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Photograph by Tom Young

HOUSE RABBIT JOURNAL

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rabbitcenter.org/adopt

Cover photo by Sandy Parshall, HRS Program Manager
EVERY YEAR WE HEAR ABOUT

a number of emergency rabbit rescue situations around the
country that involve anywhere from 15 to 1500 rabbits.

In order to help, in 2007 we started the Emergency Rescue Fund. All donations coming to HRS that specify
“Emergency Rescue Fund” will go toward these grants. We use these funds to make targeted grants
(usually ranging from $250 to $750) to animal rescue organizations that are involved in a large rescue of
many rabbits. House Rabbit Society’s Chapter Grant program seeks to assist HRS chapters in their mission
of rabbit rescue or education and outreach. Below are our grant recipients for the second half of 2016.
Congratulations to these great rescues and HRS chapters! To see past winners and apply, visit: rabbit.org/
the-hrs-emergency-grant-program

2016 Emergency & Chapter GRANT RECIPIENTS

Humane Society North Texas
$750
Humane Society North Texas took in 38 rabbits who
were living in heartbreaking conditions and suffering
from neglect. Funds from this grant went toward
spay/neuter, veterinary care, food, and bedding.
hsnt.org

Rabbit Rescue Inc.
$750
Rabbit Rescue Inc. in Ontario, Canada was contacted
for help by a shelter that took in 103 rabbits (plus
babies). Funds went toward spay/neuter, medical
care, and placement of these rabbits.
rabbitrescue.ca

More Than Pets
$750
More Than Pets took in 40 rabbits from a breeding
mill. Funds went toward spay/neuter, housing, and
veterinary care.
facebook.com/morethanpets

Infinite Woofs
$750
When a man breeding rabbits for meat died, his
daughter reached out to rescues to help place 50
rabbits who had been in his care. Funds went toward
spay/neuter, food, toys, and placement.
infiniteroofs.org

St. Louis HRS
$1000
Funds from this chapter grant are being used to build
an extension on the current building to help house
more bunnies.
hrsmostl.org

SE Pennsylvania-Delaware HRS
$750
SE Pennsylvania-Delaware HRS Chapter took in 30
lionheads who had escaped an outdoor enclosure.
Funds went toward spay/neuter and veterinary care,
including a limb amputation.
rabbit.org/chapters/se-pennsylvania

Indiana HRS
$750
Our Indiana chapter took in 36 rabbits from a breeder.
The rabbits had been neglected and living in fetid
conditions. Funds from this grant helped pay for spay/
neuter and safe refuge.
indianahrs.org

More Than Pets
$750
More Than Pets took in 40 rabbits from a breeding
mill. Funds went toward spay/neuter, housing, and
veterinary care.
facebook.com/morethanpets

Infinite Woofs
$750
When a man breeding rabbits for meat died, his
daughter reached out to rescues to help place 50
rabbits who had been in his care. Funds went toward
spay/neuter, food, toys, and placement.
infiniteroofs.org

Beaver County Humane Society
$750
Beaver County HS took in 65 rabbits seized from a sin-
gle home who were living in filthy conditions. Funds
went toward veterinary and other care.
beavercountyhumanesociety.org

Upstate NY HRS
$1000
This chapter grant helped provide funds for 7 rabbits
who required surgery, as well as a litter of 9 babies
from a rescued pregnant female who needed spay/
neuter surgery.
therabbitresource.org
Our domesticated pet rabbits are part of the Lagomorph order (like us, rabbits are mammals and vertebrates, but humans are members of the Primate order). Lagomorphs include rabbits, hares, and pikas. Domesticated rabbits are classified as Oryctolagus (genus) cuniculus (species). Beyond our domesticated companions, there are dozens of other lagomorphs around the world, and many of those are threatened or endangered, some severely so.

The Lagomorph order first emerged in Asia in the early Eocene period, about 53 million years ago, and diverged into two families about 50 million years ago: Leporidae (which includes hares and rabbits) and Ochotonidae (pikas). (As a comparison, primates most likely evolved starting in the late Mesozoic period, moving into the Paleocene, anywhere from 85-65 million years ago. Our own family, Hominidae, which includes both humans and the great apes, evolved about 8 million years ago, in the late Miocene.)

The Leporidae family spread from Asia to much of the rest of the world, while the Ochotonidae spread west to Europe and east to North America. In the early years of the evolution of these creatures, more than 20 genera (groups of species) of ochotonids existed within the Miocene, but almost all of them went extinct by the time the Pliocene began, about 5 million years ago. (Today, there is just one genus of ochotonids left.) Leporids also were once far more abundant than they are today, with many species going extinct after the last glacial period ended (about 12,000 years ago). Both families experienced major extinctions because of global climate changes, although, ultimately, leporids found their range expanding while ochotonids found theirs shrinking.

The State of Lagomorphs Today
By Margo DeMello, PhD
Today, extant species of Leporidae (or leporids) are native to every continent except Australia (where they were introduced in the nineteenth century) and Antarctica, while pikas are found only in cold plateau, steppe, and rocky regions in Asia and western North America (they once ranged across all of Europe, Asia, and North America). Leporids survive in a wide range of habitats, from tropical forest to steppe to plateau to desert and Arctic regions.

