

# THUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS JUNE 2010

*THIS PREY, PREDATOR OFFER SURPRISES*

## Some Observations About Bullying Buns And Fraidy Cats

By Mary Ann Maier

It was midnight. The neighbor's cat sat in a pool of lamplight on the warm summer-night street. I saw her, as I often did, when I was locking up before bed. But this night she was not alone. She was playing with what I thought was a baby raccoon. I stepped outside to look, and realized it wasn't a raccoon. It was the stray rabbit who had been spotted around my neighborhood for a week. Cat and bunny scampered to and fro; cat flopped on her side; bunny did a little hop. Cat languidly swatted at bunny; bunny scooted away for a moment, then returned to chase her up a tree.

He actually *treed* the cat! Such was my first observation of a cat-rabbit interaction. I felt like David Attenborough in pajamas.

As it turned out, this behavior was not unusual. Most domestic rabbits, according to my casual research, show little, if any, fear of cats. Indeed, many rabbits will act friendly – or even aggressively – toward cats.

Photo: Mary Ann Maier



LeMieux was particularly sensitive to compromised rabbits. Here, she huddled by newly rescued June, and helped keep her warm.

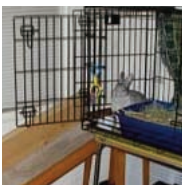
House Rabbit Society's Amy Shapiro, in her excellent article on the organization's website, theorizes that because cats are a solitary species and rabbits are a group species, rabbits are much more inclined to be confrontational in order to determine social hierarchy.

That streetlamp bunny would become my first house rabbit, Beezle, who came to live with me and my three cats.

Because of the antics I had observed that first night, it didn't surprise me when

Beezle began chasing one of the cats out of "his" kitchen. The doorway was bunny-gated, but kitty Minerva could easily sail over it, so she always had an escape hatch. This way, no one got hurt. What did surprise me, however, was that as consistently and determinedly as he chased Minerva out of the kitchen, he welcomed H.B. into it. I have no idea why. Like Minerva, H.B. was an adult rescue cat. Beezle showed not only

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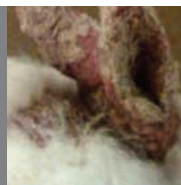
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## Prey and Predator

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an attitude toward cats in general, but he demonstrated an actual *preference* of one individual cat over another. Like rabbits' relationships with other rabbits, success seems to depend on a secret chemistry we humans cannot detect.

Photos: Mary Ann Mater



H.B. and Beezle: the original dynamic duo. Beezle hated my other cats, but adored H.B., and even shared his salad with him.

In the twelve years since, I have cared for dozens and dozens of rabbits in my home, all of whom have had to negotiate terms with my cats. This is not to say I did not supervise or provide protections. On the contrary, it is absolutely imperative to utilize gates, pens, secured cages and a lot of common sense when sheltering cats with rabbits. Ensuring neither species is stressed in the company of the other is the key to preventing skirmishes and injury. My house is an obstacle course of baby gates and half-doors, all of them too high for scaling rabbits, but low enough for flying cats.

As a rescuer I often receive calls from people who are concerned about a stray rabbit in their neighborhood, but who feel unable to help because they own cats. It's logical to assume that a cat would terrorize and injure a rabbit in the home. And that is a real risk. I do not mean to minimize risk here: cat bites and scratches can cause serious infections in people as well as in rabbits. However, my experiences have been different.

I currently have three rabbits at home who actively pursue and chase my cats out of their areas. My other rabbits' attitudes range from indifference to gentle curiosity



Gary, a stray I rescued from the Long Island Expressway, is utterly fascinated by rabbits, and loves to hang out with them in their enclosures. Some, like Jenny here, welcome him.

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*"Good fences make good neighbors."* –Robert Frost

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toward the cats. I advise any cat owner who is considering getting a rabbit to go for it. Dog-rabbit relationships have the potential to be far more dangerous than cat-rabbit ones, in my experience. And a rabbit or cat who is stressed by his new housemate will relax in time, with supervision and gentle introductions by the owner.

Details on preparing both home and cat for the new bunny's arrival are in Amy Shapiro's must-read article at <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/2-11/cats-and-rabbits.html>

Top right, Clyde's is a cat-friendly apartment. Clyde is available for adoption: [www.LongIslandRabbitRescue.org](http://www.LongIslandRabbitRescue.org).

Bottom right, Finnegan Miller thrived in his foster home – a private-home cat rescue with 9 kitties. He was adopted and now has a cat (and a dog) of his very own.





Chelsea Cohen

## Chelsea Cohen's Bunny Blog

I finally got my mom away from the computer so I can now update my bunny blog. For those of you who don't already know me, I'm Chelsea, foster bunny extraordinaire. I was thinking a lot today about my life and I realize how lucky I am. I don't remember much about my life as a baby, but I know I lived with a family and then one day I was on a street in New York and I was scared. There was too much noise and too many people and cars, and I couldn't find food. I was sure I was going to die of starvation or get killed by a predator. I found a park and dug a bunny hole to sleep in at night. But I was so frightened that when I saw a kind lady put her hand out to offer me a piece of carrot the next day, I was happy. I was hungry, so I took the carrot and she scooped me up in her arms and put me in a carrier.

I didn't know who the woman was, but she told me her name was Cindy and now I was safe and nobody was going to hurt me. She took me to a place that was noisy, with dogs

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## FOSTERING AN ABANDONED RABBIT

# How Fern's Loving Kindness Made All the Difference for Chelsea

By Jane O'Wyatt

"I don't think I even got a hay box. So when they took me out and I peed and pooped on the floor, they got angry. And they had a wild kid who would grab me and hurt me, and one day I bit him. That's the last I remember about that place."

– Chelsea Cohen, Blog  
(See Column 1)

If Chelsea Cohen is to be believed (and why not?), she was evicted from her previous home for reason No. 7 among the "Top Ten Reasons Why Rabbits Are Abandoned,"<sup>1</sup> compiled by Mary Cotter. Anyone who has worked with abandoned house rabbits at AC&C will make the connection between Chelsea's experience and the terse formulas – "bit a child" and "dirty, smelly, messy" – used by shelter staff to fill in the "reason for surrender" field in intake records.

The "Top Ten Reasons Why People Foster Abandoned Rabbits" is a list that has yet to be compiled, but let's say reason No. 1 is loving kindness: the Buddhist "metta," Christian "agape," Hebrew "chesed." Or, as Fern Cohen blogged about her decision to foster a gray chinchilla-coated rabbit named Chelsea, "I want 2007 to be the year I make a difference and the year I give back."<sup>2</sup>

Since 2004, Fern, a former high school teacher of French and Spanish, has been neurologically disabled with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease). ALS, characterized by atrophy of the body's motor neurons, results in progressive weakness and physical (though not mental) disability. Life expectancy after the ALS diagnosis is said to be about five years, and Fern often worries that Chelsea will outlive her. "I look at

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Fern Cohen joined the ALS Association's delegation in Washington in May 2007 to lobby for passage of the ALS Registry Act, which makes it mandatory to report cases of ALS so that data can be used by researchers. The act was passed the next year.

## Fern's Loving Kindness

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my Chelsea and worry what will happen if something happens to me, even though she will go back to the rescue and will be in excellent hands. She is so attached to me.”<sup>3</sup>

Fern manages to live in her own apartment in Queens, assisted by health aides 24/7, and by an assortment of machines and devices, for which she is grateful but which she says “never seem to be functioning all at the same time.”<sup>4</sup> Fern's blog (<http://fernals.blogspot.com>) describes in detail her daily life with ALS. Because the disease has robbed her of the ability to articulate words clearly, she uses an augmentative speech-generating communication device connected to a computer. An eloquent, funny, determined communicator, Fern speaks by entering words on a touch screen. Her “aug-comm” device is sophisticated and user-friendly, and she has become very fast at producing text that the device can recite aloud or send into cyberspace. Because ALS has weakened her diaphragm, Fern receives respiratory support from a BiPAP ventilator during the night and for periods during the day. She sleeps in an electric, adjustable hospital bed and her electric wheelchair is custom-designed. Fern has a Hoyer lift that enables aides to lift her from her bed to her wheelchair. A surgical procedure called a gastrostomy has made it possible for her to receive liquid nourishment directly into her stomach through a PEG (percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy) feeding tube. She also takes various medications to alleviate ALS symptoms.

Her team, “Fern's Fighters,” took part in the New York City Walk to D'feet ALS in May and will walk in a Sept. 26 ALS event at Eisenhower Park on Long Island. Depending on the year and location, the team numbers 10 to 20 members, and it has raised more than \$15,000.

