Radar's Story

I would like to welcome everyone to the first issue of the NMHRS newsletter, Rabbit Tracks. We hope that this will become a bi-annual publication, highlighting our work and providing useful information and resources for you and your buns!

It is appropriate to begin this journey by starting at the beginning. Although many of you have heard Radar’s Story, I felt it was appropriate to recount it here. Without little Radar’s struggles, we would not have the network to assist bunnies that we have today.

In February of 2007, Deb and I had grown to know our vet, Dr. Russman of VCA, better than most people should know their vet. We had two very sick buns and they needed daily visits at one point. It was a long struggle that ended six months later when we lost the second of the pair. By that time we had grown to know just about everyone at VCA on Montgomery.

One day, Dr. Russman left us a message about a little bunny that a vet tech had rescued. He had been beaten up by other buns at a local pet store and was left to die in the back room. Her roommate, who worked there, brought him home and he was nursed back to health at VCA. However, VCA couldn’t keep him and neither could the vet tech, so they called us to see if we could take him.

I had no idea what to think. I was very upset and we took him without any real plan of what to do next. We made a temporary spot for him in our home and contacted a local independent rescuer for assistance. She agreed to take him and I am glad to say that he was eventually neutered and found a home living with his very own girl bun! We gave him the name Radar because he slipped under the radar of animal abuse! We think of him often and we hope he is having a wonderful life!

In the meantime, I had written hate mail to many local pet stores. At the time I didn’t realize that I actually never wrote to the store that was originally responsible - a locally owned store with a policy of killing or starving injured animals. Shortly after writing those hate mails, I was contacted by a regional manager of Petco and asked if I wanted to do something about it. I was shocked, scared, nervous, apprehensive, and just about every other emotion. Remembering that Margo DeMello (HRS president) was living in Placitas, I contacted her for advice. Through a long series of negotiations with CABQ and Petco, the Petco Adoption Program was born.

We have come a long way from Margo and I handling bunny transfers between CABQ and Petco to where we are today. At the time Petco had breeder buns in the stores and CABQ was not spaying or neutering prior to adoption. I am very happy to report that Petco no longer has breeder rabbits in any stores across the U.S. and that CABQ now spays and neuters all buns prior to adoption. Although we can’t take credit for the national Petco decision, we did have a part in it and we can take all the credit for changing the CABQ policy! We are also now an official chapter of House Rabbit Society and with over 20 active volunteers, we are making a huge difference in the lives of many buns and many people.

We are nothing without our volunteers. I am so grateful to all of you for everything you give to this group! You make the difference! Everyone has different reasons for volunteering, but personally, my greatest joy is bonding two buns and seeing them love each other. I truly believe that the gift of love is the greatest gift that any one being can give to another.

With Deepest Gratitude,

Bill Velasquez
NMHRS President
Adoptable Buns

Ben

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

Fluffanella, Blackberry, and Peter

Fluffanella is three years old, a white angora with gray-tipped ears, paws and nose. She is curious, trusting, and loves to be held, and Loves bananas, carrots, and apples for treats. Fluffers has crooked teeth that have to be watched and trimmed if the bottom ones get too long. She also has a runny nose and eyes, but eats, drinks, and plays like normal. Blackberry is three years old and he is a black satin lop with chocolate tummy and paws. He is shy and cautious. Peter is a sweet and gentle New Zealand White who was separated from his own bond and was welcomed by Fluffers and Blackberry following his rescue from the pound.

All three bunnies are litter box trained and spayed/neutered. They must be adopted together as they love and care for each other as only bonded bunnies can!

Bojangles

This little guy was just brought into the Rio Rancho shelter. We don’t know too much about him yet but he sure is a sweetie already! And so very adorable!

Barley

Here’s Barley! She is a gorgeous redhead with the most beautiful eyelashes - no mascara needed! Calm, curious and sweet. Please come visit Barley at Petco westside.

Roger

Who knows why anyone would dump this friendly little darling bunny? Roger found himself at the local shelter through no fault of his own but decided to make the best of it. He made friends with the shelter staff and volunteers. He is always happy and friendly. But he would finally like to have a forever home of his own.

Could you provide Roger a loving home? If you would like to visit him please come to Petco Lomas. You will find a real sweetie!

Elmer and Elsie

Elmer and Elsie arrived at the ABQ shelter together but lost each other once there. They ended up in separate cages and were all set to be adopted out as singles until one of our members figured out they were a bonded pair. These two love each other like only two bonded bunnies can and they must be adopted together.

Many other rabbits are looking for their Forever Home. More adoptable buns can be seen at www.rabbit.org/newmexico. Links to bunnies available for adoption through the CABQ shelter can also be found there. All rabbits adopted through NMHRS and CABQ are spayed/neutered. Please contact Bill @ 292-6030 or bill@rabbit.org for information.
Vets Corner

NMHRS is excited to announce that Dr. Holly Edwards has volunteered to be our veterinary advisor!

