



A 501(C)3 non-profit
organization

Rabbit Tracks

Newsletter of the New Mexico House Rabbit Society Issue Number Five

Volunteer Opportunities

CABQ City Shelter

Help with intake
Contact Ned Nevera
nednever@aol.com

NMHR

Help behind the scenes with outreach
events or fostering
Contact Bill Velasquez
bill@rabbit.org



4th "ANNUAL" NMHR Quilt Raffle

To Purchase Tickets – email
bill@rabbit.org

Raffle will be held on 21 July 2013
Tickets are \$5/EA or \$10/three

PROCEEDS HELP WITH MEDICAL COSTS
AND FOSTERING OF RESCUED BUNNIES

Unique, Exciting Silent Art Auction

All proceeds to benefit
New Mexico House Rabbit Society
June 8 - June 15
Generously sponsored by
Giacobbe-Fritz
702 Canyon Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico
All art on view in the gallery
and online at
newmexicohrs.org

Bid by phone, email and in person:
art@giacobbefritz.com
505.986.1156
bill@rabbit.org
505.225.5744
Reception in the gallery
June 15 from 4 to 5pm

A Hop in the Right Direction

In 2012 there were 582 small animals turned in to the City of Albuquerque shelter. Of these, 287 were rabbits. This statistic mirrors national shelters because rabbits are the third most surrendered pet according to the American Humane Association. From this, we surmise that they are also likely the third most popular pet.

For more than two years Animal Protection New Mexico and People for Animal Welfare New Mexico along with other animal advocate groups have been meeting with other stakeholders in an effort to rewrite and revise the current Bernalillo County Animal Care Ordinance. Other stakeholders included breeders, veterinarians, animal control officers, and other groups. The meetings were public and drew comment from all sides of the issue. They were interesting to observe.

Last summer NMHR was fortunate to be invited to voice our opinions regarding rabbit welfare. A few of us spent many hours on phone calls, in meetings, writing to commissioners and sub-committee members, and sending out emails and letters. All of this work came to fruition in December when the County Commission approved the new Ordinance with a few points left for further discussion. One of these points was the treatment of rabbits in the ordinance.

In question was the agricultural use of rabbits and how a sales ban would prevent those using rabbits as agricultural products. We recognize, but do not agree with, the fact that some people in our community do use rabbits as agricultural products. My point has always been that our society has elevated rabbits to "pet status" based on the numbers we see at the shelters. This being the case, I advocate no longer treating them as agricultural products but instead as pets and giving them the same right we afford dogs and cats. I understand that this is a lofty statement and I also submit that those using rabbits for agricultural purposes do not get their rabbits from feed stores or pet shops. At the final meeting two commissioners, Maggie Hart-Stebbins and Debbie O'Malley, supported a complete ban. The other three commissioners did not.

The resulting ordinance will read: (paraphrased) Rabbits are both companion and livestock animals. Sale of rabbits as companion animals is prohibited (this basically means that pet stores cannot sell rabbits in the county). Sale of all rabbits is banned during the months of March and April (this eliminates impulse sales for Easter). This compromise passed unanimously. The ordinance will be in effect for Easter time next year. Unfortunately, this ordinance does not apply to stores in the city limits. We have however, set a good precedent for when we do have the opportunity to address this at the city level – and that day will come!

Changing people's attitudes about animal welfare can be a laborious task. However, that is what our group faces. We will continue to educate and advocate for the rights of our beloved companion animal – the rabbit!

Bill Velasquez,

President



Vet's Corner

By Dr Holly Edwards, DVM

Rabbit owners have probably heard of snuffles or pasteurellosis. One of the most common problems for rabbits to have, it is caused by the bacteria *Pasteurella multocida*. Most people associate it with the upper respiratory signs it causes, but it can be the culprit of a multitude of symptoms from nasal discharge, the most common symptom, to death. It is normally transmitted by aerosolized particles from affected rabbits, direct contact, or by fomites (objects that can carry the bacteria). It can also be transmitted sexually or to baby rabbits at birth if there is a genital infection.

