

Rabbit Tracks



Newsletter of the New Mexico House Rabbit Society

Summer is Here!
Help your bunny beat the
heat! See Page 4.

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Quilt Raffle

Winner will be drawn on July 25.
Ticket sales end July 24.
Get your tickets now!
<http://bit.ly/23ToGxI> or
email bill@rabbit.org

Write for Rabbit Tracks!

Is there a topic that hasn't
been covered in *Rabbit
Tracks* that you would
like to see? Do you have
writing muscles you want
to flex? The range of topics
is only as limited as your
imagination!

For details and info:
editor@newmexicohrs.org

Winter issue deadline:
Sunday, December 11th

IT'S NEVER WHERE YOU GO, IT'S WHO YOU GO WITH!

by Ned Nevera, NMHRS Chapter Director

Some of the best stories of my life open with the line, "It was late on a Saturday night and I was with...." This story, while different in many ways from the stories featuring my younger self, still opens with that neo-classic line....

It was late on a Saturday night and I was with several New Mexico House Rabbit Society volunteers waiting on a group of 42 rabbits, rescued from living alongside a busy highway overpass exit, making their way down from Canada in a rented van, to their forever sanctuary home. I realize that sounds like a bunch of random words thrown together—but really, 42 Canadian rabbits and their rescuers needed our help. The volunteers had gathered at a home in Rio Rancho that had been offered

as a way station to the Canadian volunteers and rabbits who were undertaking the epic journey from British Columbia overpass to forever sanctuary. Our task was to clean carriers that had been the road-weary quarters to the refugee buns; comfort them the best we could; feed, water, groom as necessary; and then reload load the van for an early morning departure.

The volunteers started to gather at 8:30pm. As the crowd grew, we exchanged stories about our rabbits, other rescues, and different events we had held over the years — we got to know each other even better. Minutes slipped away into an hour, and at 9:30pm (well past some bedtimes), word came in that the Vancouver Express was near Gallup.

Yep, ...Gallup...130 miles (208 km for any Canadians out there)...2 hours west...of Rio Rancho. More stories were exchanged; we gently kidded each other about differences in age or experience; some joked about finding an open tavern and making the most of our Saturday before it became our Sunday. But I noticed a remarkable thing happening in that house as time slowly passed. More accurately, it's what didn't

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Respite carriers await 43 special buns traveling from British Columbia to their forever sanctuary.

WHERE YOU GO

(continued from page 1)

happen that was so remarkable. Nobody quit. Nobody gave up. Even though it had been a long day for some or they had things to do on a rapidly approaching Sunday—nobody left. Everybody had made a commitment to a group of rabbits in need and, like in so many other instances over the years, this group of rabbit fans was going to



Human slaves tend to the needs of the rescue buns during the "Canadian All-Nighter of 2016."

see that promise through. It's that dedication—despite some profound differences in age, profession, or experience, which reminded me of one of the lessons life has truly taught me, "It's never where you go, it's who you go with."

So there I was in Rio Rancho, tired and ready for bed, with a terrific group of people I'm glad to know and share these experiences with.

So, it was early on a Sunday morning and I was with a bunch of dedicated House Rabbit Society volunteers when the Canadian bun express arrived. X-pens were set up in the garage, buns were unloaded in shifts of 11 or 12, volunteers cleaned carriers, and wranglers cuddled tired

buns. Food bowls were cleaned and refilled, nails were trimmed, tired jokes were told, lots of buns were called "Sweetie" and an unofficial competition to "Look at this cutie pie" broke out in the garage. Two short hours later, the buns had been cleaned, fed and hugged. Bleary eyed volunteers reloaded the rescue van and the buns were ready for the final leg to their forever home. The party finally started to break up and we mumbled our "Good-byes" to each other. And while this story isn't as colorful as the "...it was late on a Saturday night and I was with..." stories from my youth, it is certainly more rewarding than most all of them.

For all their efforts and dedication during the "Canadian All-Nighter of 2016," I'm glad I know: Matt, Victoria P, Ginger, Ashley, Beth, Deb V., Bill V., Julia, Erin, Fred, and of course Kirstin and Eric for hosting the all-nighter.