Debate continues among scientists regarding the exact number of all living Lagomorph genera and species, but there are 8 genera and 28 species of rabbit, 3 genera and 30 species of hare, and a single genus and anywhere from 28-32 species of pika. (To find a list of all of them, please visit rabbit.org/lagomorph-species.) Many of them are now in trouble.

After a wave of about two dozen species went extinct before the end of the last Ice Age, species of ochotonids remained relatively stable, with a single species (Prolagus sardus, the Sardinian pika) going extinct in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. But today, with the climate again warming, more species are threatened with extinction; in fact, the entire Ochotonidae family is labeled as critically endangered because of climate change and the resulting loss of habitat. Three species are currently endangered, including Hoffman’s pika (Ochotona hoffmanni), Ili pika (Ochotona iliensis), and Kozlov’s pika (Ochotona koslowi), and one is critically endangered—the silver pika (Ochotona argentata).

It’s not just these pikas that are in trouble. The majority of the pika species listed as not threatened or endangered show decreasing population numbers, and most of the rest are so unknown to scientists that assessing their conservation status is difficult. The American pika (Ochotona princeps), for example, is thought to be so threatened that it may go extinct by the end of the century, yet federal and state officials have declined to list the species as endangered. Only 3 pika species are considered to be stable with regard to their population statuses.

While neither hares nor rabbits are suffering as much as are pikas, thanks to the diversity of habitats in which they live, the family Leporidae is not safe from climate change either. Of the 62 Leporidae species listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, two are critically endangered: Riverine Rabbit (Bunolagus monticularis) and San Jose Brush Rabbit (Sylvilagus mansuetus); seven are endangered: Hispid Hare (Caprolagus hispidus), Tehuantepec Jackrabbit (Lepus flavigularis), Amami Rabbit (Pentalagus furnessii), Volcano Rabbit (Romerolagus diazi), Tres Marias Cottontail (Sylvilagus graysoni), Omilteme Cottontail (Sylvilagus insanus), and Robust Cottontail (Sylvilagus robustus); five are near threatened: White-sided Jackrabbit (Lepus callotis), Black Jackrabbit (Lepus insularis), Yarkand Hare (Lepus yarkandensis), European Rabbit—our pet species (Oryctolagus cuniculus), and Appalachian Cottontail (Sylvilagus transitionalis). Only five species have stable population levels, with two species increasing; the rest are all decreasing.

What is threatening the future of these species? Climate change. In fact, according to a 2015 article published in Ecography, more than two-thirds of Lagomorph species are now threatened by the rapid warming of the planet. The authors, who looked at the environmental conditions surrounding all Lagomorph species worldwide, projected that the majority of rabbits, hares, and pikas will be forced to move into new territories or adapt to shrinking habitats.
as the world’s temperatures continue to rise. Pikas will especially suffer, with numerous species—and perhaps the entire Ochotonidae family—suffering extinction.

Unlike the end of the previous Ice Age, which resulted in global warming and is part of a pattern of global weather changes extending over the past hundreds of thousands of years known as the Quaternary glaciation, the current global warming period, which began only less than a century ago in what scientists are now calling the Anthropocene, has, according to scientific consensus, been largely caused by human activities.

What kinds of activities are contributing to the increase in global temperatures over the last century and especially since the 1970s (when temperature increases have tripled)? What might be surprising is that livestock production, rather than transportation, is the largest single cause of greenhouse gases (it is greenhouse gases that cause global warming).

In particular, according to a 2006 report by the United Nations, livestock are responsible for more carbon dioxide emissions, nitrous oxide, and methane than any other single source. Cattle, for example, release (through their emissions) large amounts of methane, and methane is responsible for far more greenhouse gas damage than carbon dioxide. The livestock industry also produces 65% of nitrous oxide emissions (primarily through the production of livestock feed and the management of waste), which are also extremely deadly. Finally, in order to produce meat, dairy, and eggs, a huge amount of fossil fuels must be burned, which accounts for about 51% of all carbon dioxide, another deadly contributor to the global warming crisis. And it’s not just cattle: other animals raised for food also play a role, with lamb, pork, and chicken production creating yet more greenhouse gases.

Numbers differ, but a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization suggested that livestock contribute 18% to greenhouse gas emissions (more than all the world’s vehicles), while a World Bank report found that 51% of greenhouse gas emissions can be traced to the raising of animals for meat and dairy. Livestock also use three quarters of all agricultural land on the planet (and 45% of all land) which contributes to shrinking habitats for animals—including lagomorphs. And finally, a 2011 article published in *Science of the Total Environment* made the claim that meat consumption could be the single most important reason for our current extinction crisis.

What these figures suggest is that the greatest way to save the many Lagomorph species that are threatened by climate change is to make a change in our diets. Choosing a plant-based diet, or even a reduction in the amount of meat, dairy, and eggs consumed, will make a big difference. The fewer animals raised, fed, and slaughtered for food means the fewer strains on our already impacted climate.

House Rabbit Society has long held the position that wild rabbits do best without human intervention. Unfortunately, how we eat is “intervening” in the lives of a great many wild rabbit species.

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**“What might be surprising is that livestock production, rather than transportation, is the largest single cause of greenhouse gases (it is greenhouse gases that cause global warming).”**

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Oh, look at that brown bunny, isn’t she adorable?” My husband and I bought Lopp from a pet shop in June 2008. She was like thousands of other rabbits who were bought on a whim by thousands of other humans who had no knowledge of rabbits or rabbit care. We were guilty of that. I remember we brought her home in a small cardboard box with a starter cage that the young salesperson at the pet shop assured us would be sufficient as she grew up.

