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Bunny Road Trip!

By SHANA ABÉ

Editor: MAUREEN O'NEILL

MOVING DAY. You've thought of everything: packing, hiring the movers, planning your route to your new home, how you're going to transport your valuables. But what do you do about your most fragile, beloved valuable of all, your house rabbit?

I've relocated eight times across several states during my years with rabbits. I've driven along sleek smooth highways and gritty dirt roads, into glaring bright mornings and deep velvet nights, every hour spent with my bunnies at my side, and I'm going to share with you a few of the lessons I've learned.

The Basics: I Know You Know This, But . . .

They must travel in the car with you. Don't put them in a trailer, or anything else just attached to your vehicle. These are your house rabbits; keep them inside the car with you. You should be able to monitor them the entire trip. If it's hot, they'll need the air-conditioning. If it's cold, they'll need a little heat. And just like in your home, they should be shielded from drafts and extra-loud noises.

(What if it's hot and your car doesn't have air-conditioning? Filled, frozen plastic water bottles placed inside each cage. Depending upon the length of your journey, you can prepare a cooler of them before you go.

What if it's cold and the heat isn't reaching them? Extra towels or blankets they can snuggle against.)



Abby and Diego are glad to take a break on the road and are asking if we're there yet.

Prep Work: No One Likes Smelly Towels

There's some debate about traveling with your buns in carriers vs. cages. Several factors can contribute to how you manage it, but usually it comes down to the space available inside your car. If your trip isn't a long one, you might consider a carrier instead of a cage. The rabbits will have less room, but you can strap a seatbelt around a carrier a lot more easily than you can a cage. In case of sudden starts or stops, bunny will not be flung as far.

Wire cages can also damage your car's seats; place a sturdy rug or bathmat beneath them so they don't. Drape the cage

with towels or blankets so that bunny will feel more safe.

In either case, surround your rabbits with soft things, especially familiar plush toys or clean towels. Don't put anything hard (except possibly the frozen water bottle) or with sharp edges inside their traveling environment; again, think about the effects of sudden stops. They have no sure way to steady themselves.

Bring extra towels for them, even more than you think they'll need, and a sealed container for the soiled ones. They will likely mess whatever's beneath them several times during the day, so when you stop to get gas, check. You don't want your rabbits hunched up on sodden towels all day.

If you're lodging overnight, a bottle of carpet spot cleaner and a roll of paper towels could come in handy.

Bonded pairs of buns should be kept together. Their journey will be much, much easier with a trusted partner at their side.

Keep single bunnies within view, if possible. You are their rock and the only thing they know in this frightening, shifting new world. Let them realize you're there with them.

Your rabbits are likely accustomed to grazing during the day, and you definitely want to make sure there is nourishment available to them on the road. I've placed pellets in the cages/carriers before, but honestly, I've never had a rabbit eat while the car was in motion. So feel free to put

some hay in there with them (it's soft!) but pellets require a bowl, and that can be dangerous. Unless they're on some sort of emergency diet, I suggest saving the pellets for whenever you've stopped for the day. Do not try to drive with a hanging water bottle attached to a cage. No matter how you position it, it will make a huge mess and soak everything. Have fresh water in bowls ready to offer during temporary stops, but don't be surprised if your buns don't drink. They are stressed.

Getting There: It's All About the Journey

This is going to sound obvious, but don't drive like a maniac. We've all been stuck behind that person puttering along so leisurely that you roll your eyes and grit your teeth and wonder from which particular circle of hell they got their license. You are that person now. Who cares what the people in the cars behind you think? You'll never see any of them again. Your rabbits are your priority. Take turns slowly. Accelerate gently; decelerate gently. Smile cheerfully at all the angry, rabbit-less people whipping past you. Your blood pressure is going to be so much healthier than theirs.

Some bunnies like music. A lot don't. Keep things as calm and soothing as you can. No blasting the stereo.

If you stop and have to leave the car, don't be gone long. Remember, as always, that temperature fluctuations in cars are dangerous to all pets.

Should your trip require more than one day on the road, you'll need to find lodging. Don't push yourself to drive all night; that's never safe, and you want to get to your new location all in one piece. Just find a clean, well-lit place to stay and get some rest.

Do not leave your rabbits in your car overnight. Not unless you're also planning to sleep there with them, which I assume would be an emergency measure. Think

about the overnight environment inside your car: strange noises, odd lights, people walking back and forth, maybe rapping on the window because they see a pet inside. The temperature changes, completely beyond your senses or control. And, frankly, what if your car gets broken into, or stolen? If you're moving, you've probably got a lot of stuff crammed in there. Even if you're not, people are opportunists, and they'll take what they can find. Do not risk sleeping apart from your rabbits, any more than you would your jewelry or wallet.