Primarily the bacteria gains entry through the nose or wounds. Rabbits can resist the infection. But sometimes, the bacteria colonizes in the nose and causes the nasal discharge and upper respiratory signs most often associated with the disease. Infection can then spread to a multitude of other areas: from the trachea to the lungs, from the nose via the nasolacrimal ducts to the eyes, from the nasal cavity to the inner ear, from the bloodstream to the heart or any other organ.

The most common clinical signs a rabbit will show are the "snuffle" signs – clear nasal discharge that can progress to white or yellow mucoid discharge. Often because rabbits groom their face with their paws they will develop mats or the paws will be yellowish-gray after the discharge dries. They can also have bouts of sneezing and can make snuffly or congested nasal sounds. When infection spreads to the eyes signs can also include weepy, irritated eyes and sometimes even bulging of the eye and elevation of the third eyelid when abscesses develop behind the eye. If the infection spreads to the ear signs can include scratching at the ears and dried wax or pus in the ear canal or coming from it. If the inner ear is affected nystagmus (rapid uncontrolled/dancing eyes), head tilt, and ataxia (incoordination/abnormal walking) can also be seen.

More severe signs can be seen if the infection spreads via the blood where microscopic abscesses can develop in any organ. If this is the case signs may be acute generalized disease, fever and sudden death. Chronic infection may go unnoticed and when spread to the chest can result in pneumonia and/or pericarditis (inflammation of the sac around the heart). Signs can be non-specific like decreased appetite, depression, weight loss, and tiring rapidly. *Pasteurella* can also be the cause of abscesses in any organ or in the subcutaneous tissue. If the abscesses are subcutaneous then owners may note itching and redness where the abscess is. These abscesses are well encapsulated, contain thick white exudate that does not drain and tend to grow slowly.

Diagnosis is by culture of the organism from the infected area. There is a blood test to check for antibodies against the bacteria, but many animals are believed to be chronic asymptomatic carriers of the bacteria and the test is usually considered unhelpful. Treatment can vary depending on the specific area of involvement. Antibiotic treatment is required, and treatment with Enrofloxacin either orally or by skin injection appears to be the most effective. Some situations might require more intensive treatment, as with abscesses where removal given the encapsulated nature and low blood supply make medical treatment likely unrewarding. If complete removal is impossible the use of antibiotic impregnated beads may be required. Complete resolution of the disease may be difficult and treatment may be chronic especially with the upper respiratory signs.

The Joys of Fostering

Palin Wiltshire

I just recently became acquainted with my third foster rescue rabbit. After hearing her background story, I named her Mirame.

A relative of an NMHRS volunteer found Mirame & her companion dumped in her back yard. Before they could be trapped and rescued, Mirame's companion was killed in the street by a passing car.

She was spayed and she lost her 7 babies as it was discovered during the procedure that she had been pregnant. She has missing fur from her time on the streets, most likely from encounters with predators.

I really didn't know what to expect her to be like after all her trials and troubles. This sweet, little rabbit weighs in at 4 lbs. and has the softest fur. She is shiny black with white and gray slippers on all four paws. The night she came into our home, she couldn't have been sweeter. She jumped into my lap and licked me. She jumped for joy and ran around our kitchen. I was enchanted. We discovered that Mirame can jump quite well as she made her way from a chair, up onto the kitchen table. We now let her out only under complete supervision, so she can't hurt herself.

We put a white plush rabbit in her run. I've observed her licking and humping this replica of her own kind. We've decided she'll most likely do best with a companion.

Mirame is Spanish for "Look at me". So many like her are so easily overlooked and even discarded. Mirame is one of the lucky ones. We are thrilled to be her foster parents. We are happy to care for her and socialize her, so she can go on to thrive and find her "forever home".

Adoptable Buns



Smokie and **Archie** were born in the city shelter. Soon their Mom and 6 siblings were taken into foster care where they grew up fast. Now they are ready to find their own home together. They are a fun loving pair who love adventure! They are altered and litter-box trained.



Mirame was dumped along with her mate, whom she lost before being rescued. Despite this she is an absolute delight. Weighing in at 4lbs, she appears to be around 9 months old. She has the softest black fur with two white socks on her front paws. She is inquisitive and a big jumper and an expert at unusually dramatic binkys. She is also affectionate and is known to jump in your lap and start licking any available hands. Her litter box skills are excellent. Mirame displays behavior that leads her foster parent to believe she would do best with another rabbit.