Well, she outgrew that small cage within the first two weeks. She also had myriad health problems that we suspected were from being housed with other sick bunnies during her short time at the pet shop. As she grew up, we learned the hard way of the expenses that can be incurred from having a rabbit as a companion animal. These extended beyond the cost of buying a rabbit: vet care and spaying as well as bunny proofing (Lopp destroyed a few laptop chargers before we learned to prevent that properly).

The sign at the pet shop said that bunnies make great gifts. This disturbs me now because I can’t imagine giving a bunny like Lopp to anyone who is not ready or willing to care for her well. What about her being considered a gift—like an object that someone can “own”? We learned later not to acquire rabbits from pet stores but to adopt from local shelters that have volunteers who provide potential guardians with excellent resources and advice on rabbit care and behavior.

Lopp gradually turned into the friendliest bunny anyone has ever met. Visitors to our house would be greeted by our “ambassador” who wanted to know if they brought any treats for her. She made it clear to my husband and me that she was the top bun in our household hierarchy. A few years after she joined us, we thought that she might want some bunny company when we were not home, so we adopted Lady as a friend for her, following a somewhat positive bonding date at the animal shelter. Unfortunately, Lady was not a good match and, after months of bonding efforts and vicious rabbit fights, we resolved to house them side by side instead. Lady eventually found a friend in Champ, who we fostered and failed to give back.

I think seeing Lady and Champ together changed Lopp’s mind about wanting to be a single rabbit forever, so when we took her in for a date with Fudd, she was a little more sold on the idea of a rabbit friend. After a few weeks of bonding at home, they became inseparable. As Fudd is a tripod missing one of his front paws, he often has trouble balancing himself. So it was common to see him lean into Lopp to be able to groom himself better as they cuddled.

Lopp would also lead Fudd into a game we called “Binky Party,” where she would start doing binkies and he would follow her around and imitate her. Witnessing times like these made me glad that we were able to find a rabbit friend for Lopp so that she could speak “Rabbit” with someone who could truly understand her.

(continued on page 9)
The year 2002 was a busy one for HRS members in Central Ohio. A new HRS chapter, the Columbus House Rabbit Society (CHRS), came into being. Even before CHRS achieved formal status as a chapter, however, volunteers prepared each year for the flood of dumped and abandoned rabbits that inevitably followed the Easter holiday. The creation of a new chapter provided the resources to address this issue head-on, through a national education campaign, Make Mine Chocolate!™ (MMC). Central to the campaign is a focus on creating and distributing educational content addressing the special needs of these unique creatures. The goal is to provide potential rabbit guardians with the information they need to make thoughtful decisions about whether a rabbit is right for their family.

Starting with our signature ceramic pin in the shape of a chocolate bunny, we set out to start a conversation about rabbit welfare during the Easter season. Our website (make-minechocolate.org) was developed to provide a variety of marketing materials to those interested in carrying out their own MMC activities. We also created the “Interactive Bun” as a set of hands-on activities accessible on the website, offering entertaining opportunities to explore the demands of living with a rabbit.

The real strength of the MMC campaign lies with our partnerships and supporters. Because of its simplicity—the core message that rabbits should not be considered “disposable” holiday pets—virtually anyone can participate, regardless of location, affiliation, or resources. They simply have to be able to start a conversation. By providing some basic marketing materials via our website—flyers, posters, sample letters—MMC facilitates these conversations. We now boast supporters from all across North America and Europe, and countries as far away as Australia, South Africa, and Singapore. When a group of rabbit enthusiasts in the United Kingdom asked to have our signature pin produced locally, we licensed them as official representatives of the MMC campaign (makeminechocolate.org.uk).

With the popularity of social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, participation in MMC has become easier than ever. Our Facebook page (facebook.com/Make-Mine-Chocolate-342712376109) is very active, with supporters sharing ideas and announcements of MMC activities and events across the globe. It’s been an exciting and busy 15 years!

But there’s still a lot of work to be done. To this end, we are kicking off our next 15 years by holding a celebration—and everyone is invited! We are sponsoring a contest to solicit the most creative ideas for spreading the word about MMC. Additional details about the contest will be posted on our Facebook page.

We have other plans as well. Building on our contest submissions, we intend to create a permanent repository on our website where a range of materials, activity descriptions and concepts, and other content will be available to anyone who wishes to participate in MMC. We want to share the creations of the many talented supporters of MMC and support the many volunteers interested in spreading the MMC message.

Additional content will be added to our Interactive Bun library. We also intend to raise greater awareness of the campaign through newspaper and magazine articles. The campaign has been successful in reaching rabbit savvy readers. Our goal, starting this year, is to work harder at reaching out to parents, grandparents, and others who may be pondering acquiring a rabbit for themselves or a young family member. The past 15 years have been extremely gratifying. We hope to build on this foundation and make the next 15 years even more special. Our sincere thanks goes to everyone who has supported and helped us along this journey.

Please visit the Make Mine Chocolate! Facebook page (facebook.com/Make-Mine-Chocolate-342712376109) for additional information about the contest and other events.
Bella’s Wish
by Maurice Liang

A ball of fluff, a children’s toy
Life began with love and joy,
But as I grew, they soon forgot
I like to play and run and hop!

