



Rabbit Tracks



Newsletter of the New Mexico House Rabbit Society

Issue Number Three

Volunteer Opportunities

Petco

Help socialize bunnies with petting and love!

Contact Bill Velasquez

Bill@rabbit.org

CABQ City Shelter

Help with intake

Contact Cathy Sweeney

guineapigmom@earthlink.net

Watermelon Mtn. Ranch

Help with daily care

Contact Dennell Sandoval

Dennells2002@yahoo.com

Help behind the scenes, with outreach events, or fostering

Contact Bill Velasquez

Bill@rabbit.org

Growing A Dot ORG

As we approach our second year as a chapter of the House Rabbit Society, I am humbled by the dedication and hard work of all our volunteers. I think back to our early days of volunteering for the bunnies, there were four of us dedicated to a small outreach program through Petco on Lomas. Now we have over fifty volunteers working all over the State and many of them are active on a weekly basis.

This year we have made several changes. We chose to move out of the Petco Lomas store and instead facilitated the placement of homeless bunnies directly from the city shelter into the store. Half way through the year, it became clear that the workload for the board was too much and we added committee chair positions to help us better serve the community. Towards the end of the year we expanded our outreach through visits to the Las Cruces shelter, and it is my hope that we can cultivate an enthusiastic group of volunteers to assist the bunnies there.

We have made great strides this year by having a continuous presence at the Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Rio Rancho Shelters. Still, there are so many bunnies around the state that we are not able to help. It can be hard to remain focused on the positive work we do when so many are left behind. We may never save every bunny, but what a difference we make in the lives of the ones we do! All of our great volunteers working together make this organization what it is today. We are proud of all the work that our volunteers do at outreach and adoption events throughout the state. I am grateful beyond words for those who are working the front lines of our rescue operation. The people fostering bunnies, cleaning shelters, transporting bunnies, providing medical care, and staffing events are the real heroes of our organization. Every volunteer is like family and every volunteer is a necessary part of what we do.

For 2012, we plan to expand our outreach operations by providing more educational opportunities for volunteers wishing to expand their knowledge of bunnies. We will continue to have a greater impact in the quality of life the bunnies have at the shelters by providing care, cleaning, and better housing. We will, of course, continue to facilitate bunny adoptions and we hope to provide even more bonding sessions so that more bunnies can find a friend or life mate. Our most important resource, our volunteers, also needs to be constantly replenished with new people. We are also grateful for our financial supporters who help keep our organization afloat. Thanks for another great year!

The Board of Directors has conferred upon Deb Schaefer the status of licensed House Rabbit Society Educator. Education and outreach is one of our primary missions and Deb's extensive knowledge base and vast experience make her a huge asset to our organization. This designation is an honor which she has earned through hard work with a huge heart!

We are extremely grateful for the hard work of all of our volunteers. For 2011, we have awarded Ned Nevera as our Volunteer of the Year and Victoria Mancha as our New Volunteer of the Year. Without their work, we would have never been able to accomplish all of the projects and outreach we took on this year. Their "can do" attitude and willingness to do whatever necessary, whenever necessary, was instrumental to our mission this year!

Bill Velasquez
NMHRS President



The Second Annual NMHRS Easter Bake Sale will be happening soon! Stay informed of all NMHRS event dates and times by joining NMHRS@googlegroups.com !

Adoptable Buns



Lennon

So here is a cute little dude but he is a baby so he is still learning his litter box habits. He likes people a lot! Come visit with little Lennon at Petco on the west side. He is a beautiful bunny now, time will tell but we think he will have long hair as he grows into a young adult. Wow! Quite the looker already!!!

Snowshoe

Snowshoe is a small male (neutered) bunny found as a stray in Rio Rancho in early Dec. He is very friendly, and a good 'lap' bunny, he loves to be held and petted. Snowshoe is very calm, alert and inquisitive. Come see this bright little guy at Petco on the west side!