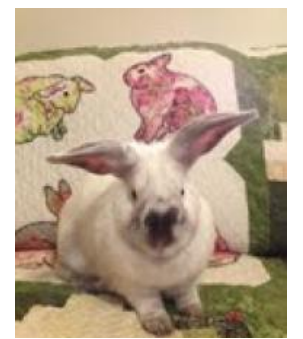


My name is **Luna** and I am a little over a year old. I was one of many bunnies dumped at the shelter by an irresponsible homeowner. I was very unhappy at the shelter, but after 6 months my world changed when I went to live in a foster home. Now I'm learning how great it is to be a house bunny! I love when my people come to feed me and spend time with me. I also love play time where I run around doing binkys! I have excellent litter habits and though I don't like to be picked up, I do love to be petted. Because of my rough start you'll need to be patient with me until I fully develop trust for humans



Hello, my name is **Sierra** and I have had a rough start to my life. I was left in the cold outside in a tiny hutch with no one to love me, but now I am ready to find my forever home.

Cloud is a beautiful bunny who was just rescued from the city shelter. She was very unhappy there and started to display some cage aggressive behavior. But the shelter director wanted to give her a chance and NMHRS had a space open up to take Cloud. Being out of the shelter, she has not displayed any aggressive behavior and seems quite sweet but may be a little timid. She has beautiful blue silvery eyes and would really like to have a loving home of her own.



Many other rabbits are looking for their Forever Home. More adoptable buns can be seen at www.newmexicohrs.org. 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.

Volunteer Profile

Iris Klimczuk

By Kyle Clement

To say Iris Klimczuk loves rabbits might be a bit of understatement. This busy NMHRS volunteer dedicates a huge amount of time and effort to help bunnies in any way she can. Iris acts as NMHRS shelter coordinator in Santa Fe, an organizer for adoption events, a fosterer for NMHRS bunnies, and even finds the time to be a wife and mother of three teenage daughters, yikes! We put on the coffee and got a chance to speak to this amazing volunteer about work, bunny flops and bonding.

I understand you took in your first bunny, BunBun, after looking for a furry companion your husband wasn't allergic to. Did you think at the time that bunnies would become such a big part of your life?

I grew up with cats, dogs and fish but never knew anyone with a pet rabbit. I ended up deciding on a pet rabbit for our 3 kids under age 10, since I didn't want to add scooping poop while walking dogs to my list of daily tasks. I did some cursory information gathering about bunnies on the internet before deciding to adopt one, but it was really my first rabbit, BunBun, who taught me all I needed to know.

What made you want to start volunteering with rabbits?

One of the first people I met upon arriving in Santa Fe noticed the "I Love My Rabbit" sticker on the back of my car. Beth Wagner (a fellow NMHRS volunteer) introduced herself by saying she too had a pet rabbit and had also relocated from Pennsylvania (we still had our PA license plates). Beth handed me her card, which read "Scamper Services" and featured a bunny on it! When we needed someone to house/bunny sit later on, we contacted Beth. It was then I learned she was regularly volunteering with Santa Fe shelter rabbits and NMHRS. I accompanied her to an NMHRS adoption event and the rest is history! Before moving away from the area, Beth encouraged me also to volunteer with the shelter bunnies because otherwise there would be no one to exercise them or advocate for their needs. I'm so grateful she did, since I can't imagine my life in Santa Fe without regular visits to play with the shelter bunnies!

You are involved with a number of things inside NMHRS, from fostering, to working with shelter bunnies and organizing events.

What is the most rewarding?

I can't really say one thing is more rewarding than any of the others. I love working with all bunnies, be they shelter rabbits or NMHRS foster rabbits. Each rabbit has a very unique personality and will have different needs to be met. I do what I can to improve their situation while they are in my care, always with a goal of making them more adoptable. Seeing the shelter dogs and cats lavished with attention by volunteers made me determined to recruit and train more volunteers to work with the rabbits. If shelter dogs can be walked 3 times a day, then at the very least, shelter rabbits should be taken out of their enclosures and exercised once a day. Ultimately though, finding the shelter rabbits great forever homes is paramount, so planning successful adoption events in conjunction with the shelter staff and NMHRS is equally important.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering bonding bunnies?