Wire walls, a space 4 by 2
Was all the world I ever knew.
One starry night, I made a wish
To have a life with more than this.

My wish came true one summer day
When someone came and whisked me away.
Scared and lonely, frightened at first --
Being a rabbit, I feared the worst.

But now I’m free to run and play
With no more cages to block my way,
With fresh greens to eat and plenty of hay
I nibble and dance throughout my day.

My life is filled with love and respect --
A cherished bunny with no neglect.
Now my wish is all bunnies could know
A life of happiness, without any woe.

WRITE FOR US!
We’re looking for submissions to
House Rabbit Journal and we would love to
have your contribution! You can find out more
information about the types of articles we’re
soliciting and submission deadlines here:

rabbit.org/hrjsubmissions

(continued from page 7)
Even though she had Fudd, her affections for us didn’t change at all. She learned to split her time between Fudd and us when we were home, and even encouraged Fudd to be more trusting of us.

As the years went by and the number of rabbits in our household slowly increased, we learned more and more about how to better care for our little family through online resources, trips to House Rabbit Society headquarters in Richmond, California, for supplies and chats with experienced volunteers there, and talking to our vet during the bunnies’ annual checkups. We were slowly drawn into the world of rabbit rescue, first through fostering and then eventually becoming volunteers ourselves. All this time, Lopp was there to welcome the fosters that came through our home and to sniff us every time we returned from our volunteer shift at HRS for scents of strange rabbits we handled.

We would often use Lopp as our go-to rabbit whenever we told stories to visitors who came in on days we volunteered. They wanted to know more about what it is like sharing our home with our furry friends. People would be surprised about the mischief she got into, since they usually thought about rabbits in backyard hutch, not really doing anything. We told them of Lopp binky-ing down our hallway, jumping into the fridge as we put the groceries away, and climbing onto our windowsill to eat the herb plant whole, leaving only a stump for us.

We told them of the benefits of housing the bunny indoors as part of the family, so that their personalities could shine. Lopp taught us to look for those personalities in the rabbits we fostered and socialized. She taught us to try to bring their personalities out. We were always delighted to pass on her lessons to other potential rabbit adopters.

Lopp passed away this August. She was a fighter—with Fudd as her rock—until the end. Losing her was very hard for my husband and me, but we are so grateful for all the happy moments that we shared with her. She also brought Lady, Champ, and Fudd, along with countless other rabbits and wonderful rabbit people, into our lives. We probably would not have met them if it weren’t for her. For us, she was the bunny who started it all.
I confess to having been fairly uninformed about rabbits when the first one joined our family years ago. We had decided on a rabbit because my husband had allergies to cats and we had young children at home. A rabbit seemed the ideal quiet, cute, cuddly, undemanding pet, requiring no stinky poop to scoop, nor daily outdoor walks.

Our local Virginia animal shelter directed our family to the friendliest, best-behaved bunny of the half-dozen awaiting homes, and so it was that BunBun came to us. His paltry $5 adoption fee did not prepare me for the true expense of rabbit care. This became apparent the next morning when I was handed the $60 vet bill to cover the cost of pain meds for his post-neuter recovery. It didn’t take long before BunBun needed his first butt bath in the kitchen sink because we overfed him greens, and I remember thinking there must be a lot more to rabbit care than I realized.

It was then that I stumbled across House Rabbit Society online and my eyes were opened to what proper rabbit care looked like. I dispensed with the too-small pet store cage, sipper bottle, wood chips and muesli-style food a pet-store sales associate had recommended. I replaced with them a litter box, plain timothy pellets and hay, and a heavy ceramic water bowl. The poopy-butt episodes disappeared as he adjusted to a healthier diet with the correct proportion of greens.

We were pleased how well BunBun acclimated to our family. The kids loved him as much as we parents did. Many “bunny sleepovers” took place in our family room, where BunBun scampered over sleeping bags to inspect the occupants or watched over us from his perch atop the sofa back.

When I began to wonder whether BunBun might like a rabbit companion, Trixie joined us from a nearby Maryland county shelter. Their rabbit volunteer held a few speed dates, gave me some helpful tips on bonding them at home, and assured me it would go well. I never dreamed that one day I would volunteer at my local shelter, speed-dating and bonding rabbits for others! In a couple weeks,
I had bonded Trixie and BunBun, who enjoyed six blissful years together. When our family made several moves to new cities, we went to great lengths to bring our bunnies along when we traveled cross-country and across borders by car, jet, ferry, and even seaplane. I vividly remember a cross-country flight when, to our great delight, the pilot welcomed “special passengers Trixie and BunBun” over the intercom!

In one city, where a university campus was overrun with hundreds of dumped pet rabbits and their offspring, a controversial cull was announced. I felt powerless to help in any meaningful way until my daughter and I drove to the campus to scoop up three innocent baby bunnies to fill the void that BunBun’s and Trixie’s passing had left a few months earlier.

A relocation some months later put me near the route where some of these university rabbits—spared a cull by public outcry and a few determined rescuers—had been offered sanctuary in Texas. I became an alternate driver for the final leg of one bunny transport, and was able to witness the release of these once-doomed university rabbits into the safety of their new sanctuary.

That experience led me to become more involved in rabbit rescue. When I attended my first adoption event at the New Mexico House Rabbit Society (NMHRS) in Albuquerque, I was hooked. I also began to volunteer at the Santa Fe animal shelter, where I dropped in to exercise and socialize the rabbits. Soon, I was changing litter boxes, cleaning food and water dishes, and tidying up bunny kennels. The shelter asked me to foster their special-needs, sick, and behaviorally-challenged rabbits because I had the expertise and available space.