THE SCOOP ON POOP: Composting 101

by Lucy Newman

A domestic bunny may drop around three hundred pellets a day. New bunny owners can find themselves surprised at the amount of "mucking out" they need to do for such a small creature, and litter tray cleaning should always be daily. This waste need not be added to the landfill but can be used in a variety of ways to enrich your (or a neighbors') garden. Rabbit manure is known to be one of the best natural fertilizers by gardeners and our 'unique' New Mexico soils will greatly benefit from this nitrogen-rich addition.

Bunny manure, the result of a vegetarian diet, is also safer if you are growing herbs or vegetables for the home. Meat-eating animals

such as dogs, cats and pigs can produce manure with pathogens in them. It can be compostable but requires more knowledge and attention.

There are two easy ways to use bunny berries. One is to separate the pellets from the litter as a 'cold' manure. Bunny pellets are not too rich as to damage roots or plant growth so can be applied into the soil directly. You can grab a handful and pop them just below the soil level on your houseplants, or work them into any beds. Even if you don't have yard space, you could collect the pellets and give them away to any grateful gardeners.

The second method is to make compost but this is only possible

if the litter is organic in nature. Acceptable litters should be plant, citrus or paper based such as Care Fresh (Natural only), Cat Country, Critter Country, Yesterday's News, and Papurr. Clay or clumping litters, in addition to being dangerous for your bunny will not compost and are terrible for your garden. Any uneaten hay is good to add to the compost, adding bulk.

Ammonia in the bunny's urine is considered 'hot' and requires composting to make it safe for the garden. Ammonia however, is also good for heating up a compost pile, making it work faster. This means that a well-tended and turned pile may be ready for use in less than six months. Composting can be as simple as a 3x3 pile in the back yard. You don't need to buy any purpose

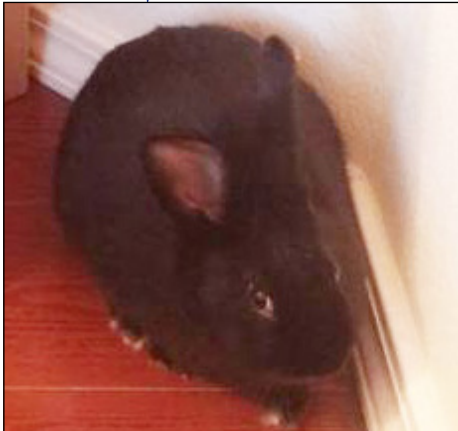
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Looking for their
forever home!

Adoptable Buns

If you're interested in adopting, contact
crissstarr@hotmail.com unless otherwise noted.

View adoptable bunnies and adoption procedures at
www.newmexicohrs.org



DESDEMONA

Desdemona loves sitting in corners and is a champ at walking in reverse to get to them. She always looks bashful but is very sweet and will sit with you on the couch. Excellent litterbox skills. No experience with other animals or kids. *Desdemona is currently being fostered for the City of Albuquerque Shelter, so if you are interested in adopting Desdemona please contact our ABQ shelter volunteer Ned at nednever@aol.com.*



TITANIA

Titania loves laying in the sunshine and burying herself in hay. She eats like a lady and enjoys passing the time by chewing on cardboard. She is better on the floor, but will let you snuggle her. Excellent litterbox skills. No experience with other animals or kids. *Titania is currently being fostered for the City of Albuquerque Shelter, so if you are interested in adopting Titania please contact our ABQ shelter volunteer Ned at nednever@aol.com.*