My first piece of advice would be to spay and neuter the rabbits and wait at least 2-3 weeks for their hormone levels to drop. My second piece of advice is to seek out expertise - either online or from your local rabbit rescue - on how best to go about it! My third piece of advice is to be patient, yet determined. My favorite bonding technique is to go for a car drive with both rabbits in the same carrier and then to place them together in neutral territory, with a broom handy in case a squabble breaks out. So much depends on the personalities of the rabbits involved! I like to place the bunnies next to each other and pet their fur so that their scents mingle. Another tactic that works well is to swap out litter boxes or even enclosures so the rabbits are exposed to each other's scents for longer periods. If one is lucky, the bonding goes relatively quickly. If one is unlucky, it may take months of work and dedication or - worst-case scenario - never happen. Ultimately, it is the rabbits who have the final say on a bonding, not their humans.

When you aren't volunteering for bunnies, what do you do?

I have three teenage daughters and a husband who works from home - they and all their daily activities keep me very busy! I've also volunteered with the Santa Fe Community Farm, harvesting food for the Food Depot, destined to feed the hungry of Northern New Mexico. I love gardening and have a small, raised vegetable garden that I grow homegrown veggies like swiss chard, collard greens, kale, parsley, squash and cucumbers in. I also support local non-profit efforts to improve health/well-being/education of girls and young women such as GutsyGirls, Girls on the Run and Girls Inc.

How many bunnies do you currently have? What are their names / ages / personalities?

I currently have 4 bunnies, a trio and a single. The trio are University of Victoria rescues from British Columbia: Nico and Smokey (both 3 years) and Babycakes (8 years). Babycakes, a Dutch, has the sweetest personality and is quite social. Nico, my all-black bunny beauty, and Smokey, a blue silver fox, are much more aloof and tend to do their own thing and want to be left alone! MicTwist is almost 3 years old and was adopted from the Santa Fe shelter 2 years ago. He's the friendliest bunny in the house and showers us with bunny kisses. He likes to lick us all over and does happy bunny dances while circling our feet! It is one of my deepest regrets that I have been unsuccessful so far in integrating him into my bonded trio to make a bunny quartet, but Nico just won't accept another male rabbit.

What is cuter, a flop or a binky?

I personally melt when a bunny licks me and starts grooming me like a mate. That is the ultimate compliment for a bunny slave! But watching a bunny flop or binky also brings an enormous smile to my face.

What would you tell someone who is considering adopting a bunny for the first time?

Do your homework! I recommend potential adopters read the entire House Rabbit Society website and then decide if they're still interested in a pet rabbit. So much misinformation about rabbits exists! I constantly remind those considering a rabbit that rabbits behave like rabbits - not like cats or dogs. If people can't put up with chewing and digging which are perfectly natural behaviors for rabbits because they have a house full of valuable antique furniture and heirlooms, then a rabbit may not be the right house pet for them. Rabbits need to be accepted on their own terms and with a lifetime commitment, come what may.

The Adventures of Bart, the Globetrotting Bunny

As told by NMHRS member Anne Beamon to *Rabbit Tracks'* Iris Klimczuk



Picture this: you're on a jumbo jet flying across the Atlantic Ocean, cruising along at 550 miles per hour at 36,000 feet above sea level, relaxing in your comfortable reclining seat, about to nod off to sleep. Nothing unusual about that? Well, it is if you are a dwarf rabbit who normally prefers having his feet a lot closer to the ground! NMHRS member Anne Beamon has flown across the Atlantic Ocean no less than THREE times with her Netherland dwarf rabbit, Bart -- once even in First Class! Impressive for a two and a half pound bunny!

***Rabbit Tracks* caught up with Anne and asked her to share their European exploits.**

RT: How does your and Bart's story begin?