Elsie and Elmer

Elmer and Elsie arrived at the ABQ shelter together. However, due to the busy chaotic environment at the shelter, they lost each other once they got there. They ended up in separate cages and were all set to be adopted out as singles, when one of our vigilant members noticed that their intake photos showed them as a pair. As you can see from their picture, these two love each other like only bonded bunnies can. They must be adopted together. Bonded bunnies must never be separated.



Penny

Penny is a very happy bunny, with her marathon binkies and her fantastic people skills! She is definitely a people bunny and loves to be around her humans one of her favorite things is to sit next to you and be petted. Just watching her happy-hops will be enough to make you smile and laugh

Gracie and The Bear

Gracie and The Bear are a playful loving couple who enjoy lounging around the house and snuggling with each other. They are calm and relaxed lop and half lop bunnies who recently lost their home. They would love to find a place where they can feel safe and know that they will be loved forever. This is a male female bonded pair and they must be adopted together. They are currently in foster care.



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



Vet's Corner

By Dr Holly Edwards, DVM

Malocclusions – to Trim or Not to Trim

Rabbits are special animals for many reasons but one aspect that makes them so unique is their teeth, which have been especially adapted to their unique dietary needs. Understanding how their teeth are different is important in maintaining a happy, healthy rabbit. All of their teeth are open rooted which means they grow continuously throughout their lives. Rabbits have two distinct types of teeth, the incisors (the front teeth we see) and the cheek teeth (chewing teeth we do not see). Each type of tooth has its own function. The incisors play a minor role in eating and chewing and are mainly designed to cut growing plant material and reduce the size of larger food. The cheek teeth are what are important for the grinding and chewing required for the normal fibrous/grass diet of rabbits. Their different functions can be important when making decisions about how proactive to be in saving teeth by trimming versus extracting them.

Pet rabbits often present with abnormal growth of the incisors because they are easy to identify. However, abnormal growth of incisors is often a result of cheek teeth malocclusion (misalignment of teeth). As a result, addressing only the incisor abnormalities without doing a full dental exam and assessment may not take care of the whole problem. Problems result from abnormal wear either because of anatomical abnormalities or trauma or because of insufficient wear due to lack of fiber in the diet. Determining the best course of action to treat abnormal teeth depends on a lot of factors, including which teeth are affected, the underlying reason, and how chronic the issue is. The earlier a problem is detected the more likely change of diet and trimming the teeth with abnormal wear may result in resolution of issues. More chronic abnormalities can involve complications with infection, gingival growth and bone abnormalities that can make resolution difficult or impossible with trimming alone.

When a rabbit presents with teeth abnormalities, a thorough exam under sedation with dental x-rays is paramount in determining what teeth are affected and if the cheek teeth are playing a role. Simple incisor abnormalities may be controlled with trimming alone and some rabbits may even be amenable to the trimming procedure without sedation. However, at some point if trimming needs to be done frequently and under anesthesia, extraction of the incisors causing a problem may be necessary. This can be accomplished with little effect on the rabbit's normal feeding. Problems with cheek teeth will normally require much more involved and continuous treatment as anesthesia is required and the goal with cheek teeth is to save them if possible to allow normal crushing and ingestion of food. At some point extractions may be necessary if teeth are loose, there is severe root infection, or marked deformities that will not respond to trimming. In some cases complete resolution may not be possible and management for life is required.

Though each rabbit will be different, the most important factor for any rabbit owner to remember is that providing the right diet high in long fibers/grasses from the get go is the best thing an owner can do to help prevent dental issues.

Announcements

We are reluctant to announce that Criss Starr has stepped down from the board of directors. Her enthusiasm, knowledge, and devotion will be missed. She will continue volunteering in other capacities. Her guidance and selflessness have played a major role in the formation of our organization and we hope that she will return to board service in the future.