When visitors noticed the bunnies romping in the hallways during exercise time, I shared basics of proper rabbit care, diet and housing, and dispelled common myths about rabbits. I helped screen potential rabbit adopters, snapped cute bunny pictures, and wrote accompanying biographies for each adoptable rabbit for the shelter’s Facebook page and website.

Upon my request, the old wooden rabbit hutches disappeared, kennel identification tags with cute photos and bunny biographies were posted, and the rabbit room received attractive, visible signs.

The shelter’s educational outreach director invited me to speak about house rabbits during Critter Camps, week-long animal sheltering experiences for children aged 9-13. In addition to spending floor time with the bunnies and learning about proper care, a favorite activity is making bunny treat bags: paper lunch bags filled with hay, a small piece of dried fruit, a pinecone, willow wisps, dried rose petals, and toilet paper roll rings.

I still felt like there was more to be done to help rabbits find good homes, so I organized several off-site joint adoption events for the Santa Fe Animal Shelter & Humane Society and the New Mexico House Rabbit Society at the Santa Fe PetSmart.

After volunteering with NMHRS and my local shelter for several years, I became a House Rabbit Society Educator. I now benefit from the expertise of other rabbit-savvy educators across the country, and I learn useful, new information daily through the HRS educator email groups.

Anyone can become a supporting member of the House Rabbit Society for $20 annually ($28 non-US), or join the HRS’ Bunny Brigade to support rabbits at the Richmond adoption center and elsewhere via HRS emergency rescue grants. Local city and county animal shelters (not all of them accept rabbits) also welcome in-kind and financial donations.

For many people, living with house rabbits results in a natural progression to a heightened awareness of the plight of rabbits in general. In a world where rabbits are inhumane farmed and slaughtered, served to people and pets alike, tested on for cosmetics and cleaning products, experimented on for medical advancements, farmed for their fur, and sold as clothing and accessories, there is ample room to advocate for better treatment of our gentle friends. Although these issues may seem insurmountable, change often comes incrementally when you exercise consumer choice and demand humane treatment for rabbits. Other actions you might consider include:

• Refuse to patronize restaurants where rabbit meat is served and try to persuade others to do likewise.
• Avoid shopping at grocery stores that sell rabbit meat and tell the store and public why, either in person or via social media
• Petitions, consumer feedback, peaceful protests and social-media activism can change corporate behavior
• Buy cruelty-free makeup and cleaning products instead of those sold by companies still engaged in animal testing.
• Use social-media accounts or customer-service phone lines of companies and department stores selling rabbit-fur clothing to object to this practice.
• Sign online petitions to raise awareness and build alliances with other animal welfare groups.
• Join the Rabbit Advocacy Network, a Facebook page that heightens awareness of how rabbits are exploited
• Forge alliances with other animal welfare groups. This can be especially helpful to improve local ordinances for rabbit welfare.

Regardless of where you live or work, you can do something to make the world more rabbit friendly. Start today!

How You Can Help

In areas where a House Rabbit Society-affiliated rescue operates, it’s easy to get involved and to meet other rabbit enthusiasts by hosting adoption events, fundraisers, fostering rabbits, planning social events such as Hoppy Hours, Bunny Fests, and other public outreach.

Those without HRS chapters usually can find a city or county animal shelter. Not all of these have rabbit-savvy volunteers to socialize, exercise, or foster rabbits. It’s worth approaching your animal shelter to find out what assistance they might welcome. Some have no budget for bunny basics like hay or greens, and many still do not spay/neuter or microchip rabbits.

Rabbit-savvy volunteers can make a big difference in the care and placement rate of adoptable bunnies in animal shelters. Take cute photos or video footage of shelter rabbits with your cell phone and write biographies for each adoptable rabbit on the shelter’s Facebook page and adoptables’ website. This will give otherwise-ignored shelter rabbits greater exposure.

Consider organizing an offsite adoption event at a local venue to get more eyes on adoptable rabbits and to do public outreach on rabbit care. Lobby for spay/neuter surgery and microchipping for rabbits in shelters or offer in-kind donations like hay or greens, which are important contributions.

If no local rabbit rescue or animal shelter is nearby, individuals can help rabbits via social media. Share fundraising appeals, online petitions, or information about adoptable rabbits and proper house rabbit care. Help organize rabbit transport between shelters/rescues/adopters via the volunteer Bunderground Railroad.

The ResQwalk app allows you to fundraise by walking/running/cycling on behalf of rescues. Purchase items through smile.amazon.com, which contributes 0.5 percent of the cost to a designated non-profit of your choice. Purchase from companies that donate a portion of their proceeds to animal-welfare groups. Find out whether your employer has corporate matching-gift programs.

Some individuals might consider founding an independent rabbit rescue or an affiliated HRS chapter, serious undertakings that require careful consideration.

www.rabbit.org
Maurice, Miss Bean, and Bella
by Chelsea Eng

My friend’s summer had been marked by grief. His beloved cat, Miss Bean, his steadfast mate of fourteen years, had respiratory failure. The wrenching decision to euthanize reduced Maurice to convulsive sobs. Past breakups—even his divorce—never drew such tears.