Back at home, in the hive of therapeutic activity with Fern and her aides, amid masses of high-tech equipment with provocatively bunny-proofed cables and wires, lives Chelsea, a happy five-pound



“My Creation,” Fern's Warholian treatment of a photograph of Chelsea.

rabbit whose care Fern knowledgeably supervises. When she vowed in 2007 to make a difference in the life of an abandoned rabbit, Fern possessed the essential qualifications for fostering: she adored house rabbits and she knew a lot about them. She had lived with and loved a rabbit named Penny and, since becoming disabled, she had fostered Hannah, who moved on to a blissful partnership with new husband Ole Man Stevie Wonder. Fern is also a volunteer list manager for Etherbun ([groups.yahoo.com/group/etherbun](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/etherbun)), the world's largest rabbit-care listserv. Mary Ann Maier and Nancy Schreiber of Long Island Rabbit Rescue helped with bunny-proofing and organized Chelsea's Fern-accessible cage and ramp. As a fosterer, Fern isn't responsible for Chelsea's vet bills, which are paid by LIRR. Fern's part of the deal: “I supply the greens, the hay and the love.”<sup>5</sup>



Photo: Mary Ann Maier

Fern and Chelsea. Note ramp up to Chelsea's cage.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Mary E. Cotter, Ed. D. “Top Ten Reasons Rabbits Are Abandoned, and Criteria for Screening Potential Adopters. Reason #7: “He's aggressive (scratches/bites), and/or destructive, and/or he makes the whole house smell.” <http://www.petfinder.com/for-shelters/reasons-rabbits-abandoned.html>

<sup>2</sup> Fern's Blog, Jan. 1, 2007. <http://fernals.blogspot.com>

<sup>3</sup> Fern's Blog, Jan. 1, 2009. <http://fernals.blogspot.com>

<sup>4</sup> Fern's Blog, Feb. 21, 2010. <http://fernals.blogspot.com>

<sup>5</sup> Fern's Blog, Jan. 1, 2007. <http://fernals.blogspot.com>

## Chelsea's Blog

*(Continued from page 3)*

barking and cats meowing. Even though it was noisy, I was put in a cage, so I knew I was safe. In the cage, I had a bowl of water, a bowl full of fresh greens, a bowl full of timothy pellets, and a box with hay that I could pee and poop in. The hay smelled and tasted great. It was a little lonely, but I finally felt safe. I remember that in the house I lived in before, the people didn't know much about a bunny's needs. They gave me some strange pellets with colored bits and I would often get a bellyache. I don't think I even got a hay box. So when they took me out and I peed and pooped on the floor, they got angry. And they had a wild kid who would grab me and hurt me, and one day I bit him. That's the last I remember about that place. This noisy place with the barking dogs was better. And every day, Cindy or another nice lady or man would come to pet me and change my food and hay box. And every Saturday, someone would take me to Petco, where people would hold me and pet me and I even heard some of them say they wanted to adopt me. But each week, Cindy would tell me she had to "check out" the people, and the people never seemed to be right. I was relieved because I did not want to go to another home where people would get mad at me and give me strange food, and where bratty children would hurt me.

One day, a nice lady named Mary Ann came and said I was going to a foster home. I told her I did not want to go to a home where people would get mad at me, and children would play rough with me. I was happy at the noisy shelter where a nice lady would visit me every day and I would get greens, pellets, fresh water and hay. And then on Saturdays I would get to go to Petco and see Cindy and Maddy and the other nice people. This is what Mary Ann told me: "You are going to the best home. Your new foster

mommy is Fern Cohen and she has had two bunnies before you. She is disabled and can't work anymore, so she is home most of the time, and you won't be lonely. The only thing is that she is in a wheelchair so she can't sit on the floor with you. But we are going to put your cage up high with a ramp and she can pull up to the cage with the wheelchair and give you head rubs every day. And you will have plenty of room to run around because you will have a lot of time out of your cage, if you choose to come out. How does that sound?"

*Dr. Saver says I am too fat. Fern is giving me fewer pellets and I throw a fit and bang my bowl until she gives in. She is a softie.....*

I said it sounded good, but I would have to see. Mary Ann smiled and said, "You will be very happy. Trust me." She picked up her friend Nancy and we went off to Fern's apartment. The rest is history. I love Fern and she loves me. She has an aide with her all the time – four different ones, to be exact. One is an Indian lady who gives me a piece of dried apple every time she comes. She can't pronounce my name so she calls me "Chesley." But I don't care what she calls me – she can even call me "Ferret" – when she gives me a piece of dried apple and head rubs all the time. It took time for the other aides to like me. But even Ellita – who says she is not an "animal person" – now gives me head rubs and lets me sit right next to her feet. I binky every day now and have a lot of free time out of my cage to run around and explore. I used to like sleeping under Fern's bed but it's a hospital bed and has electrical cords, which I chewed on. One day the bed didn't work and Fern had to pay \$160 to get it fixed.

She was not pleased and said to me, "I'm sorry, Chelsea, but I don't have money like this to spend and I am afraid of you getting electrocuted. So I am going to have to fix things so that you can't go under the bed anymore." There is now a big bunny pen around the bed, but I try to find a way to get under it again and Fern laughs when I stand there and wiggle my nose in puzzlement. She says, "You will never figure this out, you silly bunny!" I get so angry when she does this, and I usually lie on the floor with my back to her, to show my displeasure. One day I will "figure it out." I am one smart rabbit and Fern doesn't know whom she is dealing with!!

Fern told me her disease is fatal and she hopes she lives long enough to take care of me all my life. But, if she should pass away before I do, she said Mary Ann and Nancy will come and get me and find me another mommy. I will be sad if that happens but I will always have Fern in my heart. And now I know that I will always be safe with the rabbit-rescue ladies. I am supposed to be on a diet. Dr. Saver says I am too fat. Fern is giving me fewer pellets and I throw a fit and bang my bowl until she gives in. She is a softie, and a really kind mommy. I am sorry she has to be in that wheelchair. I wish someone would find a cure for the disease she has. But she has love in her heart. To me, she is not disabled. To me, my foster mommy is very special. I went through some hard and scary times, but now I am the luckiest bunny rabbit in the world. I have to stop writing because mommy says she needs the computer. I am going to rest in my Cottontail Cottage.

'Bye for now.

– Chelsea Cohen  
*(with Fern Cohen)*

## Seeking Summer Bunny Volunteers!

Photos: Mary Ann Maier



Sheldon was a star at the Garden City Park Petco.

With the vacation season upon us, rabbit-rescue resources are stretched thin. More than any other time of the year, we need help with our rescue and fostering efforts.

You can help our area bunnies by volunteering at a local Petco or at the Manhattan shelter, cleaning cages and caring for the many rabbits who are abandoned in the warm weather. Can you help with our rescue work on Long Island? Can you foster a homeless bunny in your home for 10-12 weeks?

We truly need your help in getting through the summer season. Already, we are feeling the pinch. The rabbit room at the AC&C shelter is full and many of our regular fosterers have left the city for the summer. On Long Island, where a number of public parks have become dumping grounds for unwanted bunnies, our volunteers are busier than ever. If you have been thinking of helping out, now is the time. Please contact us immediately.



Sheldon being held by his adopter Mary Kavanaugh

For Manhattan volunteer work, email Cindy Stutts at [bygolyoly@yahoo.com](mailto:bygolyoly@yahoo.com) or call her at (646) 319-4766. On Long Island, contact Mary Ann Maier at [altitude8@yahoo.com](mailto:altitude8@yahoo.com) or at (516) 671-6654. (For a comprehensive list of contact information, as well as information about making tax-deductible donations, see page 22 of this newsletter.)



Volunteer Karin Hoffman, standing

### In Manhattan, you can help by:

— letting us know if you can work at the shelter or a Petco store, or as a fosterer for a rabbit. (*Our primary focus in Manhattan at the moment is an urgent search for people to foster our rabbits.*)

### On Long Island, we need helpers to:

— tidy the cages and play with and feed bunnies at our “shelters,” i.e., our two main foster homes.

— become fosterers to ease the Levittown strays crisis. (For years, we’ve received reports of stray buns on one particular block, but now the sightings are constant.)

— work with us at the Petcos, for as little as an hour or two a week. (We need socializers at Garden City Park and Levittown, and we are open to suggestions for new Petcos that could help us promote bunny adoptions.)

— be transporters for our rabbits, either for a medical issue, an adoption event or a rescue-related emergency.

— donate your time in any way you can.

— donate money so that we can use the funds for spaying and neutering our rabbits.

## How You Can Be of Help to Your Beloved Older Rabbit

By Megan Krieman

I knew when I adopted Samson 3 1/2 years ago that he was a special-needs bunny, though he didn't really require much that was special.

Samson, who had some mobility issues and limited use of his back right leg, needed a litter box with the lowest walls I could find, and I had to make sure my floors weren't slick.

We've had a blissful existence together, and I don't think he ever believed that he was a special-needs bun, except that he knows he is an incredibly special guy in our household. Samson is now about nine years old.

It was two years ago that my vet, Dr. Jennifer Saver, asked if Samson's back feet were dragging across the rim of the litter box as he jumped into it. She said this was a sign of arthritis, and we started him and his younger girlfriend, Delilah, on a daily dose of glucosamine. This, we hoped, would help him be more comfortable while giving her a preventive dose.