The board of directors is pleased to announce the induction of three new board members: Dennell Sandoval-Newhall has extensive experience working in all aspects of nonprofit organizations. She will be taking over the role of Treasurer for us from Margo DeMello. Cathy Sweeney and Ned Nevera are also joining the board as Directors and both bring a huge heart and tireless dedication to their new roles. We are fortunate to have all three joining us as we begin our third year as a chapter of the House Rabbit Society



Volunteer Profiles

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



Ned Nevera

Interview by Kat Cox

How did you get into bunnies? I went out of town and left my wife and daughter by themselves for a couple of days. My daughter, 9 years old at the time, wanted a pet. As my wife is allergic to dogs and my daughter is allergic to cats they decided to get a rabbit. So they bought a black and white Dutch and named him Oreo...then I returned home. I wasn't thrilled at first, but Oreo was a prince and he grew on me. In the months that followed Oreo added so much to our family that we decided to get a second rabbit. Then word went out that we were "rabbit people" and when some friends of ours had an accidental litter they immediately contacted us with a request to take one of the kits. We agreed and in the space of six months we were "into bunnies" in a big way.

What was your gateway into the life of a House Rabbit Society volunteer? When we got Oreo, our first rabbit, we knew next to nothing about bunnies. We had read some books, the type you buy in a PETCO, but they didn't address some of the issues we had. So I Googled "rabbits" and the HRS website was the first result listed. I kept going back to the site for information and decided to join the national organization as a way of showing my gratitude for all the assistance the HRS had provided me through the website. At the time there was no New Mexico chapter so I simply maintained my membership in the national organization and followed the efforts of other chapters through the newsletter. Then, after I returned from a long deployment, one of the articles in the HRS newsletter featured the newly established NMHRS chapter rescue effort in Rio Rancho. When it came time to renew my HRS membership I contacted Bill Velasquez and offered to volunteer and help out wherever I could.

What do you do for NMHRS? I try and help out wherever I can. However, I dedicate most of my volunteer time to the Albuquerque shelter. I'm there most Sunday mornings, with Criss Starr and Jenn Abernathy, cleaning up, feeding the city's rabbits, and just trying to advocate for the buns. I also try and support the city's adoption events for cats and dogs. I've volunteered to help out at mobile adoption events and let the dog and cat people know that the city has other animals besides cats & dogs looking for good homes.

What are the names, ages, and breeds of your bunnies? We have three rabbits: Cookie, our "Hey, you're rabbit people, wanna 'nother one?" rabbit, Mocha, our resident chow hound, and Eduardo, our big daddy rabbit who I adopted from the shelter after he was: surrendered - adopted - returned. Cookie is seven and with the exception of her very small ears looks like an English Spotted Dwarf. Mocha, a mini-Rex, is six. Eduardo, we guess, is nine and spry. We don't know his breed but he tolerates us and is good to his sisters, which is all that counts.

Other than bunny volunteerism, what do you do? I am retired from the military and work at a civil service job on Kirtland. I'm the proud father of a 16 year old daughter and spend a great deal of time being a "Band Dad." We didn't realize that when our daughter joined the school band, **the entire family joined the band**. We spend a a lot of time attending band performances...known to some as football games...and attending band competitions. I also run the occasional road race with an eye on completing a marathon in all 50 states. I've got a way to go on that goal, however.

What is your favorite toy to give a bunny? A plain old toilet paper roll stuffed with hay. My rabbits, well Mocha and Eduardo anyway, love to wrestle with those things before the chew them apart. It's almost as if they're trying to figure out how to crawl inside the tubes.

What is your favorite funny bunny story? I love to tell people about our second rabbit, Whipped Cream. While we loved our first rabbit, Oreo, his younger brother Whipped Cream was like the crazy aunt you talk about at family gatherings long after she has passed. Whipped Cream, a white lop, was the Brad Pitt of rabbits, he was that good looking. He was also the meanest, least lovable, surliest, son of a ...gun that ever hopped. He fought with Oreo, terrorized his sisters, and the one and only time he was with Eduardo he attacked him. He would NOT be held, he made sure the only view you ever had was of his backside, and he would not let you look at him while he ate. You were to leave the food, be thanked with a thump, and GET OUT! Once, when my daughter and I were trying to corral him back into his cage, he managed to give us the slip and find a place to hole up. We split up trying to find him and the next thing I know my daughter shouts from a distant room "HE'S COMING YOUR WAY!" I turned to see a blur of white fluff, ears, and attitude rounding the corner, bearing down on me, oblivious to the natural order of size and strength, and acting for all the world like he's got a shot at taking me on. On another occasion, when he was near the end of his life and had lost most of his mobility, I decided to let him out to visit with his sisters on the chance that he may have mellowed in his advancing age. No such luck. His sister Cookie enjoyed a few minutes of free time, running back and forth and sniffing everything in sight before she spotted him and FROZE in terror. Now they had not been together in years but it was obvious that Cookie remembered her evil step brother none to fondly. Whipped Creme's response to seeing is long lost sister? A snort and a feeble charge before I intercepted the old grouch. He passed away not long after, but I'm sure that he did that only because he was sick and tired of putting up with us and wanted to move on.