Heart-raw, and acutely aware of Miss Bean’s absence (“I went to share the milk from my cereal bowl—our morning ritual—only to realize she wasn’t there”), Maurice found himself pet-sitting a pair of rabbits in his home. Photo texts ensued.

An orange tray laden with fresh greens, carrots, hay, and pellets: “Tonight’s dinner.”

A bunny snuggled to his chest.

“Are you going to adopt a rabbit?” I asked.

“No,” he shot back. “I want a cat.”

Fast forward a few weeks. Urgent text: “I’m having a moral quandary re: adopting a rabbit. Can you call me?”

I excused myself from lunch and slipped out into the sunshine to oblige. Maurice’s voice teetered with tension. “This one-year-old rabbit that’s living in a cage. Not a great situation. But he doesn’t like to be held or even touched, particularly.”

“I believe in the transformative power of love,” I offered, in the gentle tone I assume when teaching yoga. “I’m sure the one-year-old would grow to trust you in time.”

He worried aloud, “One of my car buddies said, ‘You’re going to adopt a rabbit? That’s as unmanly as your purple-sparkle dune buggy!’ Do you think people will think that?”

“Oh, Maurice!” I growled, done with New Age niceties. “That’s just stupid! Look, I’m not going to tell you what to do, but you need a companion, and that bunny needs a home. Adopt the one-year-old. That’s what I say!”

In a gift shop I stumbled upon a greeting card depicting the face of a hare, its ears erect and eyes full of mischief. The heading read, “Good Luck!” I popped it in the mail to Maurice.

The fateful text: “I adopted the rabbit. I think I’ll name him Mister B, in honor of Miss Bean.”

But a veterinary trip revealed that the one-year-old was, in fact, female.

“I’m going to call her Bella,” Maurice affirmed. “I love her!”

“I think Miss Bean orchestrated your meeting Bella,” I observed.

Upon scouting baby cards, I found one featuring a bunny in a diaper bound with pink pins. The heading read, “It’s a Girl!” I popped it in the mail to Maurice.

My parents shared my delight that our longtime family friend had a new furry adoptee and were, like me, eager to meet her in-rabbit. We would meet Bella at Maurice’s house after a dinner at an upscale restaurant in Palo Alto.

As we were seated, Maurice declared, “Well, one thing’s for certain. I’m never eating rabbit again!”

In our sleek surrounds we dined on plantain empanadas and vegan “scallops.” Meanwhile, Maurice spoke of hay.

“I used to think Timothy hay was a brand of hay, but it’s not! It’s actually a type of hay. I bought Bella three different types of hay to see which she likes best. And I noticed she only eats the green pieces, so I went through the entire supply and picked out all of the dry brown bits. I discovered I am actually allergic to hay, giving new meaning to the term hay fever,” he quipped. “Rabbits have to eat hay. They need to chew on it to whittle down their teeth. But Bella’s previous owners only gave her hay and pellets—not much in the way of fresh greens. I’ve been offering her fresh greens from the farmers’ market every day.”

“She’s so smart,” I said. “No way am I going back to the days of just hay and pellets! Keep those fresh greens coming! She’s training you, Maurice!”

Bella’s training program, it turned out, included redecorating. We entered Maurice’s always-immaculate home by way of his museum-worthy garage: abode of gleaming Vipers, snowmobiles, and the purple-sparkle dune buggy.

“There she is! Hi, baby,” Maurice announced in one breath.

At the base of a tall window in the living room sat a Netherland dwarf bunny. My parents took the couch, while Maurice and I knelt down on the carpeted floor. Together we formed an adoring audience for the star of the night: a chestnut fluffball who eyed us with caution. She hopped over to investigate us, but not close enough to be touched. Cilantro beckoned from her “orange tray smorgasbord.” She chomped heartily whilst we admired her. Next to the cilantro lay an herb of a bigger leaf.

“That’s basil,” Maurice cooed, as if addressing a picky infant. “Sometimes we like basil, and sometimes we don’t...”

From Grief to Grace

Maurice, Miss Bean, and Bella

Photographs by Maurice Liang
My parents and I exchanged winks. This guy was far gone.

A random leaf of romaine cast from the tray lay on the floor. A toilet paper tube. And a scattering of tiny pellets (not of the “dinner menu” variety). Quirky counterpoints to the slick glass coffee table, mod lamp, and shiny car-related awards.

Maurice grabbed a hand-vac to tackle select pellets but not all. “She has marked that spot as her territory,” he explained, as he left the “window base” pellets undisturbed.

Her cilantro demolished, Bella approached me, let me pet her for a few seconds, then dashed off. I was thrilled! Moments later she catapulted into the air, flicking her hind legs back like a modern dancer on a turboboost. She literally jumped for joy!

“That’s called a binky!” Maurice grinned. Off she sped in rapid circles ’round the dining room table. “That’s the Bella 500,” he added.

Fresh from the Bunny Speedway, Bella returned to approach me again. Only this time, she presented herself and stayed put. She lowered her head, let me pet her between her darling ears, and seemed to look into my soul. To be trusted by one so small and vulnerable was an honor. To commune with this sweet being was sublime. In the way of great spiritual teachers, without words and without force, she helped expand my heart.

Bella’s spiritual path for Maurice would be more intense. For one, the stress of her spay procedure on “Dad.” Maurice began sleeping on the living room floor to keep anxious watch over her recovery. When her digestive tract resumed normal function, he texted a testament to true bun love: “I was never so happy to see a pile of pellets.”