Also when he was about seven, I noticed a change in Samson's eyes. They appeared cloudy. We made another visit to Dr. Saver and discovered that Samson had developed cataracts. Dr. Saver said he was in fact blind in one eye, and it seemed likely he would lose sight in the other eye, too. Dr. Saver had encouraging things to say about the lifespan of a blind bunny, explaining that that he had many other senses he could rely on. He could live a perfectly full life as a blind bun, she said, and he has lived a fun-filled life as blind bunny for the past 2 1/2 years. I don't rearrange anything in the house, and he knows just where to find everything. He's fortunate enough to have a city home and a country home, and he gets around just fine in both houses.

It was only a few months ago that Samson decided that pooping next to the litter box was sufficient. I didn't mind. I

Photos: Megan Krieman



Top, Delilah in the box in front and Sam in the back with fresh greens.  
Bottom, Delilah and Samson.

recognized he was getting older, and I appreciated that he unflinchingly still made trips into the box. However, recently, pooping next to the box became all that he could manage.

I wanted to offer Samson low-sided litter boxes, but we couldn't find boxes that were suitable for him. They either were too

small or their sides were too high for his hopping abilities. Sam was starting to have difficulties with whatever new box I found. He would hop in and smash his face on the box's high wall. I had to keep searching for an alternative, while cleaning more frequently around the litter-box area.

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## For Apple, Life's Sweeter With Sam

By Jessica Fitzsimons

Chris and I both grew up with dogs, which made us an animal-loving couple. We used to spend our weekends outdoors, watching the dogs at parks near our apartment. I had always wanted to have a rabbit, though, and I encouraged Chris to visit the Union Square Petco to ask about adopting a rabbit. We then decided to visit the shelter on East 110th Street, where we found our first rabbit, a sweet young girl bunny who we named Apple.

Apple was adorable, yet mischievous! She had the run of Chris's Park Avenue apartment for many months, with a spacious two-floor cage, a myriad of toys and all the love a bunny could want. Apple would play for hours, tossing her plastic keys and hopping all over us.

Around Christmas, we all moved to a more spacious home nearby where Apple had

the run of the apartment. Each morning, though, our hearts broke when we had to leave her alone, without a friend to frolic with.

After much thought, we returned to Petco to find her a playmate. Nestled in her carrier, Apple arrived for a speed-dating session, supervised by the Rabbit Rescue & Rehab volunteers. She was put into a pen and introduced to one rabbit, and then another, but the dates didn't look promising. For her third date, a man brought out his rabbit, Sam, and placed him in the cage with Apple. Although it wasn't love at first sight, it was at least okay. Sam kept lowering his head for Apple to groom him, but she just wasn't having any of it. She was the hard-to-get type! After two separate sessions with loveable Sam, we decided that he could be just the bunny for Apple.

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Photos: Chris Nell



Sam and Apple

## Beloved Older Rabbit

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Finally, in a moment of desperation, I tried cutting down a side on his litter box. Incredibly, household scissors did the trick! I also found an indispensable item on the Internet: bed pads. They come in many sizes and are machine-washable and affordable (<http://www.allegromedical.com>). They are very thin and have been impenetrable. I keep several on hand. They're great because they wick urine away from the skin, keeping a bunny dry. No more cleaning the floor several times a day!

Caging Sam had never been an option. I've wanted him to keep his mobile quality of life alongside his girlfriend. They are an inseparable, dynamic duo.

Delilah, meanwhile, has become Samson's seeing-eye bun. She won't take her bedtime treat until they're both together in the bedroom. She will "herd" Sam when she wants him to go somewhere, by gently

pressing into him and hopping alongside him. It's really quite something!

It's because of this special bond that they both visit the doctor whenever one has to go. It's less stressful than separating them. So it was during one of Delilah's recent visits that Dr. Saver decided to take a look at Sam, too. She noticed a change in his eye and told me to set up an appointment as soon as possible with a recommended ophthalmologist.

Dr. John Sapienza said Samson had glaucoma. After three months of medicine, thrice daily, we've developed a medical routine that includes a lot of lap-sitting time. While Samson has never been much of a lap bunny, he certainly has become one now.

Delilah hasn't cared for lap time either, but she can't stand the fact that Sam is getting so much attention. Consequently, she has taken to climbing into my lap, too. What has been an extremely emotional

time has also become a wonderful time of bonding for all of us. I cherish that Sam allows me to lavish attention upon him while lying in my lap. He stays long past his medicine time, and I believe it's an indication that he's enjoying the cuddle time, too.

Samson is my second bun to reach this elder stage of life. Stuart, my first bunny, wasn't blind, but at the age of about 10 he needed a wheelchair to get around (<http://www.doggon.com/home.html>).

The needs of elder bunnies can vary greatly. Physical changes seem to come on quickly and unexpectedly. It can be a difficult time for a bunny caretaker. However, there are resources available to make this a less stressful and more comfortable time for all. Talk to your vet; go to [rabbit.org](http://rabbit.org), and contact your local rabbit-rescue community. Most of all, enjoy loving your new lap bunny!

## BONDING

### Sweeter With Sam

(Continued from page 8)

We took Sam home and situated him away from Apple, separating them by a barrier so that they could be close enough to get to know one another, but not too close.

They then began their bonding sessions. Over a pile of lettuce, and under adult supervision, Apple and Sam became acquainted. The two buns would sniff each other from tail to ears and snuggle up to one another, showing a bit of affection. Each day, their sessions grew longer and longer, and Chris and I became eager for the duo to be fully bonded. There was progress at each bonding session, but I was waiting for that “aha” moment of mutual grooming – the moment when you just know, finally, that the rabbits are bonded.

After three weeks of Sam constantly grooming Apple, without reciprocation,

it happened. We couldn't believe our eyes. For the first time, Apple didn't ignore Sam's silent request for grooming. She hopped over and groomed him just enough for everyone to see, and then hopped away as though it didn't happen.

The next bonding session sealed the deal. There was nothing but affection, grooming and happy tails from Apple and Sam!

We headed to Petco the following weekend to pick up some new toys for the duo and told one of the rabbit volunteers about the mutual grooming. She said that it would soon be time for the two rabbits to live together, everyday, all the time.

With trepidation, we took down the metal divider and let Apple and Sam enjoy each other. Now, three months later, they are nearly inseparable. Both rabbits have distinctly different living habits, much like any human couple you would meet, but they like snuggling, running and being friends. At any given

moment, you can find them cuddled together in the corner of the room, or sharing a romantic pellet dinner.

Our family of four couldn't be happier, and Chris and I are so grateful for having found Sam. He is both wonderful for Apple, and wonderful with his human friends. The two rabbits get along amazingly well, and they really couldn't be any cuter.

If you would like to check out their antics, they are on YouTube.

To see Apple acting crazy right before we got Sam, go to

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHKrdialP5I>

To watch Sam redecorating after he moved in, go to

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7nFtpo\\_DkU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7nFtpo_DkU)

Whether they're tossing around a faux carrot, or eating handfuls of hay together, it is evident that these two are truly best friends, forever.

Photo: Kerstin Aumann



Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Top, Joshua draping an ear over his partner Storm's head  
Bottom, Joshua lounging in an Oxbow hay box

### RIP: Joshua Jumper

By Kerstin Aumann

Our beloved lop, Joshua, crossed over the rainbow bridge in the witching hour of June 6. Although no longer a young bun, Joshua's passing came as a shock. He had seemed like a perfectly happy, healthy bun just hours earlier, devouring a plate of veggies for dinner with his girlfriend Storm. Just two hours later, he refused his bedtime treat and things went terribly and quickly downhill from there. The cause of death was later identified as an intestinal infection.

Joshua's story is a remarkable example of rabbit rehabilitation. Known as Pepe at the time, Joshua was surrendered to the Brooklyn AC&C shelter just days before Valentine's Day in February 2007. His previous owners said they were going on vacation and had no one to care for him – but it was clear that they had been neglecting Joshua long before giving him up. Joshua was thin and unsocialized, full of raging hormones and pent-up energy from being confined in too small a cage.

Joshua didn't do well in the shelter environment; sadly, he soon wound up on “death row” for biting a kennel worker. Rabbit volunteers in Brooklyn sounded the alarm, recognizing that it was the circumstances and hormones, not an evil personality, that led to Joshua's biting. The euthanasia was already scheduled when I responded to an urgent email and took the long subway ride to the Brooklyn shelter to rescue and foster Joshua.

Once I had Joshua safe in my home, I thought I'd be in trouble with my fiancé for bringing home yet another rabbit...but Victor's reaction to Joshua was simply “Whoa, what a cool bunny!” My husband-to-be instantly fell in love with the manly moustache on Joshua's nose, perfectly mirroring his “macho” manners. Victor described Joshua as a “man's rabbit.” Despite the fact that we

already shared our home with five rabbits, it soon became clear that Joshua was a keeper.

Biting became a distant memory, as Joshua turned into a much calmer bunny with plenty of room to exercise and blow off steam. Victor and Joshua shared a special bond, with Vic often taking Joshua for a “boys' night” to our beach bungalow.