Anne: I was living near Amsterdam in the Netherlands during a two year assignment for my company. Working long hours and traveling through Europe on various assignments. I suppose I was more than a bit lonely. I had this idea to get a dwarf rabbit and began visiting pet stores in search of one. I didn't really know much about rabbits at the time, but I wanted a dwarf rabbit, not a cat or a dog (which seemed like too much work). At that time, not many pet stores in the Netherlands carried dwarf rabbits because the Dutch have a preference for large lops. One day, after inquiring after a dwarf rabbit and being told there were none for sale, I spied a small rabbit in a back room of the pet store. I mentioned to the owner I wanted one about that size and asked if I could hold him? I walked back to Bart, picked him up -- and he bit me!!

RT: And you decided you still wanted him after that?

Anne: Well, I didn't hold it against him, I was a stranger after all! But I knew I wanted this dwarf bunny after searching so long for one like him. I asked the proprietor a few questions: how long rabbits lived and whether it was a male or female. He told me rabbits lived about 5 years and that this rabbit was a female. So, I bought the rabbit, along with a few books on rabbit care, some food and hay, and a small cage. Poor Bart was actually named Daisy for several months...

RT: How'd he settle in?

Anne: Really well! I decided from the beginning that his cage door would never be closed so he could always hop freely around the house. Fortunately for me, he wasn't a chewer! He was always glad to see me when I returned home from work and proved to be great company. He would even put himself to bed at night! One day, one of my colleagues was over, and I noticed Bart humping his leather shoe with great fervor. I picked Bart up and flipped him over. It was anatomically evident Daisy was NOT a female, but a male, and that he needed to be renamed and neutered! I then contacted a local vet about neutering him, which was quite an uncommon request there. My vet confided in me that she hadn't neutered a rabbit since veterinary school and wanted first to consult her vet school professor to refresh her memory on how to do it properly. A few days later, Bart was neutered.

RT: What did you do with Bart when you had to travel out-of-town for work?

Anne: I simply took him along! Sometimes they were short overnight trips, sometimes two week or month-long assignments. For shorter trips, I took along Bart's cage with him inside it. For longer absences, I'd take along a second suitcase to check for Bart and place his disassembled cage along with his other necessities like hay, food, bowls, etc. Bart travelled very comfortably in a black, mesh backpack/carrier which I took on board the plane. He was a great traveler!

RT: Did you ever have difficulty during security screening or when boarding flights with Bart?

Anne: Well, I never sent Bart through an X-ray machine, that's for sure! Normally, he charmed everyone who saw him. I mean, it isn't often that a rabbit goes through security or flies in the cabin! More than once, he passed unnoticed in my black mesh carry-on backpack.

Bart, continued

RT: Any funny stories to relate about your travels with Bart?

Anne: While checking in for a transatlantic flight back to the US, the airline agent was so taken with Bart that he blocked the First Class seat next to me so Bart could hop around during the long flight! On another much shorter flight to Madrid, my colleague and I were seated in the emergency exit row. The flight attendant informed me I needed to move my belongings (Bart) from under the seat in front of me into the overhead bin! Somewhat reluctantly, I passed my backpack carrier to the flight attendant. My colleague worried the entire flight about Bart being in the dark or not having enough oxygen, so he repeatedly popped up during the flight to open the overhead bin to check on him! Bart was fine, of course - a real trooper.

RT: Where did Bart stay while in hotel rooms on the road?

Anne: I normally kept him in the bathroom area with the door open to my hotel room when I was present. When out of my room, I hung a DO NOT DISTURB sign on my outside room door. This also meant my bed was never made by the housekeeping staff, but I didn't mind.

RT: Where was the fanciest place you ever stayed with Bart?

Anne: I travelled to Biarritz on the western coast of France with him once. We stayed at a very luxurious beachfront hotel. I returned to my room one afternoon to find one square foot of the fancy flocked wallpaper had been ripped off and chewed up! Bart must not have liked the style. This was the only time I can remember Bart causing any damage as he wasn't normally a chewer. To hide it from view, I pulled the large chaise in front of the damaged area and no one was the wiser.

RT: To which European countries did you travel with Bart?

Anne: Switzerland, Spain, Liechtenstein, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy.

RT: Customs officials never stopped you during all those trips to ask about your rabbit?