A native New Mexican, Dr. Holly Edwards was born and raised in Los Alamos, NM. She received her bachelor’s degree in wildlife biology from Colorado State University in 1999, and then her degree in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Pennsylvania in May 2004. Homesick for the west and green chile, she returned to New Mexico where she completed an internship in small animal medicine and surgery at VCA Veterinary Care Animal Hospital. Dr. Holly Edwards joined the Rio Grande Animal Hospital Family in August 2009.

She is a member of the American Veterinary Medicine Association and the primary veterinarian for Weimaraner Rescue in New Mexico. Dr. Holly lives here in Albuquerque with her furry (and not so furry) family that includes Molly, a sweet natured Border Collie mix; Lola, a persnickety grey cat and Gizmo, a rather lazy gecko. Outside of work she enjoys hiking in the wilderness, all things Irish, exploring other worlds in books, and dancing anything from salsa to swing.

She practices at Rio Grande Animal Hospital! Look forward to her advisory column in our subsequent newsletters!

Volunteer profiles

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

Cathy Sweeney

By Kat Cox

Cathy Sweeney got into bunnies about four years ago when she found an injured bunny practically on her doorstep. After two weeks of looking for the bunny’s home, Cathy came to the realization that this bunny had been intentionally dumped, a problem she would later learn is all too common with our rabbit friends. Cathy knew at that moment that she wanted to help rabbits in need. The rabbit on her doorstep was Isaac, a Netherland dwarf (or "little bunny" if you want to be PC). He is now four years old and is the reigning bunny in Cathy's home. “He’s the love of my life!” she says. “And he’s probably the best bunny ever.”

Cathy's responsibilities for NMHRS include being active at the shelter and at Petco West. With fellow volunteer Criss Starr, Cathy checks out the shelter bunnies, cleans their cages, trims their nails, and, perhaps most importantly, comforts the bunnies as best she can. When a space opens up at Petco, Cathy helps decide which shelter bunny can move out to be shown off, and she goes twice a week to Petco West to socialize those lucky bunnies. Because she lives so close to Petco West, she also goes above and beyond in her duties by providing the bunnies there with daily veggies. Cathy also attends a lot of outreach events. "It's rewarding to educate the public by telling as many people as we can that bunnies should be house rabbits," she says. "This is still such a weird concept to people."

Cathy's favorite toy to give a bunny is a toilet paper roll stuffed with hay. It's cheap, practical, and it's very fun to watch the bunny toss all over the place. In fact, Cathy once gave Isaac a toilet paper roll to play with and he found a way to get it onto his head. “He looked like the king of the toilet rolls,” “Disapproving Rabbits” is one of Cathy’s favorite websites and books. "Those pictures and captions are priceless and make me laugh, no matter how many times I look at them!"

What do other volunteers think about Cathy? "She is one of the most caring, sensitive, and intuitive people," says fellow volunteer Criss Starr. "Her love of animals infuses every aspect of her life." Cathy has taken in 11 baby rabbits and reunited them with their estranged mothers who were separated at the shelter. She also volunteers her time at Watermelon Mountain Ranch and has made many trips to Santa Fe, Glorietta, and even Texas transporting rabbits. We are all lucky to have Cathy as a volunteer and a friend.

Thank you, Cathy, for all your hard work! We know we appreciate Cathy’s efforts, and certainly the bunnies do, too.

Fun Tip – Bunnies are natural foragers. Hiding small portions of your rabbit’s favorite food or treat in easily found places around his habitat will provide exercise and mental stimulation.
Heat by digging tunnels deep into the cool earth. Here are a few tips to keep your Bunny cool and comfortable:

- Provide plenty of cool, fresh (preferably filtered) water. Some buns even like ice! On really hot days, try freezing a gallon jug of water. Hot buns love to snuggle these icy companions!

- Ears as air-conditioning? It's true, a rabbit's method of cooling herself is through her large ears. You can help cool your bunny by rubbing a cool water, as this can send them into shock!

- Avoid direct sunlight during the heat of the day. UV blocking curtains are an inexpensive way to reduce cooling costs during the hottest part of the day. Your bunny will enjoy a cool, cave-like environment, much like her ancestors who relaxed in cool earthen tunnels. This can also be a lifesaver if the air conditioning fails while you're away.

- Keep your bunny well groomed. Most rabbits will molt when it is really hot. This hair must be plucked or combed out to prevent wool block and to keep bunny cool. Angora rabbits should be clipped short by a groomer who is experienced with rabbits. Never try shaving or scissoring your bunny.

- Bored bunnies are destructive bunnies. Unlike their wild cousins who are busy escaping predators and surviving on a daily basis, the domestic house rabbit doesn't need to worry about constant danger. Eating and pooping take up most of their waking hours, but as any bunny owner with a house rabbit can attest, rabbits are very clever creatures and need mental stimulation to keep life interesting.

- Keep your bunny well hydrated, especially when served damp from washing.

- Have Thumper discovered that carpet fibers pull out very easily? Or that the leg of the coffee table, couch, chair, or bed has acquired a piquant flavor that he can't get enough of? Sounds like Thumper is in need of some toys!