What is your favorite pop culture rabbit reference? Bugs Bunny's tour de force performance in "Rabbit of Seville." It was funny when I was four years old, it's funny today.

The Secret to a Healthy,

Happy Bunny

By Iris Klimczuk

Who hasn't given their darling bunny a treat - and then, another? It can be very hard to resist bunny's begging for treats! But as with people, not eating properly can do a lot of harm to a bun's digestive system which is easily upset. Sadly, many bunnies become so overweight they are unable to reach their life-sustaining cecotropes due to well-meaning human companions who feed them too many goodies and an inappropriate diet. The secret to having a healthy, happy bunny is about to be unveiled...

You might be surprised to learn what is most important for bunny's healthy digestion - free access to plentiful, fresh grass hays: timothy, orchard grass, meadow grass, brome grass or other grass hay. (Alfalfa hay, being a legume, is not recommended for bunnies over 6 months due to its high calcium content.) Aim to have bunny eat twice as much hay as his body size daily. Grass hay should smell fresh and be completely dry - not damp, wet, moldy or excessively dusty. Some smart bunnies will even refuse to eat old, stale hay! Other buns have strong preferences for certain types of hay and will demand their favorite kind.

It is best to experiment with small bags of different varieties of hay until you learn what bunny likes best. Large timothy hay bales can be purchased economically at local feed stores, but need to be stored in a dry place, like a garage. Smaller hay bags can be bought from pet stores. Try to purchase hay from a place that has a high turnover and restocks its hay frequently to ensure best quality. Some bunnies prefer long stalks of hay to hay chopped into smaller pieces, although any kind of hay is clearly preferable to none.

What happens if bunny doesn't eat hay? Without copious amounts of fresh hay daily, a rabbit's teeth may not wear down enough to keep teeth from overgrowing, resulting in painful molar spurs scraping against the tongue or inside of the cheek, and/or maloccluded incisor teeth that interfere with proper chewing and eating. Dwarf rabbits are especially prone to overgrown teeth due to their smaller head size - as are some genetically predisposed rabbits - but often, malocclusion is due simply to the fact many bunnies don't eat enough hay daily to wear down their continuously growing teeth.

More seriously, insufficient hay intake can also directly contribute to Gastrointestinal Stasis. GI stasis occurs when the rabbit's digestive tract is out of balance and stops functioning properly. It can come on quickly and can kill a rabbit within twelve hours if immediate veterinary care is not provided to stabilize the bun. Signs of GI stasis can be: extreme lethargy/lack of normal movement; no droppings, cecotropes or urine passage for more than 12 hours; refusal to eat or drink; or other out-of-character behavior. GI stasis should always be treated as an emergency requiring immediate rabbit-savvy vet care.

Secondly, most veterinarians and the House Rabbit Society recommend high quality timothy hay pellets for rabbits aged eight months or more. A good timothy hay rabbit pellet is high in fiber (18%+), low in protein (less than 12%) and has a small amount of salt and fat (less than 3%) without extra add-ins like seeds and corn. The recommended pellet amount is based on bunny's weight and is usually described on the label, but should be around 1/8 -1/4 cup per 4-5 pounds of body weight daily. While it's tempting to feed bunny just pellets, large amounts of hay are even more important to maintain bunny's healthy gut and wear down his teeth.