Eventually, Joshua developed another special bond – this time with a little old dwarf girl named Storm. Together, Joshua and Storm were featured in an Easter story in the Daily News ([http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/2009/04/11/2009-04-11\\_unhappy\\_holidays\\_rabbits\\_are\\_often\\_easter\\_gifts\\_only\\_to\\_be\\_abandoned\\_soon\\_after.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/lifestyle/2009/04/11/2009-04-11_unhappy_holidays_rabbits_are_often_easter_gifts_only_to_be_abandoned_soon_after.html)). They were also featured in the October 2009 edition of NYC Metro Rabbit News (now known as Thump) in a story about “Love and Second Chances in the Golden Years.”

Storm, Victor and I dearly miss Joshua's determined, yet lovable “tough bun” personality. He was a “cool bunny” indeed, (who always enjoyed a round of the “broom game” (chasing the broom whenever one of his humans tried to sweep up poop and hay), digging, ripping and shredding, chewing on his bunny house and following his humans into the kitchen to see what they were up to. He also loved to follow his humans into the bathroom...we're not really sure why he did that. He was one of those special bunnies who are more like dogs.

Farewell, Joshua Jumper! Thank you for being such a fun bun. We learned a lot from you. Your story once again proves that every bunny deserves a second chance. Your sudden departure from our lives reminds us to cherish each day with our furry kids. Here's to counting our blessings each time a hungry bunny knocks a full pellets bowl out of our hands because breakfast service is just too slow (again!) or pounces on a bedtime treat.

## Going With the Flow of Bunny Love

By Erin McElhinney

I am a type-A personality in all aspects outside of my own personal life. In my professional life, I am used to poring over minute details and planning out weeks in 30-minute increments. My own life is much more free-form. Actually, it's kind of a mess, except where my Ginger Madeleine is concerned. From her, I expect meticulous litter-box habits, cuddles on demand and my little furry shadow to maintain her composure at all times. (My other rabbits thump when it thunders or when the doorbell rings, and are not afraid to nip me if I'm in their way.)

Ginger has always been my baby girl, my first pet in my adult life and my best friend. What I'm trying to say here is, it took a lot for me to admit I might not be enough for her, that she might be happier during my daily 12-14 hour absences if she had some bunny companionship.

My other rabbits were immediately a no in this respect. Ginger has had brief encounters with them all at various points over the years and fur has flown each time. So I sent an email to some bunny people and the response was almost unanimous: I had to meet Amy's foster, Houdini.

You may remember Houdini as a cover boy in our fall 2009 newsletter. Amy described his philosophy as "bite first and ask questions later!" Fortunately, under her loving care and supervision he changed his ways, or so she said.

Bunny speed-dating is lady's (or gentleman's) choice, so I soothed myself with the knowledge that I didn't have to take this big boy home – that perhaps Ginger would fall in love with another, smaller bun, one with fewer skeletons in his closet.

On the big day, I packed Ginger Madeleine up into her pink carrier, and after a quick detour to Starbucks where her little face poked out and immediately received universal praise from the Union Square coffee-drinking clientele, we were on our way to Petco to meet Amy and Houdini.

At Petco, Amy had created the perfect setup for a bunny-bonding session – a large pen with a litter box on each side. We let each bun loose, one at a time, to get a feel for the strange new territory. Houdini was his usual gregarious, curious little self, running around sniffing and chinning his heart out. Ginger Madeleine,

however, immediately became shy and had to be prodded to even leave the litter box. She would take a couple of steps before collapsing her body down to the floor. She was overwhelmed.

We put Houdini in the puppy pen with Ginger and suddenly my little chubbette looked so vulnerable and tiny. I looked at this big white bun and just saw big white chompers. What had I gotten myself and Ginger Madeleine into?

Ginger felt similarly scared (or, more likely, she picked up on my nervous energy and reacted in kind; having positive energy is very important for bunny owners to project on speed-dates!) Every time Houdini ventured near her, her little body flattened on the floor. I watched Amy and Houdini like a hawk, waiting for that moment when Houdini would go berserk and charge my Ginger and rip fur right out of her skin. This moment, of course, never happened. Despite the size difference, he was just as shy, but curious about her, as she was of him. They stared at each other from opposite sides of the puppy pen and pretended not to notice. We tried Ginger with another boy (a dwarf) but Houdini was clearly the winner. They were fascinated by each other. He seemed more curious than she was, so I thought when I got them home that I would have to watch out for him being too aggressive. This was not the first time I was proven wrong by a bun.

At home, Ginger Madeleine turned into a territorial four-pound wildebeest. She growled at him; she chased him down; she found any possible way to squeeze her way into his side of the apartment to taunt him and provoke him. At one point, I happened upon him with his paws pinning her to the ground, a crazed maniacal expression across her face and puffs of Houdini's white fur blowing all around them like a fog cloud. He could

*(Continued on page 11)*

Photo: Erin McElhinney



Houdini and Ginger Madeleine

## Two White-Pawed Buns: A Perfect Match?

By Helen Chen

As a volunteer helping to care for our adoptable rabbits, I have always found it hard to resist taking all the bunnies home myself. None made it more difficult to resist than Penny, formerly known as Madonna. A medium-sized agouti beauty with a hare-like face and one white paw, Penny won the hearts of the volunteers during her stay at the shelter and captured the attention of passers-by at the Upper East Side Petco. Penny stood out for her easygoing demeanor, insatiable appetite and most of all, her willingness to show her affection for humans. Penny gave countless bunny kisses to the volunteers, including me. I cared for her and observed her for weeks before entertaining the idea of pairing her with my rabbit, Kirby.

I adopted Kirby from Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue in New Jersey in November 2008. He is a handsome mini-satin with shiny black fur all over his body except for a white stripe, white lips and one white paw, just like Penny. Since taking

him home he has grown to trust my husband and me, but he still knows to protect himself. He runs away from strangers and is stressed in unfamiliar environments. Attempts to bond him with my other rabbit, a dwarf bunny named Toby, never worked out. The two neutered boys were too untrusting of each other to ever get along.

In my mind, I thought two rabbits who just happened to have the same white “sock” had to be made for each other. More than that, Penny was full of love and gave unlimited kisses, and Kirby wanted more than anything for someone to love and understand him. It looked like a match made in heaven. I brought Kirby to meet Penny during a speed-date at Petco. Kirby hid under the rabbit cages while Penny explored and observed the interloper. When the two found themselves face to face, they sniffed as if to politely say “how do you do,” and then they walked right past each other in the most civil way possible.

*(Continued on page 12)*

Photos: Helen Chen



Penny and Kirby

## Going With the Flow

*(Continued from page 10)*

have destroyed her in that moment, but chose to just pin her there, writhing on her side. I ran into the pen and scooped her up. She growled at me but then immediately relaxed in my arms. My pride and joy, my perfect little girl, was learning to share her space with a big white bun.

Although it is taking longer than I had hoped, bonding is coming along and after nearly three months, I’m at about three minutes of them being together with no aggressive chasing and nipping, and longer if they are separated by a single puppy pen. Houdini is one of the loveliest and affectionate rabbits I have known, and if having Ginger is like having a perfectly feminine little baby

girl, Houdini is like having a terrier puppy. He is curious about everything and I swear I can see him problem-solving in his expressions. He is a very smart bun.

I know one day I will have another bonded pair of buns, and whether it takes three months more or six months more, I must respect the time they both need to feel totally comfortable with each other. One day I know that Ginger Madeleine will realize that Houdini can’t spend every waking minute of his day grooming her pretty face. He can groom her from time to time, and he is within his rights to expect a little return on that investment. Until then, I will continue to don a sneaker on my right hand to break up any fights and hop in the pen with them, waiting for that

magical moment when we can go just a little bit longer before my tiny, perfect dwarf mix goes berserk on a big white bun twice her size. Instead of focusing on why it’s taking as long as it is, I remember that Ginger’s litter-box habits are still perfect; Houdini is an amazing snuggle bun, and I am so lucky to be able to go through this process with them both so that one day when love does blossom, I can smile and remember how much hard work went into their bond and maybe I can even take a lesson from them for my own relationships! In the meantime, I will learn to keep my jealousy under control whenever someone else tells me how they managed to create a bonded pair in two weeks, or one month, or any amount of time that is quicker than what I am going through!

## Group Therapy: How Flopsy, Pickles and Nibbles Found a Place in Their Hearts (Sort of) for Duchess

By Will Leung

Four years ago, I never had any intention of having rabbits as pets, nor did I know much generally about rabbits as pets. In fact, I had every intention of adopting a dog, but on that fateful day, someone beat me out on adopting an English Bulldog. I happened upon the small animal room at the shelter and noticed a brown-and-white lop named Pickles, a super-aggressive rabbit who would attack your hand. When I got home, I became curious and started reading and researching. I saw on Craigslist that there was another lop on Long Island up for adoption.

Having read that two rabbits are more ideal for a working person like me, I went one weekend day to pick up Tinkerbelle (now known as Flopsy), and then that Monday went to adopt Pickles.