Upon considering what might become of Bella if, Heaven forbid, something should happen to him, Maurice asked me if I would be Bella’s godmother.

Godmother to a rabbit? What a request! I happily—or perhaps hopfully—said yes.

Yes, of course!

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**Fly Strike (Myiasis) in Rabbits**
by Stacie Grannum, DVM; Rabbit Guardian

One of the most distressing medical conditions a rabbit guardian may encounter is a condition called myiasis, also known as fly strike. Fly strike occurs when flies lay eggs on moist skin or hair coat areas, which allows their larvae to grow and develop in the rabbit’s underlying tissues. If not resolved quickly, the larvae can cause considerable tissue damage and death of the rabbit in a matter of hours or days. Knowledge and prevention are key to prevention of fly strike.

Fly strike most commonly occurs during the warmer summer months when flies are most active. The most common fly species that infect rabbits include blowflies (Lucilia sericata), the grey fleshfly (Wohlfahrtia sp.), the common screwworm fly (Callitroga sp.), and the botfly (Cuterebra sp). Fly strike has the potential to lead to septicemia and shock, which can rapidly result in the demise and death of the rabbit. It is therefore imperative that responsible guardians are keen to the health status of each and every one of their rabbits.

Outdoor rabbits are more prone to fly strike due to their greater contact with flies, although one or two flies trapped indoors may potentially elicit just as much damage. Rabbits most at risk are typically obese and sedentary animals. Special attention must be given to those rabbits that cannot maintain proper hygiene, have dental or digestive problems, have infected or open wounds, or have problems that render them disabled such as fractures or arthritis. In addition, rabbit guardians must also provide proper husbandry for their animals by keeping enclosures and cages clean. Attention to these details will help to decrease the incidence of fly strike by preventing the accumulation of odors that attract the flies. It is also important to frequently examine the rabbits for any of the signs or problems mentioned above and to resolve ailments as quickly as possible.

The first clinical signs of fly strike include depression, lethargy, and anorexia. Once the condition progresses, hair loss and inflamed tissues may be noted. In cases of deeper tissue damage, euthanasia may be recommended. Treatment can include intravenous fluid therapy, nutritional support in anorexic rabbits, pain medications, antibiotics, removal of all larvae and eggs, administration of rabbit-safe treatments to kill remaining larvae and eggs, wound cleaning and management, and identification and correction of any underlying problems such as diarrhea or dental disease. Any remaining eggs on the surrounding hair coat can be removed with the aid of a flea comb.

Preventing fly strike involves limiting the abundance of flies and limiting the conditions that favor the growth and survival of the larvae on the rabbit. Of course, preventing nearby attraction of the adult flies can avoid fly strike entirely. Guardians must be aware of fecal and urine contamination, especially during the hot, humid summer months, as those conditions tend to attract the adult egg-laying females that seek out warm, damp places to lay. Check rabbits twice daily to ensure that such problems are caught and resolved early and quickly.

Fly strike in any animal species can be a disturbing experience and early care and treatment of the condition may improve the prognosis of the animal. Prevention is the most important step.

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When the opportunity came for my husband and me to relocate from Singapore to the United States, we were so excited. And then we thought about one problem, our rabbit Guai Guai. He had been living with us for almost two and half years and we loved him very much. If we were to move, he needed to move with us because he is part of the family.

I immediately started to search online for peoples’ experiences about bringing rabbits overseas. After reading some of the articles, I realized there were two main problems that I needed to solve: finding an airline that allowed me to bring my rabbit in the cabin with me and confirming the regulations for importing a rabbit to the United States.

I did not want to transport my rabbit as cargo and there are a few reasons that I considered this a last resort. Most importantly, I couldn’t stand my rabbit flying alone and being handled by people I did not know. Rabbits are very timid animals; they get scared very easily in an unfamiliar environment and with unknown people.

So, if you are someone like me who would like to fly together with your rabbit, you will need to find out which airlines allow you to bring your rabbit in the cabin. Of course, I preferred flying with my rabbit in the cabin so I could always have my eye on him, feed him food and water, and comfort him if he got scared. I called several airlines including Japan Airlines, United Airlines, American Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and Cathay Pacific. Here are the responses I got from them:

**Singapore Airlines**: Strictly no pets in the cabin or as checked luggage.

**Cathay Pacific**: No pets in the cabin or as checked luggage to the United States.

**Japan Airlines**: Pets are allowed as checked luggage at no extra cost and will be placed in cargo.

**American Airlines**: Cats/dogs are allowed in the cabin, but rabbits are not.

**United Airlines**: Rabbits are allowed in the cabin, but limited to one pet per flight, so when booking a ticket you will need to check with them first to find out if they still have a vacancy for your pet for that flight. Also, if you are connecting like me, as there is no direct flight from Singapore to New York, you will need to make sure all the connecting flights are operated by United Airlines. If one of the flights is not operated by them, you cannot book your rabbit in the cabin. There is a charge of $125 for carrying a pet in the cabin.

After all these calls, United Airlines was the only one that allowed me to travel with my rabbit in the cabin. As such, I booked my flight with them, connecting in San Francisco. I had to call them before I booked my flight online to make sure on that date, that the flight still had a vacancy for a pet in the cabin. Also, note that when you book online, you cannot book your pet in the cabin. You should call the airline to book your ticket.