- Online websites such as bunnybytes.com offer a wide range of toys that are guaranteed to be safe and toxin free. They are fun and imaginative, but they can also bust a budget very quickly. At this point the owner must judge which toys are most cost-effective. If your bunny can destroy a cardboard box within a week, is it wise to spend $21 for the Cottontail Cottage which is just a fancily-cut piece of cardboard? It's a safe bet that Thumper can't tell the difference between a cottage and a couple of stacked copier paper boxes.

- As a single "bunny mom" of 4, economy is my main priority. Over the last 4 years of bunny ownership I have offered my brood a wide selection of homemade and "generic" toys. With very few exceptions they have been met with curiosity before suffering the undiscriminating wrath of my rabbits' teeth. Here are a few of the favorites:

  - Cereal boxes – You can't go wrong with this one. Sometimes just chewing the box will do. Other times I cut a dozen or more small holes in the box and stuff it full of hay. It spices up the regular routine of hay munching since they have to work for it a little more. For added incentive, throw in a couple bunny cookies which you can buy from places like Bunny Bytes. (For those true DIYers, you can make your own.) Round oatmeal containers that roll give Thumper an extra challenge.

  - Wicker baskets – These are usually a hit. These can be found at hobby stores like Michael’s or Hobby Lobby. The trick is to find the ones that aren’t varnished. Added treats in the basket are fine, but normally the bunny just wants to chew and tear it apart.

  - Chewing sticks – For the enterprising DIYer with access to a willow tree, Thumper will never lack for chew toys. Apple twigs are also good. Avoid plum, cherry, apricot, and peach trees. Or pretty much any fruit tree except apple just to be on the safe side.

  - Tubes – To replicate the warren environment that domestic rabbits come from, I buy cement piping formation tubes from a building supply store like Home Depot or Lowe’s. They like to chew the edges or tear the thin layers of paper off the tube. With a towel thrown in there to lie on, Thumper may just never come out and stay hidden where he feels safe and comfortable.

  - Phonebooks – What to do nowadays with those huge doorstops containing information easily found on the internet? Thumper would love to have a crack at ‘em! Tactics vary; my guys usually chew along the binding and release 20-50 pages at once. I have also caught my lop digging at the pages and flipping through them. Perhaps he’s looking for a good Chinese takeout place?

- The sky is the limit (or at least your imagination) when it comes to bunny. No matter how big, small, elaborate, cheap, or expensive, it will at the least be sniffed and inspected. If chewed, ripped, and destroyed, you know you have done an excellent job of amusing Mr. Bun.

We all know that New Mexico summers can be brutally hot. Heat stroke is a painful condition that can affect all animals. Rabbits are particularly susceptible: Temperatures over 85 degrees Fahrenheit can be deadly. In the wild, European rabbits, the ancestor of all domestic rabbits, escape the heat by digging tunnels deep into the cool earth. Here are a few tips to keep your Bunny cool and comfortable:

- Keep your bunny inside in a cool, air-conditioned or evaporative cooled environment. Fans can help circulate the air, just make sure cords are protected and bunny is out of drafts.

- Keep your bunny well groomed. Most rabbits will molt when it is really hot. This hair must be plucked or combed out to prevent wool block and to keep bunny cool. Angora rabbits should be clipped short by a groomer who is experienced with rabbits. Never try shaving or scissoring your rabbit without training (available free from NMHRS). It is very easy to cut or over-brush delicate bunny skin.

- Keep your bunny well watered. Some buns even like ice! On really hot days, try freezing a gallon jug of water. Hot buns love to snuggle these icy companions!

- Bored bunnies are destructive bunnies. Unlike their wild cousins who are busy escaping predators and surviving on a daily basis, the domestic house rabbit doesn't need to worry about constant danger. Eating and pooping take up most of their waking hours, but as any bunny owner with a house rabbit can attest, rabbits are very clever creatures and need mental stimulation to keep life interesting.

- Ears as air-conditioning? It's true, a rabbit's method of cooling herself is through her large ears. You can help cool your bunny by rubbing a cool washcloth on her ears and over her body. You can also wrap ice in a washcloth and rub her ears, feet, and belly. Never submerge a bunny in ice water, as this can send them into shock!

- If your bun displays signs of heatstroke: panting, delirium, listlessness: This is an emergency situation! Wrap bunny in a cool wet towel and get her to a vet as soon as possible!

- Always provide your bunny with plenty of crispy, fresh salads to munch on in the summer months. Romaine and parsley are particularly cooling and hydrating, especially when served damp from washing.
Membership Form

☐ I would like to join New Mexico HRS.

☐ I would like to make an additional donation.

☐ I would like to volunteer.

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

Membership fees:

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

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

Name: ________________________________

Address: ______________________________

City/State/Zip: _________________________

E-mail ________________________________

Phone ________________________________

☐ Please add my email address to your list for periodic announcements. We do not share our members' names with anyone.

☐ Check enclosed (Payable to NM HRS)

☐ Charge my Visa or MC

Card# ________________________________

Exp Date __________

Signature ______________________________

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