Somewhere I read that the aggressive rabbits are the smart ones. And I took it to heart that Pickles was a misunderstood little soul. Flopsy and Pickles were an instant bond, although I think Flopsy did more of the loving and Pickles was more or less in shock. It turned out Flopsy wasn't spayed, but this got taken care of within a couple weeks. A few

*(Continued on page 13)*

### Two White-Pawed Buns

*(Continued from page 11)*

After such a well-mannered first encounter, Loraine Kopf, another volunteer, said she thought there was a real possibility for the two to bond. I had to consider the effect this would have on my other rabbit, Toby, since he would have to move out of the room where Kirby lived in order to make room for Penny. With my husband's support, I decided to take Penny home and give Kirby a chance at bonding with her.

After four weeks and 32 bonding sessions at home, Kirby and Penny moved in together to share the same living space. Penny was cool as a cucumber, while Kirby hopped around and occasionally groomed her. It became clear that Penny was the dominant bunny.

The four weeks of bonding had gone by quickly but not as easily as I had expected. I saw Penny do things that I never saw when she was at Petco. Penny became cross when I touched her ears and would sometimes fling her ears around as if something was bothering her. She was also urinating all over her pen and

soiling her fur. Two trips to the vet and some testing later, she was diagnosed with ear mites, but her tests were inconclusive for the urinating problem. She was given Revolution for the mites, and antibiotics in case she had a urinary tract infection. Penny's now in great health!

They had moved in together, but Penny played hard to get. She would not groom her roommate or give him kisses. They waited until the third week before snuggling. One week after that, Penny finally gave Kirby bunny kisses on his head and his ears. Now, the two are inseparable. Penny is happily stealing food from Kirby's plate while he is busy kissing her. Kirby is gaining confidence with his new bunny friend next to him. He no longer runs when he encounters strangers, and he goes wherever she goes. Even Toby has benefited; he has taken over the living room and thrives being the only bunny around. Each time I go into Kirby and Penny's room, Penny rushes over to lick my hands and feet, as if to say "thank you." I always say thank you back, for the wonderfully positive ways she has changed my life and my bunnies' lives.

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Duchess at AC&C, Sept. 29, 2009

### Duchess Joins Will's Warren

For Duchess, a gentle bun who came to AC&C in the fall of 2009, there were a few bumps in the road at the outset. After her spay surgery, she developed some large welts around the incision, and also had some areas of swelling. Volunteer Loraine Kopf took Duchess under her wing and visited Dr. Becky Campbell at Symphony Vet for advice. The welts, which were believed to have been caused by the razor shaving for her spay or else a heating pad, finally went away after two weeks of treatment with a salve, and Loraine nursed Duchess back to health.

Another volunteer, Will Leung, began fostering Duchess in January, introducing her to his three lop-eared rabbits: Nibbles, Pickles and Flopsy. Over a period of more than three months, Duchess became comfortable with the other buns in her family. On April 21, Will officially adopted Duchess.

Will took photos to document how Duchess interacted with her housemates in the early days. He dated each picture. As a whole, the sequenced photos present the story of how Duchess and Will's three rabbits reacted to each other and finally joined together as a family. Because the photos are in chronological order, they provide useful information about rabbit bonding. (See pages 13-14.) As Will explains in his accompanying article on this page, "It all is a work in progress."

**Group Therapy**

*(Continued from page 12)*

months later I decided to try to bring another boy into the family, but to my horror, Pickles was so vicious to the other boy that I couldn't believe it. Pickles was so outraged that he would literally sit in front of the pen and harass the other boy all day long, and the fights were too much. So I had to give up on the new guy, the friendliest rabbit I have ever met. Several months after that, I tried again – this time a girl, and a baby one. Pickles, surprisingly, didn't even care much about her at first. After five days behind the pens, ButterCup (now know as Nibbles,) managed to escape during the day while I was at work. When I came home, she had already done a lot of the the necessary groundwork toward becoming the third rabbit of the warren. Though at first she kept her three-foot distance from the group, by the second day she was snuggling with the rest.

When I started to volunteer with the AC&C group, Duchess was already at the Union Square Petco. And she was the most aggressive rabbit I have ever met. I didn't think rabbits would ever bare their teeth, but there was Duchess standing on her hind legs, baring her teeth and ready to bite when I tried to take her out for her exercise time. Over the next few weeks, I would hear that some volunteers couldn't get her out, or would get bitten, or generally didn't know how to handle her aggressiveness. But she reminded me of Pickles when he was at the shelter. Perfect, I said. Another misunderstood little soul. I am taking her home. And I told myself that I could not give up this time, no matter what – not after one of my attempts had failed, something I have regretted ever since.

So I took her home, and the instant she got home, she was already out and about, exploring her new environment. Even though she would run away from me, she never bared her teeth or tried to bite me when I tried to pick her up. Instead,

Photos: Will Leung

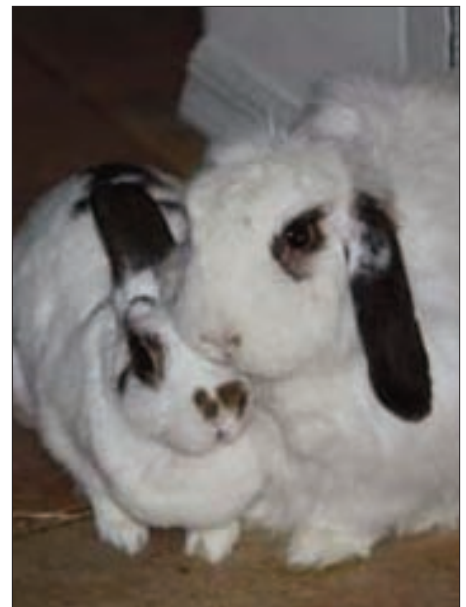


From top:  
 Jan. 11: 3 lops on one side, with Duchess alone  
 March 18: Pickles, Flopsy, Duchess  
 March 22: clockwise from top: Duchess, Pickles, Nibbles, Flopsy  
 March 25: Duchess and Flopsy

she would actually lie down when she knew she was being picked up. And she instantly discovered her own comfy way to lie in my arm, with one paw thrown over the outside of my arm and her head tucked into my arm. Eventually, she would get comfortable enough so that she could let me know when she didn't want to be held. She'd start grumbling, or when that didn't work, she would give me a nip. And she fit right in with my family of talking rabbits: Pickles, who growls; Flopsy, who also grumbles; and Nibbles, who is learning to grumble.

Bonding time was an adventure for all. When I took Duchess home, I set up a pen to close off the sitting area in my living room, and set up a new giant shared litter box, half inside Duchess's

*(Continued on page 14)*



## Her Name's Lucky, and This Is Why

It was the first Sunday in May when Mary Ann Maier's phone rang. There was a white rabbit loose in a park in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. Mary Ann couldn't go to investigate because she was caring for a stasis bunny, so to buy time she coached the caller, Laura Gonzalez, on preparing a cardboard box, approaching the rabbit and herding the bunny into the box, if possible. Meanwhile, Mary Ann emailed rabbit owners and volunteers in Brooklyn seeking assistance, and she continued coaching Laura on the phone.

The good news was that Laura managed to safely contain the bunny. The bad news was that she reported that the bunny looked severely injured, even abused.

Mary Ann sent out another email, alerting Manhattan volunteers and indicating she might need immediate medical attention. Laura was on her way to the Manhattan

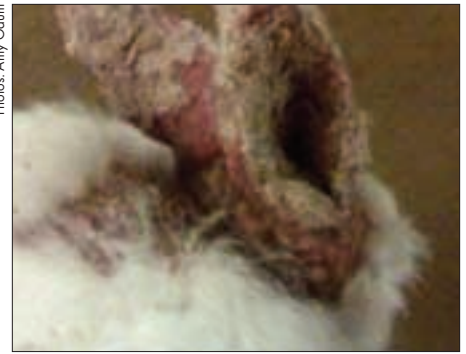
shelter. "Bunny en route to 110th St. now, 2:45 on May 2," Mary Ann's email said.

The response she got was swift. Erin McElhinney was at the shelter and emailed, "Hi all. I am the volunteer here on duty. Have made a cage for the new guy and will reach out to Laura directly so she can call me when she gets here. If the rabbit is injured, will get her into medical asap."

Later that evening, Laura let everyone know that the rabbit arrived safely. She added, "The rabbit was severely sick and when I arrived. Erin said it was the worst case she had seen in the four years she has been at the shelter. It turns out that the rabbit suffered a bad infection caused by ear mites, and this had traveled through part of her head and back. She also suffered some urine burn on her front paws."