Try to find a hotel/motel that has access to the rooms not too near the check-in lobby, and definitely don't stay at one that requires you to walk through the lobby to get to your room. Happily, hotels/motels with the rooms physically apart from the main building aren't very difficult to locate, especially in the little towns you're likely to encounter along highways. You want to be able to park as closely as possible to your room and get the buns inside as swiftly as possible. Rabbits are a curiosity to most people, and the less you have to deal with questions from either hotel management or the other guests, the better.

Walk quickly. Act like you know what you're doing. If people notice you're carrying rabbits and say anything about it, just smile vaguely and reply something noncommittal ("Why, yes, they are rabbits!" Or, if you're a smart aleck like I am: "Oh, no, these aren't real!"), and then get the heck out of the situation.

Why am I suggesting you act like a thief hastening away from the scene of the crime? Because, bluntly, you cannot trust strangers with your bunnies. I'm sorry to say it, but it's true. Even well-meaning people can accidentally hurt your rabbits by mishandling them. On several occasions, parents who've noticed I'm traveling with bunnies have approached and said some-

thing like, "Hey, my kid wants to pet/play with your rabbit"—and have gotten belligerent when I decline.

No. The answer is always no. You owe nothing to strangers or their children, at a hotel or anywhere else. You might think it could be a good learning experience for the child, but remember: this is not a normal day for your bun. Your rabbit is delicate, anxious, and totally your responsibility. You need to put her first.

I let my rabbits roam the hotel room while I'm there to watch, because I want them to hop around and stretch their legs, and I want them to know the room is safe. (Obviously, if you leave, they should go back into their cages.) The bolder ones usually do explore; the more timid, however, tend to hide in their safe place, unwilling to risk it. That's okay, too. Remember, this is all just temporary.

Now is the time to ensure they have fresh food and water within reach. They may not eat or drink yet, but overnight, in the dark, probably they will.

Be responsible: don't let them damage the furnishings, and clean up any messes they make.

Remember that you're all tired. Try to sleep. Put out the Do Not Disturb sign even while you're there, and especially if you go out (leaving the buns in the room). If there are windows that might reveal people walking by, close the curtains. You want to create a mini-sanctuary for your rabbits, keeping things as tranquil as you can.

Tomorrow you begin anew. When you settle them back into the car, remind them that they are precious to you. As you start the motor and commence the rest of your journey, let them know you're still there with them. Say their names. Tell them how brave they are, and how much you love them.

And drive safe. ■



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Editor: BETH WOOLBRIGHT

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Duke's Kingdom

Q. *Is an enclosure a necessary provision for all rabbits in a bunnyproofed house?*

A. Maybe not all rabbits under all circumstances. Whether or not you should fence an area or close a door within your house depends on your bunny's physical comfort zone and mental needs. As Duke demonstrates below, motivation to wander or stay put may change with life events.

THERE'S A TYPE OF BEHAVIOR in some free-running rabbits that Marinell Harriman calls "self-limiting"; that is, the bunnies restrict themselves to a certain part of the house without the need for doors or gates. Such was the case for Duke and his ladies.

For five years, this three-pound mini Rex—the little bunny with the big dog name—stayed in my home office. That room has a wood floor. The hall outside the room has a different color wood floor. The door was never closed, and he never left. After a couple years, he was joined by Lexie, who also never left. I could see one bunny not leaving, but two? What was with that floor? So far as I could tell it was the mere look of it that kept them from crossing the threshold. In the beginning they'd stretch their heads out the door and peer at the surface, only to shuffle back to the safety of their self-chosen abode.

Sadly, five months ago, Lexie passed away unexpectedly. And Duke, now nine years old, did what many senior citizens do: he decided he wanted to travel. For the first time, he ventured

into the forbidden hallway—and quickly discovered the world he'd been missing. Thus began nightly tours of the second floor, which he performed pretty much without stopping. First I'd open the door, now kept shut because I was afraid of losing him, and he'd hop into the bedroom, threading his way among the hatboxes under the bed. Then he'd poke his head in the bathroom—literally, taking three hops in, surveying that all was well, and hopping back out. A gallop down the hall (once his source of foreboding) would lead to a loop around the living room. Then, every night, as he came to a certain chair, he'd zip in tight circles around the chair legs, skidding and spinning donuts. Two more rooms and he'd traverse the hall back to his castle, like one long aerobics circuit.

Two weeks ago, after two dates with Duke at the Rabbit Center, a Dutch mix named Rebecca joined our family. The first evening Duke visited her in the master bath. So as not to rush the couple's friendship, she stayed there alone for the night. The next morning I brought Duke by for a visit. When I opened the door, he hopped back to his room, then back to the bathroom, back to his room, then back to her—as if to say, "Rebecca, this is the way to your new home." She looked at the hardwood like it had all the solidity of outer space; so I laid out a runner of towels, and



With his kingdom secure on the right flooring, Duke drapes himself over Rebecca. The World is his.

after many attempts—going a little farther each time—she made it to the end of her magic carpet.