Exceptions to this pellet feeding guideline are young rabbits under 6-8 months of age and pregnant females, who require unlimited free-access to pellets, due to their increased caloric requirements. A small minority of rabbits have completely pellet-free diets, in an attempt to return them to their diet before domestication, but such bunnies must have free access to huge amounts of veggies and unlimited, high quality hay to maintain sufficient caloric intake.

Vets also recommend rabbits be given a cup or more of fresh, dark green, leafy veggies to round out their daily diet, such as: romaine lettuce, parsley, kale, cilantro, collards, carrot tops, parsley, dandelion greens, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, broccoli leaves, brussels sprouts, peppermint leaves, escarole, endive, wheat grass, alfalfa sprouts, etc. A very gradual introduction to veggies is recommended to avoid upsetting bunny's gut which could result in loose stools, diarrhea or worse.

Last, but not least, providing large quantities of fresh, clean water is also very important to the optimal functioning of bunny's gut. Whether served in a bottle or open-faced crock, replenishing fresh water daily, as well as regular cleaning of bunny's water receptacle, is crucial. Some vets believe bunnies have to work too hard to extract sufficient amounts from water bottles and for this reason recommend the use of large water crocks instead which allow easy access to plentiful water. A rabbit drinks a lot of water for an animal of its size, so access to a large fresh water crock and/or bottle is always necessary.

It's easy to overlook the importance of regular, daily exercise to maintaining bunny's health. Every rabbit should spend several hours a day outside of its cage/pen to exercise its muscles and stimulate its mind. Try "playing dead" by lying down on the ground with bunny, letting bunny climb up on you or explore a new room, letting bun hop on/shred a cardboard box or phonebook, or rotate fun toys to play with like cat jingles or pinecones to chew. Daily, playful interaction with your bunny will make for a contented, healthier bun. A bunny locked inside his cage for days on end is a sad, neglected rabbit who may develop cage protectiveness, lunging at or biting anyone reaching inside.

During particularly heavy periods of shedding, some vets recommend feeding fresh papaya or giving papaya enzyme supplements to bunnies. It is believed that papaya has healing digestive properties which may help pass excessive fur through the rabbit gut and out of the body in the droppings

And yes, the occasional fresh or dried fruit treat is fine - just keep it to less than a tablespoon per day - bunny has a sweet tooth which you don't want to encourage at the expense of eating healthier foods like hay, veggies, and timothy pellets. Or, choose to spoil your bun with a special green like mint, basil, watercress, or other fresh herb instead. Remember any fruit treats will be more calorie dense than bunny's other foods, so go easy and serve very sparingly.

So, now you know the secret to a happy, healthy bunny! A proper diet keeps digestive problems away: unlimited fresh timothy hay, quality pellets, lots of clean, fresh water and fresh veggies, plus frequent daily exercise, regular feeding hours, and quality playtime - these things will ensure your bunny's digestive system and mind stay in excellent condition and will give bunny the best chance for a long, happy life with you.

Safely Treating Your Rabbit With Antibiotics

By Criss Starr

Antibiotics are medications used to help treat bacterial infections. Their use in veterinary practice has saved countless lives. However, the use of antibiotics to treat rabbits is more complicated than it is for dogs and cats. Rabbits have a unique digestive organ called the caecum and a delicate balance of gastrointestinal flora. Certain antibiotic medications can upset this balance leading to severe diarrhea and death. Therefore, these medications should only be administered under the supervision of a qualified rabbit savvy veterinarian.

These days there are a staggering number of different antibiotic medications available to veterinarians. Further complicating the matter is the fact that medications can have more than one name. For example, Baytril is a brand name for the antibiotic Enrofloxacin.

In a perfect world, your vet will do a culture and sensitivity test to determine the exact bacteria causing your rabbit's infection and the antibiotic most likely to kill the bacteria. Unfortunately, these tests can be expensive and inconclusive. Sometimes the infected area of a bunny is impossible to reach, and your vet will have to use trial and error to select an antibiotic. Don't give up. If one medication is not effective, ask to try another.