Anne: Never. On my first trip to Switzerland, I asked the customs official there about my rabbit, if I needed to do anything special? He said no, so I quickly continued through the green "Nothing to Declare" lane and on toward the taxi stand with Bart and my suitcase. I didn't want the official to change his mind and come after us!

RT: How old is Bart now and does he still travel?

Anne: Thirteen years old. He's now blind and probably also deaf, or nearly so. As a result, he's most comfortable in his cage and that's where he spends much of his time, so his traveling days are definitely over. Fortunately, he's bonded with two separate groups of female rabbits, so he's never lonely. They look after him, in turn. Originally, I'd hoped to have one big, happy group of five bonded rabbits, but the female rabbits had other ideas and it never worked out that way.

RT: Any advice to share with people wanting to travel with their rabbit as you have done?

Anne: Do your homework first and research your options well. Many airlines no longer fly rabbits in the cabin internationally or domestically, and some airlines won't even fly them in the hold anymore. There will definitely be an additional cost for transporting your rabbit. Airlines are constantly changing their policies with regard to flying pets and not often in favor of rabbits. They continue to be discriminated against by most airlines, ostensibly because rabbits might get loose in the cabin and chew wires. Some countries strictly limit the number of rabbits one can import and some require vaccinations and/or veterinary health certificates to accompany the rabbit upon entry.

RT: How did you become involved with New Mexico House Rabbit Society?

Anne: After my international assignments were over, I settled in Albuquerque and adopted a NMHRS rabbit from PetCo to keep Bart company. I filled out the paperwork at PetCo, paid my adoption fee and took the rabbit, Daisy, home to meet Bart. I placed her on the bedroom carpet right next to Bart. I had no idea how risky this was at the time, but happily, it was love at first sight! Later on, I took in three more rabbits from NMHRS, making a total of 5 rabbits now living under my roof.

Photo selections: left - Bart in his cage on the Swissotel luggage rack right - Bart with Daisy, an adopted NMHRS bunny

Miracle Cure

Matt Wasson

He sits in a corner, under a desk. The pain is too strong to allow movement, eating, drinking. He can barely think. He is confused. Just a few hours ago everything was wonderful. Fresh water and a wonderful mixed salad with a treat inside! Then some relaxing time in that wonderful box that keeps all his droppings in one place and never runs out of delicious grass hay. He fell asleep to soothing grooming from his mate after a long snuggle with his favorite human. Nothing has ever chased him or attacked him, but a small voice in the back of his mind whispers through the shadows of time and tells him that his pain makes him weak – a target. He must sit very still so that he can be safe. He must not make a sound or he will be prey. The pain removes all memories of his own peaceful life and his instincts to bear his agony silently and thereby survive are all his little mind can hold.

Suddenly he is swept up into the air! He kicks to defend himself but kicking causes so much pain that he cannot do it again. But it is not talons gripping him. It is his favorite human. She holds him close and speaks kindly. Something is forced between his teeth and a small mouthful of minty water is in his mouth. How could he get a drink without using his tongue? This is amazing! Actually, why is he thinking about a drink? He should be worried about staying still.....but why? It is time to play! A Binky sounds like a good idea and is there a treat anywhere?

Within minutes this miserable bunny has been transformed and is happy again. He was suffering from the beginning stages of GI stasis, a common affliction for domestic bunnies and the bunny in the above story is especially susceptible to it. He is a small one to begin with. Mildly splayed feet and passive temperament suggest he may have been the smallest of his litter. His fragility may be the reason for his frequent bouts with stasis or it may be that some bunnies just get it more than others. Every time one miracle cure has stopped his stasis in its tracks. Every time but one.

Reeses was fine at bedtime. His stasis must have begun soon after because by morning he was in a bad way. His usual dosage did not visibly help, nor did a second dose two hours later. A fast call to our normal vet discovered him out of town as was our reserve vet. We called another NMHRS trusted vet but he was not available either. His partner offered to see him and we rushed Reeses in. Examination and X-Ray showed no blockage, mild dehydration, and some abdominal discomfort. Force feeding of Critical Care was prescribed to bring up hydration and electrolyte levels.