Duke and Rebecca are now happy together in their one-room realm, as my little fellow has significantly curtailed his nightly meanderings. Now I know why he went out in the world: he was looking for a girl. ■

Bunny Bereavement

BY AMY BREMERS

Helping a lone bunny move on after the death of a mate

IN THE PAST 20 YEARS of living with rabbits, I've grieved many times over the death of one. Each time I lose one of my "children," my heart breaks. I'll pick up a piece of cardboard she chewed, notice a bit of her fur, and cry. I'll wash her dirty towels for the last time and sob over the laundry machine. It hurts so much.

But I'm not the only one grieving. The surviving partner bunny is too, and probably even more so.

Most recently, I lost my special-needs bunny, Nika. I had spent hours each day with her. Nika's mate, Arley, however, spent all day, every day with her. They, like other bonded rabbits, were as close as two creatures can be—grooming, playing with each other, snuggling for hours, eating and sleeping together. Nika was Arley's world; and as Arley's human caretaker, I had to remember to focus on him even in my sadness.

When a bonded rabbit dies, it is extremely important that her mate spends time with her body. While this may seem morbid or gross from a human perspective, it allows the grieving process to begin. A rabbit who does not see and understand that his devoted mate is dead and not coming back waits – and continues to wait – for her to return. This can result in deep depression, refusal to eat, and sometimes death. So I laid Nika's body on the towel on the couch where she and Arley had spent Nika's last night and placed Arley next to it.

Depending on the rabbit and his rela-



Arley (bottom), who lost his mate a month before, gets a double dose of grooming from two of his new friends, Rhett (left) and Willow

tionship with his partner, the time spent with her body could be best either with you or without you there. Arley and Nika were used to spending the time I was at home with me on the couch, so I stayed with him.

While with the body, rabbits may groom it, lie down next to it, pull on the fur, jump over it, or run around it. They may even simply ignore it. With one bonded pair I had, when I put the body next to the surviving bunny, she jumped over it and ran to the other side of the room. When I tried

again, she did the same thing. That was all the time she needed. The important thing is to give the survivor the opportunity to say goodbye. One to three hours is usually enough time. When the survivor begins to ignore the body and hop away, enough time has passed.

Since Nika's health had been declining, I thought that Arley might have already known she was about to die and wouldn't need as much time. After about an hour and a half, he started hopping away. I con-

tinued to put him next to her a few more times though. I didn't want to take her body away until I was absolutely sure he understood.

(Note: If the rabbit died from something contagious, the other one has already been exposed. Giving him time with her body does not add any risk that he will contract what she had. If there is the possibility of contagion, the survivor bunny should be taken to the vet soon to be treated if necessary.)

Typically, a rabbit grieves a partner's death for several weeks. During this time, he might stop playing, appear to be staring into the distance or searching for something, lose his appetite, retreat into a corner or box, stop eating or drinking, drink excessive water, or pull out fur. He may stop using the litter box, chew on carpet, or become aggressive. Some rabbits may instead actually become more affectionate. Arley, who had always been an independent bunny, wanted to be with me constantly. He followed me around, put his head down for pets whenever I came near, and let me hold him (which was a great comfort to me in my own grief).

Before Nika died, I had started several routines with Arley so that he would have constants he could count on, and I made sure I followed those routines after her death. For example, in the mornings I had brought both of them in the bathroom with me as I got ready. Every time I put them back in their pen, I gave them oatmeal. I began cuddling with Arley more and introducing additional healthy treats. I started sleeping on the couch with him and Nika next to me on an ottoman. I continued this for a week after she died, and when he started to leave my side during the night, I knew he was ready to go back to his pen.

Spending extra time with the surviving
(continued on page 7)

A Move to the Desert

BY CHRISTINE LAYTON

WHEN I ADOPTED MY BUNNY, Todd, as a youngster, we lived in the rolling hills of Virginia. The parks were green, the lawn was organic, and although Todd is a house rabbit, he enjoyed frequent excursions outside. Wearing a harness and leash, Todd explored the great outdoors with fearless gusto. Four years later Todd was an adult, accustomed to his routines, but he was about to experience a dramatic change.

In the summer of 2011 our family moved across the country to the desert of East Texas. The move was hectic with a 5-foot rabbit habitat in the backseat of my compact car. Todd was a trooper, though. Hunkered down in the woodchips next to his food bowl, he made it through the four-day, cross-country drive.

When we arrived in the desert my excitement turned to dismay. Our new backyard was a dirtscape of small rocks and thorny cacti. The front yard, like all the others in the neighborhood, was entirely paved in cement. While in Virginia I had worried about toxic dandelions, here I had to worry about scorpions, tarantulas, and snakes. The wild jackrabbits I glimpsed in the desert looked like lean and tough survivors—distant hardcore cousins of my fluffy buddy. It became clear that the small scrabble-grassed park down the road would not be a safe place for Todd to walk on his leash. Stray dogs roamed the park and the hot sun blazed year-round. Todd would have to become a full-time house rabbit, sequestered in the air-conditioned living room for the foreseeable future.