*(Continued on page 15)*

Photos: Amy Odum



Top, Lucky's ears, before treatment  
Bottom, Lucky's ears, after treatment

## Group Therapy

*(Continued from page 13)*



April 15: All together! At back, Duchess, Flopsy; in foreground, Pickles and Nibbles.

area, and half where the other three had access, too. The girls touched noses, but Pickles growled. Duchess didn't have any place to get out of sight of the other three, so I set up a rabbit maze in which she could hide and play. When I started bonding the group, I would open the pen up and let everyone share space for

as long as possible before chasing began. This was usually for about 10-15 minutes when I got home from work. Duchess instantly demanded to be groomed, sticking her nose under everyone else's nose. Nibbles would have none of this, giving her a good bite.

The pattern started to form whereby Flopsy was the easiest to get along with, almost nonaggressive. Pickles was aggressive but only with small nips and charges, without biting. However, Nibbles, to my surprise, was the most aggressive. I figured that this was because she thought she already was on the bottom of the pecking order and didn't want to fall further behind the rest. Nibbles was always trying to climb the ladder even before Duchess was on the scene, but got chased by the other two when she did. So I guess in hindsight, I shouldn't have been surprised.

It was time to start sharing space. During the day, Duchess would have the run of

the apartment, and the other three would be confined to the back of the apartment where their other litter box was. Then I started to give each one time with Duchess to hang out together. Over time, Flopsy was the quickest to accept Duchess, then Pickles and lastly Nibbles, who to this day still reminds Duchess who was here first.

Throughout all of this, I have yet to see Duchess not be Duchess. She's never groomed anyone; she still sticks her nose out to be groomed, prompting indifference from Pickles, occasional grooming from Flopsy, and chasing by Nibbles.

It all is a work in progress. Now Duchess is trying to show me who is boss. She actually pawed and nipped me once because she didn't think she got enough sweets. Her favorite is banana chips.

## Cottontail Rabbits: Do You Know What to Do If You Find One in Your Local Park?

By Kerstin Aumann

Every now and then, we get a wild cottontail rabbit at the shelter, brought there by concerned individuals who have found the rabbit in a park or field. Cottontails may look a lot like the “wild cousins” of our house rabbits, but they are a different species. They are truly wild animals and cannot be kept as pets. Therefore, while it may be tempting to think of “rescuing” a wild rabbit by providing him or her with a safe, domestic environment, nothing could be less appropriate for these animals.



Peter Cottontail at Kerstin's (morning of May 18)

Take the story of “Peter Cottontail,” for example. Peter was tiny and barely three weeks old when he arrived at the shelter in mid-May. He was named for his physical resemblance to the Beatrix Potter character, but it was impossible to determine his sex: not only was he very young, but he did not allow shelter volunteers to handle him.

The people who found him assumed that he was abandoned by his mother and decided to “help” this little guy by keeping

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### Lucky

*(Continued from page 14)*

Laura’s email continued, “I have named the female white rabbit Lucky because she was lucky that my husband, Ronny, found her and asked for my help to get medical attention. There is a possibility that Lucky may have her ears amputated, but she’s a fighter, not a quitter.”

Lucky was taken under the wing of volunteer Amy Odum, who followed through on all the rehab work.

By May 12, Amy sent Laura this encouraging report: “Believe it or not, she’s doing great! Still looks pretty pitiful and will for a while, but feeling much better and it looks like she may not have any long-term effects from this, which as we all know isn’t always the case with these severe neglect cases.

“I took her to Dr. Pilny the following Tuesday (May 4). Even after a dose of Revolution, she was still full of live mites, which spoke to the severity of the infestation to begin with. She also had sores under all that flaking, hyperkeratotic skin that were infested with maggots! (No cuterebra, thank God; just ordinary little fly maggots.) Her ears were so inflamed they looked puffy, as though they’d been quilted. Both eyes and her

skin were infected, and she was (and is) quite underweight.

“Since she still had so many live mites, Dr. Pilny gave her Ivermectin, and sent her home with me with antibiotics and a week’s worth of pain meds. Took some blood just to be safe but haven’t gotten the results yet. She never stopped eating entirely but her appetite was iffy and she was withdrawn and startled easily – so much so that I wondered at first if there might be something wrong with her hearing or vision. She was clearly in pain.

“After about three to four days she really began to perk up. I think once she had no more live mites and was on antibiotics and pain meds it was just a matter of getting enough calories into her. Her appetite’s really taken off. I had her on Critical Care for the first few days but now she’s on regular pellets.

“By the time I took her back to Dr. Pilny for a recheck yesterday she’d already gained half a pound! She’s still totally bald on her ears, the top of her head, her neck, and upper back – not even peach fuzz! – but all those icky flakes have fallen off. The skin infection’s about cleared up and for the most part it’s just bald, pink skin.

“Dr. Pilny flushed her tear ducts but I have a feeling the eye infection may be

with us for a while. He didn’t mention an ear infection specifically (my great fear is head tilt with these cases). So I’ll probably ask him, just for my peace of mind. But she sure doesn’t act like her ears bother her any more, and she’s already on antibiotics for the eye infection anyway so I think we’re okay for now.

“She’s started to feel well enough to show a little personality. She’s going to be a very sociable, outgoing girl, I think. She’s not fearful or hard to handle at all. A pretty tough cookie, I guess. Probably why she didn’t just lie down and die, bless her heart! And believe it or not, Lucky’s not the worst. We’ve had two come in that looked a lot worse than she did.”

Mary Ann, who deals with rescued rabbits daily as a volunteer with the Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, said she was grateful to Laura, Erin and the AC&C volunteers. She added, “It is a miracle how some of these rabbits survive their ordeals. Thank you for fostering her, Amy. I have no doubt you’ll be able to nurture her physically and psychologically. And again, kudos to you, Laura and Ronny. As I have said, most people would have given it about five minutes and then totally bailed out on her.”

## Carla Takes a Detour on the Way to the Meat Market

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Carla at AC&C

Carla and a load of other animals were headed to a meat-processing facility on Saturday, April 17, when the truck carrying them crashed. Crates spilled into the street in Astoria, and a good Samaritan scooped up the gray-and-white bun and brought her to the East 110th Street shelter. Cindy Stutts was at AC&C for intake and remarked that Carla was “one lucky lady,” though the

rabbit seemed to have slight muscle atrophy. “I think it bears watching for the week,” Cindy said.

The following day, Melissa van Wijk also noted Carla’s minor coordination problem. “I observed her several times as she rolled onto her side or inadvertently dropped onto her rear end as though her hind legs had given way,” Melissa said. “She walks and hops but with weaker movement than what I consider normal. She did not appear to be in any pain; just a little weaker and less in control of her hind legs.”

Katelyn Belyus, Jane O’Wyatt, Vivian Barna and other volunteers monitored Carla carefully over the next several days.

Jane said that the muscles in Carla’s hind legs appeared weak, but that she used them evenly, without splaying, and she was able to sit up on them when she washed her face. “She jumped into a shallow litter box and flopped in the pen, and she stretched out in her cage,” Jane said. Carla wasn’t used to being handled in a friendly way, so Jane said she was able to do only a little range-of-motion stretching exercise with Carla’s legs.

In early May, Dr. Anthony Pilny examined Carla and agreed that her problem was muscle atrophy due to lack of exercise.

As Cindy said, “This is what Dr. Gil Stanzione once called ‘cage rot,’” adding

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### Cottontail

*(Continued from page 15)*

him. After four days, however, they realized this situation just wasn’t going to work and they brought him to us at the shelter.

Unfortunately, the shelter environment – with barking dogs and lots of people traffic – is not a good environment for any cottontail, but especially not for a frail and traumatized youngster. We made arrangements to have Peter transferred to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator on Long Island. Wildlife rehabbers are trained to care for sick or injured wildlife, eventually releasing animals back into their natural habitat.

It took a couple of days to arrange transportation, so Peter spent a week in my apartment as a foster bunny. Peter wasn’t the first cottontail to stay in my home on a layover to a wildlife rehabber or sanctuary placement, but he made it clear to me that even a bun as young as he would never be able to tolerate life in a domestic setting.

Even the most timid of domestic rabbits will show some excitement about getting

fed, but not Peter. Even though he developed a hearty appetite and wound up eating his own body weight in dandelion, clover and kale every day, he never flinched when I came to bring him food. He’d simply sit in his hidey tunnel and pretend like he wasn’t even there. He would never take food from my hand, or eat when I was around watching him. (The fact that I “caught” him nibbling some kale on camera is practically a miracle.)

When a human approached his cage, Peter always pretended he was the invisible bunny, frozen and hoping that “if I don’t move, you can’t see me.” He wouldn’t move at all, or even thump like a shy domestic bunny might. If someone were to try to touch Peter, he’d fly around the cage in a panic. Fast like lightning, it was impossible to handle this little guy without creating stress for everyone.

These patterns of behavior are typical of cottontails in captivity.

If you find a cottontail rabbit, it’s best to leave him or her alone and undisturbed – unless there are obvious signs of injury or distress. Then what should you do?