Dosage is extremely important in treating your rabbit with antibiotics. If you are unsure about the dosage, check with your vet.

Make sure your rabbit takes the entire dosage for the entire length of treatment. Be sure to finish the full course of treatment in order to prevent the formation of resistant strains of bacteria.

Watch closely for adverse reactions such as loss of appetite or profuse, watery, diarrhea. This is an emergency situation. Contact your veterinarian immediately.

The means of administering antibiotics can play a role in its safety. Some antibiotics that are generally safe in one form can be deadly in another. For example, oral Penicillin should never be given to rabbits, but injectable Penicillin can be used safely. Care should be taken with topical preparations such as ointments because rabbits can lick and ingest the medicine. Sometimes a veterinarian will use antibiotic impregnated beads to pack an abscess after it has been debrided (surgically cleaned out).

When properly prescribed and administered, antibiotics can help save the life of a rabbit with an infection. Be sure to stay informed about the medications your rabbit receives because some, such as Amoxicillin and Clindamycin, can be deadly.

Always do your own research on the medications your vet prescribes, as mistakes can and do happen. The wrong antibiotic can be deadly. Reprinted below is a chart from the House Rabbit Society's website outlining antibiotics and their use in rabbits.



Table 1. Antibiotics Used in Pet Rabbits

Antibiotic	Injectable Use?	Oral Use?	Other Use?	Risk of Antibiotic-Associated Diarrhea
Amikacin	Yes, with caution: nephrotoxic	No oral form available	Yes, impregnated in antibiotic beads Yes, in nebulization protocols	Low
Amoxicillin	No	No	No	High when given orally
Ampicillin	No	No	No	High when given orally
Azithromycin	No injectable form available	Yes	No	Low
Cephalosporins (Ceftazidime, Cefazolin, Ceftiofur, Ceftriaxone, Cephalexin, Cephaloridine, Cephalothin)	Yes	No	No	High when given orally
CEFTIOFUR	No	No	Yes, impregnated in antibiotic beads	Low, when impregnated in antibiotic beads (bone abscess)
Chloramphenicol	Yes	Yes	Yes, ophthalmic ointment	Low
Ciprofloxacin	Yes	Yes	Yes ophthalmic drops	Low
Clindamycin	No	No	No	High when given orally
Difloxacin	No	Yes	No	Low
Doxycycline	Yes	Yes	No	Low
Enrofloxacin	Yes	Yes	Yes; otic drops	Low
Fusidic Acid	No	No	Yes, ophthalmic ointment	Low when used as eye ointment
Gentamicin	With extreme caution: nephrotoxic	With extreme caution: nephrotoxic	Yes, ophthalmic drops, impregnated in antibiotic beads Yes, in nebulization protocols	Low
Lincomycin	No	No	No	High
Marbofloxacin	No	Yes	No	Low
Metronidazole	No	Yes	Yes	Low
Oxytetracycline	Yes	No	No	Low Oral use not recommended, calcium in GI tract inactivates drug
Penicillin (procaine)	Yes	No	No	High, when given orally or applied topically
Penicillin (procaine and benzthiazine)	Yes	No	No	High, when given orally or applied topically
Streptomycin	No, nephrotoxic	No	No	High
Sulfadimethoxine	No	Yes	No	Low
Tetracycline	Yes	No	No	Low Oral use not recommended, calcium in GI tract inactivates drug
Tilmicosin	No	No	No	Risk of fatal adverse reaction: sudden cardiac arrest within ~30 minutes of administration
Trimethoprim/sulphadiazine	Yes	Yes	No	Low
Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole	Yes	Yes	No	Low
Tobramycin	No, nephrotoxic	No	Yes, impregnated in antibiotic beads Yes, ophthalmic and otic drops	Low
Tylosin	Yes	No	No	Unknown

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Here is how you can help:

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

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

Join NMHRS and be a member!

Make a donation to support our work!

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

I would like to join New Mexico HRS.

I would like to make an additional donation.

I would like to volunteer.

Membership fees:

\$30 for combined national House Rabbit Society and NMHRS membership

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

Name: _____

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

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