As I packed away the leash and harness, I hoped that Todd would not resent the change too much. He didn't turn resentful.



Relocation meant finding replacements for running in lush grass at Todd's prior home.

He didn't become grumpy. He didn't bite. In fact, he didn't do much of anything at all. Over the next few months, Todd gained weight and became lethargic. My once intrepid explorer had become a little pudgy blob who liked to stretch out on the cool tile and only hustled for the clink of a carrot in his food bowl. I decided that Todd needed another change.

Friends who visit me now may have the impression that my house is a disaster area. At first glance, it appears that I have one messy living room. Elaborate tunnels made of cardboard wind around the perimeter of the room. The underside of the coffee table is a cave with a little rabbit-sized door. Baby toys and plastic spoons litter the floor. At a closer look, though, all of this is engineered, planned, and purposefully maintained for Todd.

Todd deserves the chance to explore new and exciting areas every day. He wants to be challenged by his environment. He needs to work for his treats. Although the Southwest is a vibrant, cultural gem, it is not necessarily a rabbit-friendly environment. Indoors, though, it can be. I firmly believe that no matter where we live, we can provide not just a safe environment for our rabbits, but a fun and stimulating one as well. ■

Case Study: Peanut

BY MARGO DEMELLO, PhD

Peanut is a white dwarf rabbit with striking blue eyes and splayed legs. In spring 2012, he was seen being thrown out of a moving car near the San Francisco airport but fortunately was rescued and brought to Peninsula Humane Society in San Mateo. There, a kind volunteer named Aida, knowing that Peanut would soon be euthanized because of his legs, posted his picture on her Facebook page, where it caught the attention of HRS fosterer Donna Jensen, who emailed me his picture. I told her that if she could get Peanut, I would take him, and he has lived with me in New Mexico since.

WHEN HE'S NOT SNUGLING with his buddy, Junior, Peanut scoots around my floor in a diaper, which keeps his private parts safe, and interacts with the dogs, cats, bird, and other rabbits in the house. He follows my husband and me around and spends a lot of time in the kitchen—where he quickly learned the snacks are kept. Even though he is technically “disabled,” he is a born traveler, loves to go on car rides (which is ironic, since he had been thrown from a car), and goes camping with us regularly. It's because of that adventurous spirit that his development of phacoclastic uveitis was so heart-breaking to me—I thought he would never be able to see again.

It was early January of this year when I noticed that one of Peanut's normally clear



Experienced traveler, Peanut relaxes during a camping trip.

blue eyes had become cloudy. By the time I made an appointment with my regular veterinarian, Dr. Levenson, Peanut's eye had not only filled almost completely with a white ball of what looked like pus, but the outside of the “pus ball” had become surrounded by a red “corona” of blood vessels. By the time of Peanut's appointment, the second eye had become affected as well. I had never seen anything like it, and neither had Dr. Levenson, with all his years of rabbit medicine; so, he gave me a referral to see the eye specialist in town.

It was a couple of days later by the time I got my appointment with Dr. Kennard, but the day he was available, I was teaching, so my friend Criss Starr, another HRS educator, offered to take Peanut in for me. She did some online research first and found an article written by Dr. Pilny on Vetlearn.com on phacoclastic uveitis and brought the article with her. Criss had immediately recognized that Peanut's symptoms matched those in Dr. Pilny's article, and when Dr. Kennard saw Peanut, he concurred and put Peanut on 28 days of oral fenbendazole, accompanied by thrice-daily eye drops: diclofenac sodium, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug;

neomycin/polymyxin B sulfate/ sexamethasone, an anti-infective steroid; and Refresh, an eye lubricant.

After 28 days of treatment, I saw Dr. Kennard again, and we were thrilled at the results. The red corona had completely disappeared from both eyes, and the second affected eye was almost completely cleared up. All that's left in that eye today is the slightest bit of a fuzzy white line in the pupil. The “bad” eye still has a glob of white, but Peanut can see out of it, and he acts completely normal in every way. My little adventurer can keep exploring and keep seeing new sights, and for that I am very grateful.

I've been fostering rabbits for HRS since 1989 and have seen many cases of *Encephalitozoon cuniculi* (*E. cuniculi*) in my sanctuary rabbits, especially among the older rabbits. It wasn't until going through this experience that I learned about *E. cuniculi*-associated phacoclastic uveitis and that it typically affects young dwarf rabbits. I thought *E. cuniculi* was primarily a neurological condition and that it mostly manifested in older rabbits. It's incredible how much we continue to learn about rabbits, and their health, after all these years. ■

Encephalitozoon cuniculi-associated phacoclastic uveitis in rabbits

BY ANTHONY A. PILNY, DVM, DABVP

Encephalitozoon cuniculi is an intracellular protozoal parasite with a predilection for the nervous system, kidneys, and eyes of rabbits, often causing a head tilt and/or rear-limb paresis, among the varied possible clinical signs. Phacoclastic uveitis that develops secondary to infection with *E. cuniculi* is a recognized ocular disease of rabbits and was originally reported in 1993.