You can call us for advice, but ultimately the best thing to do is contact a wildlife rehabilitator. Do not attempt to care for a cottontail rabbit yourself. To find a wildlife rehabber in your area, check these websites:

[http://wildliferehabber.org/st\\_disp\\_list.php](http://wildliferehabber.org/st_disp_list.php)

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~devo0028/contact.htm>

If you find a baby cottontail who looks abandoned by his mom – like Peter – keep in mind that he’s probably not really abandoned. Cottontail moms only nurse briefly once during the night, staying away from the nest otherwise. You will not see the mom return to the nest, but she probably is doing so. For advice and warning signs when something might be wrong, please see this article on the House Rabbit Society website:

<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/orphan.html>

Peter is happy to have survived a brief stint at the shelter and in foster care. He is now with his wildlife rehabber on Long Island, preparing to return to the wild.

## How Busefelo, a Castaway Living With Feral Cats, Finally Settled Down in a Real Home

By Lisa Winters

Busefelo (named after Alexander the Great's Horse) is a two-year-old New Zealand White neutered male who had a tough beginning.

Rescued from the streets in Washington Heights, he had made his home with feral cats and relied on the kindness of a building superintendent who came from the Dominican Republic, where New Zealand Whites are bred for meat.

When I rescued Busefelo, I named him "Snow White" because I thought he was a girl. He was undernourished and in very poor shape. I took him into my apartment and discovered two red "tumor"-like bumps that looked infected. I rushed him to the vet, only to discover that Snow White's tumors were really testicles and she was really a he. That's how Snow White became Busefelo, the transgender rabbit.

Busefelo lived for a year at the Bronx Community Pride Center, a gay community center in the South Bronx serving mainly homeless and runaway youths. They all loved Busefelo and learned a great deal about the proper care and management of rabbits and other pets. Busefelo gave endless amounts of pleasure to the staff and clients at the center. When I left there after five years of service in January 2010, Busefelo needed a new home.

Photo: AC&C



Busefelo at AC&C intake

And that's where NYC Animal Care & Control came into the picture. With the assistance of Cindy Stutts, Busefelo was adopted by a wonderful family in Brooklyn who fell in love with the New Zealand White and gave him his new forever home. The mom and dad have 6-year-old twin girls. Busefelo now has the run of 1,800 square feet and plenty of love and attention. Everyone was captivated by his good nature and good manners. He gets along with everyone – cats, kids, parents, visitors and relatives.

The family also adopted a female rabbit, Snowflake, on the same day, and they eventually may try to bond Busefelo with Snowflake.

Busefelo's story is one of hope and success, thanks to the efforts of groups like Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. This castaway went from being a malnourished castaway living on the streets of Washington Heights, to a pampered bunny living the good life that he deserves.

### Carla

*(Continued from page 16)*

that time and exercise would help. She said this condition is common in rabbits raised for meat and fur.

By mid-May, Carla had made great progress. On May 13, Amy Odum said, "She's improved tremendously and even does binkies!"

The likelihood is that Carla's legs will continue getting stronger. "Other than keeping her on rugs and carpet (no hardwood floors) she doesn't seem to have any special needs or require any special care," Amy said.

Jane said Carla was getting better at jumping in and out of her litter box. "Recently I watched while she first

assessed how much of a jump she needed to make in order to get into the big, high-sided box – and then she successfully used those hind legs to make the jump."

Carla has been moved to a foster home and will soon find a great family to adopt her.

## NY1's 'New Yorker of the Week': Cindy Stutts

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Cindy Stutts with AC&C rabbits at Petco.

Local television station NY1 honored Rabbit Rescue & Rehab's Cindy Stutts on April 30, selecting her as "New Yorker of the Week."

Cindy was nominated by adopter Abigail Aldridge, who was interviewed for the segment. Ms. Aldridge had contacted Cindy some time ago and ended up adopting a boy bunny, now called Bojangles.

NY1 reporter Roma Torre's report on Cindy including footage at the Animal Care & Control facility on 110th Street, as well as at one of the Petco stores in Manhattan where there are rabbits for adoption.

Richard Gentles, director of administrative services for AC&C, spoke on the segment about Cindy's dedication. Cindy makes sure there are support services

later, "so after somebody adopts there is follow-up" to check to see that everything is going well, he said.

Cindy introduced one of the shelter rabbits, Moe, during her NY1 interview, giving him a kiss. "Rabbits make great companion animals, especially here in New York City," she said. "They are like cats in that they use litter boxes; they groom themselves so you don't have to bathe them, and they are quiet. And, most importantly, you don't have to walk them, and they can be incredibly affectionate like a dog."

Ms. Aldridge said of Cindy, "She is like the bunny lady of New York City and she's helped save and rescue a lot of bunnies."

According to the NY1 report, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab has helped find homes for more than 3,600 rabbits. NY1 noted that the 30-plus volunteers take care of rabbits seven days a week and help to get necessary medical care when needed. The report mentioned that adoptable

rabbits are available in Manhattan at the Upper East Side and Union Square Petcos.

Cindy said that she would like to see fewer rabbits coming into the shelter. Her aim is to have potential adopters educate themselves about rabbits beforehand, rather than "just going to a pet store and buying a bunny."

"She has made a lot of people happy by helping with the adoptions and bringing the rabbits and the people together, and she is dedicated to this all on a volunteer basis," Ms. Aldridge said.

The NY1 report concluded, "So for hopping to it while others might turn tail, Cindy Stutts is the latest New Yorker of the Week."

Viewers were encouraged to visit the Web site [www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org) or send an email to [nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com).

To see the segment on Cindy, go to: <http://www.ny1.com/content/117923/-nyer-of-the-week-i-volunteer-keeps-bunny-rescue-hopping-along>

## Animal Care & Control Gets New Executive Director

Photo: Unlashed Pet Photography



Julie Bank

Julie Bank was appointed in late March to be the new executive director of Animal Care & Control of New York City. Ms. Bank, who started her new job in mid-April, has more than two

decades of animal-welfare experience. Her predecessor, Charlene Pedrolie, stepped down in October.

Previously, Ms. Bank was the executive director of North County Humane Society and SPCA in Oceanside, Calif., where she managed an organization that held two animal-control contracts with local cities. Last fall, she negotiated a merger between the North County group and the San Diego Humane Society.

Prior to working in California, Ms. Bank was deputy director of Maricopa County Animal Care & Control in Arizona. She also served as director of education and therapeutic programs for the Arizona Humane Society.

Ms. Bank actually began her career at the ASPCA in New York City, where she held various positions over a 10-year period, ranging for shelter-operations duties to humane-education outreach. Born and raised in Brooklyn, she is a graduate of Brooklyn College. She has a rescued French bulldog named Lola and a cat named Carmen.

Also in April, Mayor Bloomberg announced that the ASPCA made a \$1 million grant to support the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, a coalition of more than 160 animal-rescue groups and

shelters that work with Animal Care & Control. The Mayor's Alliance plans to use the ASPCA funds to increase adoptions, transfer at-risk animals to no-kill rescue groups, and provide low, and no-cost, spay/neuter services for low-income pet owners.

Ms. Bank joined the mayor and other officials in announcing the new funds, saying, "I feel privileged to lead an organization so committed to the welfare of animals." She added, "AC&C rescues more than 40,000 animals each year. The support we receive from the Mayor's Alliance, ASPCA, Maddie's Fund and our other partners and rescue groups is critical to our mission. I'm confident that by working together, we will continue to increase the number of animals that find safe, loving homes."

# Personalized Shopping Ideas for Bun-Loving People

By: Natalie L. Reeves

Obsessed with all things lagomorph? I recently ordered personalized bunny items that I would recommend.

**Jewelry:** I have so much rabbit-themed jewelry, I could open a boutique. Even so, I lose all self control when I see a cute bunny necklace, bracelet or ring. I recently ordered a necklace from Kay Stahler, a Canadian felt artist who has an Etsy shop that features, among other animals, sculpted felt bunny necklaces, brooches and keychains. Kay sells ready-made jewelry featuring both lop and up-eared bunnies she has painstakingly sculpted with fibers. I took advantage of the custom option and asked Kay to make a necklace for me featuring my four beautiful bunnies. I sent her pictures of my bunnies to recreate, and the finished necklace featured little bunny faces that are remarkably similar to the cute real-life versions. Kay emailed me pictures of my completed necklace before she shipped it to me, to ensure I was happy with her work. Most of her animals are made of

Necklace and Photo: Kay Stahler



wool, but she also offers vegan alternatives (which I chose) in which she uses vegetable or synthetic fibers. Each little animal head is small – approximately one inch. Since I received my necklace, I have received many compliments from people who stop me to admire it. You can get more information at <http://www.kaysk9s.com>. Kay donates a portion of her proceeds to Canadian animal-welfare groups.

Planet Jill offers photo jewelry frequently worn by celebrities, such as Holly

Robinson Peete in a recent episode of “The Celebrity Apprentice.” Choose a charm or linked photo bracelet, a ring, or a necklace in silver or gold. I’ve only purchased the sterling-silver pieces because there is a huge price differential between the silver and gold. Just upload pictures of your bunnies and pay, and you are done. Planet Jill takes care of manipulating the image to ensure that it fits properly in the charm shape you have selected. To date, I have ordered three photo bracelets, two photo rings and a photo necklace. For the most part, I’ve been very pleased with the results, but I’ve learned that some photos work better than others. Because the size of the final piece is so small, the pictures that look best should be simple and focused. It may be difficult to use a picture with more than one animal unless they are close together in the shot, but you can work with a sales representative to make sure the photo you choose will work. You can obtain information at [www.planetjill.com](http://www.planetjill.com).

