching them carefully groom one another. That is the main way rabbits show each other affection. As your bunny's best friend, this task now falls to you. Take time to carefully groom your bunny the way another rabbit would. Start by gently stroking the bridge of his nose. Use a damp cotton ball to wipe the corners of his eyes (where they tend to collect sleep "sand"). Then move on to check his ears and rub his back. Giving your bunny a light massage can be relaxing for both of you. Try nudging him with your nose and kissing his forehead. Stretch out next to him on the floor. If you are extremely lucky, he may give you a couple of bunny kisses in return!

Remember, to the world, you're just one person. To your rabbit, you are the whole world.



Are you a supporter of New Mexico HRS?

Here is how you can help:

Volunteer to be a Petco Rabbit Pal, Shelter volunteer, fosterer, or outreach volunteer!

Use your administrative skills to help us with our web site, PR, outreach, and more!

Join NM HRS and be a member!

Make a donation to support our work!

We also accept additional donations of food and other needed supplies.

I would like to join New Mexico HRS.

I would like to make an additional donation.

I would like to volunteer.

Membership fees:

\$30 for combined national House Rabbit Society and NM HRS membership

\$20 for combined national House Rabbit Society and NM HRS membership for Students or Seniors

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

Please add my email address to your list for periodic announcements. We do not share this list with anyone.

Enclosed is my donation to NM House Rabbit Society in the amount of \$_____

Check enclosed (Payable to NM HRS)

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New Mexico House Rabbit Society is a nonprofit organization. Donations are tax-deductible as provided by law. Send your tax deductible contribution to: NM HRS, 8 Calle Montoya, Placitas, NM 87043