THE OCULAR LESION appears as a white, fluffy/cottony mass in the anterior (front) chamber of the eye. The mass originates at and the inflammation is centered on a break in the lens capsule. The resulting granulomatous uveitis (inflammation of the vascular parts of the eye) develops when lens proteins are released into the anterior chamber after breakdown of the lens capsule. The posterior (back) chamber of the eye (i.e., retina, choroid) remains unaffected. While there is no recognized sex predilection, infection is more common in dwarf rabbits and in younger individuals.

Diagnosis is based on clinical appearance and by ruling out bacterial (e.g., *Pasteurella*) abscessation. Diagnosis is supported by specific blood tests. Historically, serum antibody titers were useful in making a diagnosis; however, serology indicates only past exposure and is not diagnostic of infection. Newer DNA test



Phacoclastic uveitis in a pet rabbit secondary to infection with *E. cuniculi*.

options include polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing of tissues, cerebrospinal fluid, and removed lens material. Testing of serum or plasma IgG- and IgM-specific antibodies can support infection status because the presence of IgM antibodies indicates active infection. Changes seen in plasma or serum protein electrophoresis tests may prove useful as well. PCR testing and/or histopathology should be performed on lens material in cases of enucleation (removal of the eye).

Rabbits should be treated with oral fenbendazole (20 mg/kg PO daily for 21 to 28 days). Additional treatment may involve phacoemulsification to remove the lens and granuloma (which can be difficult) or enucleation. Without treatment, some affected eyes become atrophied and may require enucleation. If the phacoclastic uveitis is mild, topical corticosteroids (e.g., prednisone ophthalmic drops) and long-term oral dosing with fenbendazole may be effective. ■

BEREAVEMENT (continued from page 5) partner, hand-feeding him veggies and treats, and petting him a lot can help him get through his grief. Monitoring his eating and drinking and general behavior is also very important. If he is tending to hide more often, don't let him retreat completely: he needs to have love and attention. Sometimes a towel or stuffed animal or something else with his mate's scent can help comfort him.

A rabbit who has been previously bonded will almost always be happier with a new friend because he is used to living like this. Some bereaved bunnies accept a new partner right away, while others need a few weeks or even months. Introductions should be carried out slowly and with thought to personalities, as with any bonding interactions.

Instead of getting a new mate for Arley, I decided to bond him with my foursome, three boys and a girl. He already "knew" them all from being in the same room, separated by gates. First, after my week on the couch with Arley, I moved his nighttime pen closer to the other rabbits. After a week of that, I started formally introducing them to him one by one, based on personalities. I started with my most mellow boy, Willow, whom I had tried to bond with Arley and Nika years before but whom Nika always chased. Surprisingly, without Nika there, Willow took on the dominant role. A week later, I brought in Rhett, who can be aggressive but also always does what I say. Two weeks after that, I started introducing Periwinkle, who is very loving but also charges and chases. Periwinkle now grooms Arley for minutes on end. I will soon work with Arley and the "Queen B," Thistle.

Losing a bunny is hard—and very sad. But the surviving bunny and you can comfort each other, and soon both of you will be ready for a new relationship. ■

Emergency

BY MARK ZEVALK

Wednesday

4:00 P.M. Dad is distracted by work. Daisey (male—another story) has disappeared to another part of the house.

After a short search, Daisey is found on the raised hearth of the fireplace where he has chewed and swallowed 18-20 match heads. Fears are confirmed by an internet search. Call the vet, a knowledgeable rabbit owner, who sends us immediately to the local emergency vet.

Though Daisey is not showing any signs of distress, Dad and Mom are frantic. Calm prevails at the clinic. Daisey is our fifth bun, and what we know of the digestive system makes us worry.

Rabbits can't vomit, so any kind of meds for that are useless. Activated charcoal would be the thing for poisons, but the potassium chlorate in the matches doesn't absorb into charcoal.

With rabbit stomachs being small, flushing or pumping them out is stressful and usually unsuccessful, as it was with Daisey. And the anesthesia required has hazards as well. Pushing tubes down the tiny throat risks damage and fluids into little lungs, and that means pneumonia.

That leaves surgery and anesthesia. Rabbits are very prone to shock. Post-surgery GI stasis is probable.

Doing nothing means death by poisoning. "Risk of anemia, dyspnea, death," we read during our internet search. The decision to ok the operation came as we were left alone in the exam room. Daisey was already under anesthesia for the attempt to rinse his stomach and we knew time was against us. I said "GO" with a knot in my

stomach and fear in my heart. Still I knew it was his only chance since they had told us surgery would give him a 50/50 chance.