Painting and photo: Catherine Cranford



Mopsy and Robin

**Paintings:** After reading about artist Catherine Cranford on the San Diego House Rabbit Society’s website, I was intrigued by her beautiful bunny art. Catherine is a bunny lover who donates 20% of the proceeds from her animal paintings to the San Diego House Rabbit Society. I sent Catherine numerous pictures of my bunnies and asked her to help me select one to paint. She was very patient as I asked many questions about which picture she thought would lead to the best painting. When she told me her favorite was a picture of Mopsy eating parsley from a pumpkin, I asked her if she could add Mopsy’s bonded partner, Robin, to the painting. She did, and her 16x20 painting of Mopsy and Robin is now proudly hanging in my office. More information can be obtained at [www.catherinecranford.com](http://www.catherinecranford.com).

# Letters

Photo: Melissa Schroyer



## Belvedere

*Belvedere was adopted in late February by Melissa, who sent this update to us two months later.*

Marcie,

I want to thank you for helping us find our "little boy." Belvedere is a joy to us and has settled in really well. We're still getting to know each other and finding out new parts of his personality (like his dislike of carrots). He loves hanging out next to me when I work on the computer, and likes burrowing into the sheets we give him. He knows exactly when its play time and binkies as soon as he is out of his cage.

Belvedere loves to take on "bunstruction" projects and has been nicknamed the nuclear scientist because of how vigorously he gets into them. He is such a joy to have as company and Derek and I have found a few games Belvedere likes to play (knock down the blocks, play with his ball, etc.)

Thanks so much for all your advice. It's wonderful to see him run to the side of the pen when I come in the room, and you always have to wonder how he will try to escape his bunny-proof areas this time. His constant antics bring a smile to everyone who visits our home and I am so glad to have him in my life.

Best,  
Melissa Schroyer

Photo: Sean Lo



## Benelli

*Benelli, known previously as Brendon, was adopted at the end of March by Sean and Jessica, who sent us this email recently.*

It was love at first sight, and now after two months we've come to realize that we never stood a chance.

Our mini lop, Benelli, was adopted from a Petco shelter, and we wondered whether abandoned rabbits could recover from their past. Benelli, though, lives his life blissfully and spreads happiness wherever he goes.

There is a lot of love and excitement from a pet, but those considering a rabbit should also be aware of the commitment needed. We spend two to four hours or more of quality time with him a day.

During the short time he has lived with us, Benelli has become fully potty trained; doesn't enter areas we tell him are off limits; comes on command, and even gives us kisses on our lips. He loves cilantro and thinly sliced banana as much as he loves binkies.

We always keep in mind that bringing a special member to the family is as important to him as it is to us, so save a life that will change your life!

Thanks again!  
Sean and Jessica

Photo: Ellen Mitchell



## Berry

*Ellen adopted Berry and sent this update on April 13 to volunteer Amy Odum.*

Hi Amy,

How are you? Just wanted to send you some pics of Berry in his new home. He is a pleasure – very entertaining! He's social, active and very curious. I've been home with him all day.

Mostly, he stretches out and relaxes, occasionally wants to be petted, and then he goes through spurts where he runs around, hops and skips. He was only in the cage at night, and when I was not at home. He is fantastic company.

I am planning to schedule a checkup soon – probably next week or the week after. Is there anything else I should be doing? I will definitely join some rabbit forums, and stock up on my hay and gas drops. :)

Hope you are well, and enjoying your own bunnies! Thanks for everything you do.

Ellen

*(Continued on page 21)*

## Happy Tales

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Madeline, Boswell, Thomas, Barrister, Shirley and Billy Jo (bonded pair of sisters), Berry, Nonna, Jazmin, Sarah, Barney, Duchess, Pia, Lisa, Quincy, Cinder, Ariel, Flower, Truffle, Moe, Howard, Nacho, Felix, Kenny and Lenny (bonded sisters), Pasha.

## Letters

(Continued from page 20)

Nancy Carbone



### Binky and Sugar

Frank and Nancy Carbone recently adopted Sugar (fka Lacey) to be a partner bun for Binky (fka Taran). They gave us this great update in April.

Frank and I are happy to announce that Binky and Sugar are well on their way to being bonded buns. It started on Friday. Sugar escaped from her pen by climbing out from under the sheet on top that wasn't secured. Frank found her wandering around the house when he stopped home for something. Seems Binky might have scratched her on the face, as she had a pin dot of a wound in between her whiskers. But it must have been a turning point for her. She gave in. She became submissive. No more grunting or boxing when Binky got close to her.

Frank let them out together Saturday night. They wandered around the house, chasing each other across our bed. I think Sugar was even teasing him, like saying, "catch me if you can." They ate side-by-side and when Frank put their greens in one big pile, they were polite and shared with each other.

This morning I awoke to find them in the same position, lounging side by side. I noticed Binky was in heaven because Sugar was actually grooming him! She is usually very cheap with the kisses.

It seems our month of bonding sessions finally paid off! We are delighted that they can run free together and have each other as company.

Nancy Carbone

Photo: Mabel Casado



### Maxy

Mabel, who adopted Maxy earlier this year, sent this letter in April. (She has since adopted Moe and will keep us posted on how the bonding efforts are going.)

Hello! It has been a month and a half since I adopted my beautiful girl, Maxy Bunny, thanks to the help of Cindy Stutts. I just thought I would give you a little heads up on how Maxy is doing.

She is well and healthy, eating all of the time. =) She is absolutely wonderful to have in our family. Everyone adores her and she seems to like everyone just the same. She is such a kind little rabbit. She has never bitten nor attacked anyone in my home; she is such a lovable rabbit and loves to be petted.

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



I sometimes do have to provoke her from time to time in order to get her to play around and run around. If not, she would just rather spend her time lying down on the floor, relaxing and watching television.

Believe it or not, she really likes to watch the Food Network, so I will often just open up her cage door and lie down on the floor next to her and watch TV with her. And when I do this, she will often begin to press her nose to my face, tickling my face with her whiskers. She is a very curious rabbit, as well as smart.

Well that's about all for now. Just wanted to reassure you guys that one of your bunnies is doing well after leaving your hands. Cindy Stutts, thanks again for all of your help. Maxy has truly changed my life and I am absolutely happy to have adopted her.

Thanks again.

Your Friends, Mabel and Maxy

P.S. If you have any concerns or any rabbit information that I might enjoy please do not hesitate to contact me. My email is CasadoN1989@aol.com.

### Nonna

Martyna adopted Nonna this spring and sent us this email in mid-April.

I just wanted to let you know that Nonna seems to be adjusting great.

Saturday she was a little shocked and didn't want to come out of her cage, but yesterday she was coming out by herself and exploring the room.

She's eating, drinking and using her litter box, so she seems to be well.

I'm very happy I adopted her. She is too sweet!

Martyna

## 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

### Manhattan:

**Becky Campbell, DVM**

**Deborah Levison, 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

### Manhattan (continued):

**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  
(212) 988-4650

### Westchester County:

**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

## Licensed HRS Representatives

**Mary Cotter**, HRS Licensed Educator,  
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mcc@cloud9.net, (914) 337-6146, rabbitcare.org

**Nancy Schreiber**, HRS Licensed Educator,  
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Rescue & Rehab, Long Island Rabbit Rescue  
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(516) 510-3637, LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

**Cindy Stutts**, HRS Licensed Educator,  
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**Mary Ann Maier**, HRS Licensed Educator,  
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altitude8@yahoo.com, (516) 671-6654,  
LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

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**Jennifer Saver**, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

**Laura George**, DVM, HRS Licensed Educator

## THUMP June 2010

Newsletter of RRR/NYC HRS  
56 West Pondfield Road #5C  
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[www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org)

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

## 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:

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](mailto:bygolyoly@yahoo.com) or call her at 646-319-4766. On Long Island, contact Nancy Schreiber at [nschreibmd@aol.com](mailto:nschreibmd@aol.com) or at 516-510-3637 ([www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org)), and in Westchester contact Mary Cotter at [mcc@cloud9.net](mailto:mcc@cloud9.net) or 914-337-6146 ([www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org)). Our group's email address in New York City is [nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.acc.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.

On Long Island, there are adoptable rabbits in the Garden City Park and Levittown Petco stores. Volunteer hours are variable. For more information, call Nancy Schreiber.

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](mailto:amy@adoptabunny.info) or [nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.acc.rabbits@gmail.com).

For basic information about rabbits as pets, go to [www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org), [www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org) and the House Rabbit Society main site, [www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org).

To contact us at the Thump newsletter, email [nyc.acc.rabbits.news@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.acc.rabbits.news@gmail.com).