Now, let’s talk about the second problem: US regulations on importing a rabbit. I read the regulations and rules listed on the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and US Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service websites. I could not find a definite regulation for importing a rabbit. They had very detailed regulations for importing cats and dogs, but when it came to rabbits, there was nothing. I’d read online...
that some people said since there were no regulations on importing rabbits, it was fine to bring a rabbit into the United States. I did not want to risk it, so I wrote an email to the CDC and asked them. The reply I got from them is: “There are no federal restrictions associated with bringing rabbits into the United States. However, your state may have regulations associated with keeping rabbits as pets. If you’re bringing your rabbit into the United States on an airplane, check with your airline about their requirements for shipping small animals.”

Because I was entering the United States through San Francisco, my rabbit would need to clear customs there. So, I went to California’s State website for information about importing animals, and there they said they had the same rules as the United States Federal Government. That was a big relief for me.

So, after these two problems were solved, there were only minor things left. First, you should bring your rabbit to see a vet one week before your departure. A vet will advise you if your rabbit is fit for an hours-long flight and, most importantly, you should obtain a health certificate from the vet for your rabbit. I asked United Airlines if they required any specific things to be mentioned on the health certificate. They told me that for rabbits, they didn’t have specific requirements, whereas for cats and dogs, it was much more stringent and you would also need to obtain a vaccination certificate. The vet also recommended that I get an export license from my origin, which is Singapore, and an import license from the United States. But, the CDC told me no import license was needed, so I skipped that part. I requested an export license from the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore and that was a hassle-free experience as you just fill in a few things online and they will grant you the license that you can print yourself. It turned out when it came to rabbits, import and export regulations were much more lenient.

The second thing was to find a carrier for our rabbit. United Airlines has their size requirement listed for both hard-sided and soft-sided carriers on their website. For hard-sided carriers the height requirement was almost too strict. We initially wanted to use a hard-sided carrier because we were afraid that our rabbit would chew a soft-sided carrier because he had already made a lot of damage to our sofa. However, we went to several pet shops and there wasn’t a hard-sided carrier that would meet the height requirement. In the end, we gave up and chose a soft-sided carrier. We tried to let our rabbit get used to the new carrier one week before the flight. Fortunately, the little thing liked this carrier and never chewed on it.

When the actual flight day came, I lined the bottom of the carrier with pee pads in case he peed in it. And then I put rabbit Food pellets and dried fruit he likes in my hand carrier and then I went to the airport earlier than normal, nervous that anything might go wrong when I checked in with my rabbit. It turned out things went smoothly. I told the airline officer at the check-in counter that I was flying with my rabbit and she just asked to see my rabbit. She didn’t even check the size of my carrier. Then, when I went through the security check, they asked a person to do a special inspection because I was carrying a rabbit. They asked me to take out my rabbit from the carrier so the carrier could go through the scanning machine and then I had to hold my rabbit to walk through the body scanner. The little thing was scared when I took him out. He held onto me tight because there were so many people around at the security check. Luckily it all went smoothly.

After boarding the flight, I fed him some food and water. Then I put the carrier under the seat in front of me. Throughout the flight, I took the carrier up every two hours to check on him. He was doing very well, eating and drinking, though less than normal. It was a 15-hour flight and he did quite well.

After arriving in San Francisco, I had to declare on the customs form that I was carrying a live animal with me. And when the customs officer asked me about it, I told him I was carrying a rabbit. The very nice officer there said, “Oh my gosh, this is the first time someone has carried a rabbit here. I don’t know if there are any regulations on rabbits but I think it should be fine.” Then he asked me to wait while he discussed with the other officers. It turned out they all didn’t know what to do with a rabbit. They searched on their website for this and after ten minutes he walked over to me and told me it was fine to go. I felt a big relief and then went for my next flight. I had to take out my rabbit from the carrier for a security check again. This time because the queue was a bit long, he had to be exposed to so many people for a while and he was really scared with eyes wide open. Finally, we boarded the connecting flight to New York. There was around half an hour that the flight was really bumpy and shaky. I was so worried about him in the carrier. I tried to feed him water and food but he was too stressed; he did not take any.

After another five-hour flight, we arrived in New York. However, we were still not home yet. It took me another one and a half hours by taxi to reach my final destination in Connecticut. By the time I arrived in my apartment, I was really exhausted and so was my rabbit. He did not drink and eat for quite a long time. I put him in the cage I brought over and gave him hay and water. He was so stressed that he just wanted to escape from the cage and hide under the sofa.

The next day when I woke up and checked on him, I saw that he did not drink nor eat the whole night. Poor little thing was just staying still in his cage. I gave him a good massage and went to make breakfast. And suddenly I heard him sipping his water bottle and then he started to enjoy his hay. He finally relaxed a bit after seeing me in the morning. And after a good meal, he gained his energy and started to run around in the apartment, getting curious about everything, sniffing and chiming the sofa, rug, and doing a binky!

I really hope this article can help those rabbit parents who need to relocate overseas but don’t know what to do with their rabbitry. The most important thing is not to leave your rabbit behind. There is always a way to bring him along. You just need to go that extra mile to find out how.
LEAVE A LEGACY FOR THE RABBITS
PLEASE CONSIDER HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY IN YOUR ESTATE PLANNING

Please contact Margo DeMello at margo@rabbit.org for more information