5:00 P.M. The surgeon is doing her best for our baby boy. She is a rabbit owner and has offered blood transfusions if needed from her own pet! Daisey is a rescue, found by the side of a city street by a friend who came to us after a month of posters, internet searches, and walking the neighborhood where the white bunny with HUGE ears had been found.



"About six months old and six pounds in weight—Daisey is a complete pistol who tear-asses around the family room in lightning bursts of speed. Food disappears like tree branches into a wood chipper."

8:00 P.M. The doctor tells us all went well. A large quantity of food and match remnants was removed from the stomach. The cecum was undisturbed so if he survives the sedation, anesthesia, surgery, stress of being handled by strangers in a bright and noisy lab, he might make it. Reading the entire medical chart detailing the surgery and search for solutions is very sobering. It is clinical, scientific and for a layperson—scary.

9:00 P.M. The Poison Control Center for our area is kept abreast of developments. They

were called early on and a case number assigned. Any data on pets and poisons is passed to professionals just as quickly as for human patients. There is little available on rabbits in the poison database.

10:00 P.M. "Out of crisis but not out of the woods." Oxygen, fluids, blood tests, penicillin, steroids, and a team of wonderful professionals are working through the night. Joyce and I go home where sleep is impossible. Joyce is the best person I have ever known—loving, supportive and never accusatory.

Thursday

10:00 P.M. Visitation. He is in a large Tupperware box with an oxygen tube snaking inside. We lift the lid and say hello.

Rasping noises as he breathes. That's from the intubation, the attempt at stomach flush and then the surgical procedures. We brought some cilantro, lettuce and timothy pellets. The cilantro gets some attention but he is groggy. The surgeon visits and gives us the prognosis. If he starts eating, drinking, pooping and peeing, he will have a good outcome.

The nurses have been force-feeding Critical Care slurry through a large plastic syringe that they push into his mouth. Kicks like a kangaroo and bites like a chainsaw. The pros showed us the Bunny Burrito trick with a large towel and the technique for feeding as we will have to do some of that for the first few days, maybe longer. He has gone to the bathroom in the box, a good sign.

Friday

10:00 A.M. Time to go home. The nurses tell us he escaped from his hutch on the floor while they were cleaning it this morning. He commandeered the newspaper pile and boxed at them when they tried to shoo him away. That's my boy. When we get home he trots from the carrier straight into his litter box.

He gets his first dose of meds from us, not too hard. One is for digestion, orange flavored and squirted into his tiny mouth with a needleless syringe. The other med is penicillin which we give him with a needle through the skin over his shoulders every other day for two weeks. Joyce holds him and coos lovingly while I stick him. This is tough to contemplate but follow-through is even tougher. We distract and reward him with blueberries; the treat assuages my guilt a little too.

Saturday

8:00 A.M. These have been long nights of worry and wait. First the surgery, now will he eat and drink. A few very tiny poos and some pee, and not eating much. If we put cilantro and lettuce right under his nose, he eats a little.

Haven't seen him drink. He hops around, he cleans himself, we worry. Time to parent and make the Critical Care slurry and shove it in. We have to be tough. After a series of diminishing struggles, we get the stuff inside.

4:00 P.M. At last, real pellets of a near normal size and thankfully increasing in quantity.

10:00 P.M. Another dose of meds and another restless night for Mom and Dad.

Sunday

8:00 A.M. Like nothing has happened! Running, climbing. (Who knew rabbits like to climb to be in high places?)

All this could have been prevented if I had been more conscientious and aware. We raised two great kids in a "baby-proofed" house. Rabbits too face hidden dangers that their families need to protect them from. I let my guard down and didn't supervise playtime roaming or put hazardous matches out of reach—and Daisey paid the price. While we were very lucky, I hope our story helps readers be more mindful. Our rabbits' lives are in the balance. ■

Bunnies in Our Will

BY LINDA COOK AND OLIVER WILLIAMS

"What would become of them if something happened to us?"

AS MELODRAMATIC AS IT SOUNDS, that was the focus of our thinking a few years ago as we prepared for our first vacation together overseas. We were excited about seeing London, of course, but we were also apprehensive about leaving our beloved warren of six rescued rabbits.

Flight delays are a regular issue in the national news. What if we couldn't get home on time? What if we missed our connecting flight through O'Hare, one of the world's busiest airports? What if something more serious happened, which resulted in hospitalization...or worse?

Who would know what had happened to us?

This is how we were able to address our own situation. We are fortunate to have been able to make the right connections to ensure that, regardless of our welfare, our bunnies will receive the care that they need.

We worked backwards, starting with a possible worst-case scenario. If both of us were killed, one of our friends, Janet (a colleague of Linda's), would be among the first to know. We had a key to our house made for Janet, who says, "I don't know much about bunnies, but I certainly can make sure they have hay, pellets, and water." After that temporary fix, Janet agreed to contact several House Rabbit Society members, including Facebook friends who are familiar with us and our bunnies.