By midnight he would no longer swallow the critical care and was obviously dying. Calls to both overnight emergency vets were refused as the vets on duty did not feel comfortable with rabbits. As a last resort a panicked call to NMHRS president Bill Velasquez in the middle of the night (I still feel bad for waking him up!) gave us the info we needed. One of the animal ER clinics that had turned us away had a daytime vet on staff with standing arrangements with NMHRS to allow the doctor on duty to call her for consult anytime. By 2 am Reeses was in the ICU incubator for small animals receiving IV fluids and being warmed after his temperature had dropped to a near fatal 98 degrees, and Dr R arrived by 5am and took over his care personally. His X-Rays showed gas blockage and full GI stasis. When we asked if he would be OK we were only told that they would do everything possible, but serious faces and somber tones suggested that there was not much hope and we prepared for the worst.

We brought his medicine with us and his caregivers faithfully gave him his dosage every two hours along with the rest of his treatment. By evening his temp was starting to increase, and by the following afternoon when we came for visiting hours an assistant proudly displayed his first 2 poops in 3 days! The next day Reeses came home.

Dr R said his recovery was exciting and could have gone either way (her tone suggested that the expected way had not been a positive outcome). She said she believed that his medicine was the deciding factor that kept him alive long enough to have his condition identified and may have tipped the scales to save his life.

So what is this wonder drug? It is Simethicone. It is the active ingredient in an over-the-counter indigestion remedy known as Gas-X. We were first introduced to Simethicone by Bill V. who told us that some people found it effective in treating bouts of bunny gas and preventing them from becoming full blown stasis. Simethicone is an anti-foaming agent that makes big bubbles become small ones and then makes those into smaller bubbles until there are no more bubbles. It works through direct chemical reaction in the GI tract and does not enter the bloodstream. This means it cannot develop a resistance from continued use and thereby become ineffective or require higher dosages.

Long term daily use can cause abdominal cramping or nausea so even high risk buns like Reeses cannot get it every day but we do give him a reduced dosage every 2-3 days and it seems to reduce the number of gas attacks and has had no obvious side effects. Simethicone comes in many forms including tablets, chewables, children's liquid, and caplets. It has a naturally mild minty flavor and rabbits get accustomed to the taste very quickly. We prefer to use the caplets as they have the fewest additive ingredients. We pierce the end of one 125mg caplet and dissolve the gel inside in 5cc of water. Effective dosage has been 0.4cc of this solution for active gas attacks and 0.2cc for preventative doses.

Vets do not stock Simethicone and many I have spoken with have not even heard of it. Knowing about this wonderful drug and keeping some on hand may just save your rabbit's life. If GI stasis is suspected administer Simethicone immediately and if hospitalization is required insist on it being included in the treatment regimen, even if you have to bring it in yourself. It may make the difference between life and death for your bunny.

When Bunny Won't Use the Litter box

Iris Klimczuk

Who among us hasn't wondered why bunny eliminated next to the litter box instead of inside it? It happens rarely with some bunnies and more frequently with others - and tends to be an unwelcome surprise, but it's not unsolvable. There's hope for even the messiest bunny! Here are some common reasons why bunny might not use the litter box properly and how to remedy them:

1. New surroundings - Often when bringing a new bunny home, bunny will mark its new territory with droppings and/or urine, even when a litter box is available. This instinctive territorial marking will usually cease after the first week or two, especially if you do not clean up immediately. If a new bunny is being brought home to an existing house bunny and the pair has not been bonded, expect each bunny's litter box habits to regress for a bit. Any room(s) shared in turn by unbonded bunnies will be subjected to territorial marking which should NOT be confused with poor litter box habits!
2. Young bunnies - Baby buns under 6 months of age often have less than perfect litter box habits. It is well-known that spaying and neutering rabbits contributes to establishing good litter box habits. Be patient with your young one, and fix your rabbit as soon as it's old enough (around 4-6 months).
3. Wrong litter - A litter box filled with the wrong type of litter may bother some bunnies. Most bunnies like wood stove pellets (without chemical propellants) and this is your cheapest litter option besides simple, shredded newspaper. *Yesterday's News* can also be used if bunny dislikes the regular wood stove pellets found at the hardware store in economical 40lb bags. Some rabbits even prefer NO litter at all in their litter box! Experiment with different kinds, but avoid cedar & pine wood shavings and crystalline or clumping cat litters, which can endanger bunny's health.
4. Wrong size - Some persnickety smaller rabbits don't like jumping up too high into their litter boxes so try a shallower one. Another trick is to adjust the level of litter inside the litter box to see if bunny prefers a more or less full one. Some large rabbits may feel cramped in a too small litter box and require a bigger one. A too tall or too shallow litter box may also be the reason why bunny is not using it, so experiment with different plastic box sizes and heights until your bunny is happy. For multiple bunnies sharing a litter box, purchase a 27 Qt. Rubbermaid clear, plastic, shallow bin. For senior or arthritic buns, cut a low opening on one side of the litter box so the rabbit has easy access walking in and won't have to hurdle the edge to hop inside.
5. Too clean/too dirty - Strange as it may seem, some bunnies don't like their litter boxes spotless! After cleaning, these buns may eliminate next to the litter box instead of inside it. For such bunnies, try tossing a few old droppings into the fresh litter box or place a small scoop of soiled litter on top of the clean litter. Other bunnies won't use a litter box that is too soiled - smelly and dirty! More frequent litter box changes, with a white vinegar rinse in between to remove urine stains before adding fresh litter, is the answer for these bunnies.
6. Not enough boxes - A common complaint is that cage-free house bunnies eliminate or mark in every room, especially when there are multiple bunnies or other animals visiting/living in the home. Placing several litter boxes around the home - perhaps even in one corner of each room bunny has access to - may help encourage bunny to eliminate in a litter box instead of on your floor, carpet, or furniture.
7. Too much space to roam - When litter box training your rabbit, start with a small, space/room containing a litter box. Let bunny demonstrate s/he can reliably use the litter box in this smaller space, before gradually expanding roaming space, one room or hallway at a time. If bunny relapses, use white vinegar & water mix to clean up pee, and start the process over again. Note: bunny may leave occasional droppings in a new area to mark his territory, which should just be temporary.
8. Digging - Some rabbits just enjoy digging litter out of their litter box! This is often seen in female rabbits, which have a strong burrowing/nesting instinct. First, try changing the type of litter. If this doesn't work, try placing a second plastic "digging box" filled with shredded paper, dirt, sand or small pebbles into the rabbit's habitat. An unused bathtub can also make a good "digging area" for bunny when filled with a small box of sand, dirt or paper - even snow in the wintertime! Or perhaps consider allowing your bunny some supervised outdoor "digging time" in a safe, secure, walled- or fenced-in area, away from predators.
9. Prefers another spot - Placed litter boxes all around and bunny still insists eliminating elsewhere? Give in to the determined bunny - move the litter box to bunny's preferred spot, rearranging the furniture if necessary. It's much easier to accommodate a determined bunny than to retrain one to use the litter box in another location *you* prefer. This is when giving in to bunny makes sense!
10. Unknown reason - If all else fails, here is a suggestion which has worked for one of my own litter box-averse bunnies. Build a feeding station just beyond the litter box requiring bunny to stand INSIDE the litter box while eating, drinking and chewing hay. This can be easily and inexpensively done by using an empty shoebox in a corner of the room or enclosure, onto which ceramic food & water crocks are placed. Push the litter box right up against the shoebox and push the other litter box edge against the wall. Place hay either inside the litter box or just beyond it in a small box next to the food & water. Bunny will get used to standing in his litter box while eating and drinking, which is often when elimination occurs. This will rapidly improve bunny's litter box habits!

Most rabbits will learn fairly quickly and easily to use a litter box since they are by nature very clean animals. If yours doesn't for some reason, these tips will soon help bunny to use the litter box more reliably. Remember, always be patient with your bunny while working on improving its litter box habits, and consider giving positive reinforcements in the form of a small fruit or veggie treat when bunny is successful. NEVER strike nor shout at bunny when accidents occur outside the litter box - this is counterproductive and harmful to your rabbit. If your bunny's litter box habits should suddenly deteriorate without apparent reason (such as the presence of a new bunny/animal in the house, move to new quarters, etc.), see a rabbit-savvy vet to rule out a possible hidden illness.