Then, we hired a tremendous bunny-sitter, Shannon, who is a vet tech at the clinic where our bunnies are regular patients. Not only did Shannon make sure the bunnies

had enough food and water, but she also visited with them and emailed us daily pictures so we were assured of their well-being. Janet and Shannon also have each other's contact information. Additionally, Janet has the number of the local Humane Society executive director who would be available to help Janet care for the bunnies for a few days.

Next we searched for an attorney who would ensure that Janet received some money for contacting "rabbit people" who could help find homes for our bunnies in case of disaster. We found an attorney who is very sympathetic to animal-related causes. He drew up a will that specifies that Janet will receive \$5,000 in case of our deaths, and that the money is to be used to contact people who could assist in providing or finding homes for each of our bunnies.

The will also specifies what percentage of our assets will be donated toward various organizations - many of them animal-welfare groups.

This process was not easy, swift or inexpensive. It required time, money, and a great deal of thought and soul-searching. Every moment and every penny we spent was well worth it. Not only does our will provide for our (very meager) estate, but it also provides for Roxie, Penelope, Bonita, Abernathy, Kensington, and Grayson.

We never could have made the 8 ½-hour flight without these provisions in place. While we marveled at Trafalgar Square and the National Gallery, we relaxed knowing the bunnies were provided for.

We highly recommend the "worst-case scenario" approach. Although few people like to address these serious possibilities, it's important to do so for the sake of our rabbits. And creating a will relieves family members and friends of the burden of - and possible argument over—what to do if the worst should happen. ■

St. Melangell: Patroness Saint of Hares and Rabbits

By JULIE SMITH, PhD

Move over St. Francis—hares and rabbits have their very own saint now and have had for centuries before you began preaching to the birds. Ad-

mitedly, she is a bit obscure, hails from a remote valley in Wales, and is perhaps of pagan origins.

Saint Melangell's Story

According to legend, Melangell was born in Ireland in the late 6th Century A.D. to an Irish king. When she came of age, he intended to marry her to a nobleman of his choice. However, Melangell fled to avoid the alliance. She crossed the Irish Sea and went deep into the Berwyn Mountains of mid-Northern Wales to the Tanant Valley. At the bottom of the steep, rugged green hills flowed the small Tanat River, and there

Melangell lived alone among the rocks and wildlife for fifteen years. Unbeknownst to her, the area was in the principality of Powys (now the county of Powys), whose prince was Brychwel Ysgithrog.

One day in A.D. 604, Brychwel was hunting with his dogs at Pennant, which means "at the head of the glen," in the Tanant Valley when the dogs startled a hare out of the bushes:

The dogs pursued the hare and [Prince Brychwel] too gave chase until he came to a certain thicket of brambles, which was large and full of thorns. In the thicket he found a girl of beautiful appearance who, given up to divine contemplation, was praying with the greatest devotion with the said hare lying boldly and fearlessly under the hem or fold of her garments, its face toward the dogs. (Davies, p.221)

In spite of his commands, the dogs refused to pursue the hare. Brychwel then asked the girl who she was; and she recounted her story, saying that she had fled her home so that she might serve God and the Virgin Mary as a virgin herself. Brychwel then told her that because God gave refuge to the little hare because of her merits, he, Brychwel, would give her the area of Pennant for the service of God, specifically to be an asylum, refuge, sanctuary for the oppressed.

The virgin Melangell . . . led her solitary life, as stated above, for thirty-seven years in this very same place. And the hares, which are little wild creatures, surrounded her every day of her life just as if they had been tame or domesticated animals. (Davies, p. 222)

The site of Saint Melangell's legend is today called Pennant Melangell. It has an ancient church and churchyard (fig. #1) dedicated to her, which over the centuries has undergone much destruction and renovation.

"The dogs pursued the hare and [Prince Brychwel] too gave chase until he came to a certain thicket of brambles, which was large and full of thorns. In the thicket he found a girl of beautiful appearance. . ."

Figure 2. *St. Melangell.*
Illustration by
Lucianna Burns-Dwyer.



Figure 1. *Melangell.* Photograph by Tim Gardner.

Interpretations: Celtic and Christian

Scholars of pre-Christian Wales have linked the story to the pagan nature-worship of the ancient Celts, who flourished in Ireland and Wales more than 600 years before Melangell, from about 600 B.C to 50 A.D. A character in a 2012 novel that is set in Pennant Melangell imagines a Celtic version of her story. He says,

[Melangell] wasn't a saint at all. And far from sheltering the hare when the prince was hunting it, she was the one who was being hunted. When the prince got close enough to seize her, she turned into a hare. He thinks the girl and the hare are one. The girl is a goddess, and the hare is sacred. It's the goddess in animal form.

There are quite a few old myths which go like that. I'd say there's something in it. That the hare was a sacred animal in pagan Celtic times. And then along came the real-life Christian Melangell, and the hare story got transferred to her. (Sampson, pp.129-130)

For Catholics and many other Christians, Melangell is *Saint* Mellangell (or Monacella, as her name appears in Latin). Devotees come as pilgrims to the stone church, parts of which date to about 1100, that is, to Norman Romanesque times. From the same age come some of the stones in the reconstructed shrine, which contains bones discovered in 1958 and thought to be hers.

The importance of a real hare to the Christian story depends on the commentator. Some emphasize that "[s]o strong a tradition of her influence prevail[s] that, until this day, no one in the parish will kill a hare..." ("Melangell," p.43). And the church itself has a series of stone carvings of a Christianized hare posed in front of a cross. Others maintain that the story is only about the

holiness of one of God's saints and should not be interpreted as opposed to hunting hares. In this view, the hare symbolizes those humans who are weary and oppressed and in need of sanctuary. They point out that in her story, Melangell shows little interest in the hare and does nothing herself to protect it.

Interpretations: Contemporary Artists

Although all images of St. Melangell are contemporary, still, seeing a canonized saint holding a hare or rabbit is a cheering sight. One can find the religious images by searching "St. Melangell Icon" on the internet; they are all half length and depict a Byzantine-looking young women of severe aspect cuddling a rabbit or hare. The rabbit in the icon by Colette Kalvesmaki is especially comical and charming.

St. Melangell is also depicted as a story-book damsel, referencing, no doubt, her pre-saint days in the natural world. The sign at the pub in Llangynog shows her as a rather winsome maiden holding off Brychwel and his hounds with a single up-raised hand while a large rabbit lunges at them from her feet. Others show her as a lovely young girl with long hair and flowing robes, harmonized into her natural setting and in tune with the hares she lives with. Some, as in figure #2 by a young Wisconsin artist, even suggest that Melangell is saying a little prayer for the hares. ■

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Silver Anniversary

THIS YEAR WE CELEBRATE our 25th anniversary as an organization. By the end of the year, we plan to publish a commemorative book and video; we'll hold an event at Headquarters; and some of our chapters will be celebrating in their own ways as well. Keep an eye on our website for more news!

HRS chapters have their own anniversaries (from the day they incorporated as a 501 (c)(3) organizations), but they all celebrate the creation of the original parent chapter, which licenses all the others. The parent chapter, referred to as "national," is governed by a national board of directors, which consists of members from both coasts as well as the southeast, southwest, and Midwest—providing a broad range of input. This licensing structure keeps the network of chapters and at-large volunteers unified under a common purpose.

Since HRS's history is detailed at length in *HRJ* (2008),¹ and brief history is included in the preface to the new (2013) edition of the *House Rabbit Handbook*, we won't reiterate a step-by-step chronology of events at this time. Instead, we are focusing on highlights—our greatest accomplishments—or in terms of the impact on our bunnies' lives, the miracles of the past quarter century. In

many cases, we have turned things around in our communities, influencing people's awareness and compassion.

Whether operating in private foster homes or in dedicated rabbit buildings that function as full-service shelters, our network of volunteers provide wonderful programs. Rescued bunnies are welcomed into foster care, where they receive health exams and physical care. Foster bunnies enjoy roomy habitats, playtime, human interaction and socialization. And most im-



portantly, they find loving, forever homes, with many making return visits to meet potential partners. Stories of these wonderful accomplishments are being collected from HRS chapters to be included in the commemorative book and video.

HRJ celebrates

While on the subject of accomplishments, we boast of the long publishing history of the *House Rabbit Journal*, though production may be irregular (we are all volunteers). During the early years of House

Rabbit Society's existence, the only way we had to reach people was with *HRJ*. We mailed our first *Journal* to *House Rabbit Handbook* customers and to veterinarians who put them in their lobbies. We had no Internet and no email, so all publishing was done with a printing press and postal mail. At first we were producing and mailing *Journals* monthly. This number had to decrease, as our rescue efforts increased.

Did you know that most of the articles since our beginning are available online on our new website? The main url is the same (www.rabbit.org), but now you can find the articles indexed.² A few have been removed for obsolescence (after all, we've evolved over twenty-five years. But you'd be surprised at how many truths discovered years ago are still relevant today. Don't be confused by relatively recent dates. Those are the dates they were reviewed for accuracy and updated as needed. If you scroll all the way to the bottom, you will see the original author and year of publication. You can read from the archives in order of year and volume, but the articles can also be fun to read when they pop up with other material after a keyword search. Try it and enjoy. ■

1. <http://rabbit.org/a-look-back-at-hrss-history/>
<http://rabbit.org/2008-house-rabbit-societys-20th-anniversary/>

2. <http://rabbit.org/house-rabbit-journal-archive/>