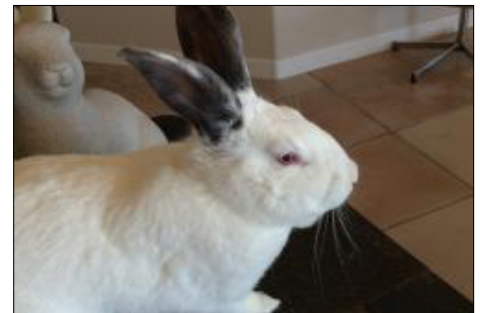
BASIL & CLOVER

Basil (black) and Clover (tan) are a closely bonded pair of male dwarf lionhead mix bunnies. They are about two years old, and weigh 5 lbs and 4 lbs, respectively. They are curious and energetic and need 2-3 hours a day of romp about time outside of their pen. They have good litterbox habits, are eager eaters of pellets and hay, and love their daily salad greens! They adore head pets and cuddles at floor level, but are not big fans of being picked up. Basil is a special needs bunny in that he was surrendered, with his mate Clover, to a shelter with a badly broken right hind leg. The vets went into action, and following a surgery to put a pin in his broken tibia, his hind leg was put in a soft cast for 5 weeks. His tibia has healed very well, but he eventually lost the toes on his right foot. However, he is the little bunny that could! He gets around so well, running, binkying and all. Basil and Clover have been fostered for 5 months since surgery date and are doing very well! Because of Basil's special needs, we prefer that this adorable pair go into a rabbit savvy home in the Santa Fe or Albuquerque area because we have discounts set up with trusted vets in these locations.



GEORGIE

Georgie had a rough start in life. He was found crammed into a backyard hutch with his siblings, abandoned when the owners moved away. Covered in urine stains and skinny, he looked nothing like the handsome young man he is today! While in foster, he has come out of his shell and loves to interact with humans. If you're looking for a friendly bunny, look no further! He is about 2 years old.



PEARL

Pearl is a pearl of a rabbit. Her time was up at a northern New Mexico shelter until she was rescued by NM House Rabbit Society. She is 5.5 pounds and the vet thinks she's about 6-7 months old. She's a little shy but if you hold her, she'll sit with you for 20-30 minutes and seems to enjoy it. Her litter box skills are good, but she may need some patience and encouragement in a new setting. She comes up to her foster mom and runs around her legs, happy to see her! She's somewhat of a picky eater: she doesn't like bananas and eats only certain greens. She's a dainty eater and very sweet. She'll make a great single rabbit or a good companion for a lonely bunny bachelor.

Cool Your Buns! Protecting your Rabbits from Summer Dangers

by Criss Starr

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

- Keep your bunny inside in a cool, air-conditioned or evaporative cooled environment. Fans can help circulate the air, just make sure cords are protected and bunny is out of drafts.
- Avoid direct sunlight during the heat of the day. UV blocking curtains are an inexpensive way to reduce cooling costs during the hottest part of the day. Your bunny will enjoy a cool, cave-like environment, much like her ancestors who relaxed in cool earthen tunnels. This can also be a lifesaver if the air conditioning fails while you're away.
- Provide plenty of cool, fresh, (preferably filtered) water. Some buns even like ice! On really hot days, try freezing a gallon jug of water. Hot buns love to snuggle these icy companions!
- Buns like to lie on cool tiles. Freezing or refrigerating the tiles makes them a nice cool resting place for warm bunny bellies.
- Keep your bunny well groomed. Most rabbits will molt when it is really hot. This hair must be plucked or combed out to prevent wool block and to keep bunny cool. Angora rabbits should be clipped short by a groomer who is experienced with rabbits. Never try shaving or scissoring your rabbit without training (available free from NMHRS). It is very easy to cut or over-brush delicate bunny skin.
- Ears as air-conditioning? It's true, a rabbit's method of cooling herself is through her large ears. You can help cool your bunny by rubbing a cool washcloth on her ears and over her body. You can also wrap ice in a washcloth and rub her ears, feet, and belly. Never submerge a bunny in ice water, as this can send them into shock!
- If your bun displays signs of heatstroke: panting, delirium, listlessness: this is an emergency situation! Wrap bunny in a cool wet towel and get her to a vet as soon as possible!
- Always provide your bunny with plenty of crispy, fresh salads to munch on in the summer months. Romaine and parsley are particularly cooling and hydrating, especially when served damp from washing.

KEEPING BUNNIES COOL!



1 YOU NEED: A cotton pillowcase, a plastic bottle of frozen water, a water spray bottle and a couple of ceramic tiles.



2 Place the bottle of frozen water into the enclosed end of the pillowcase & roll over once to secure. Spray the pillowcase lightly with water.



3 Place 2 ceramic tiles on the floor of your bunnies enclosure. This stops any bedding or flooring getting damp.



4 Place the pillowcase with the frozen water bottle on top of the ceramic tiles.



Keeping Bunnies Cool! graphic courtesy of Best4Bunny.com.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Ginny Greininger

by Kerrie Bushway

How did you get into bunnies and what was your gateway into the life of a House Rabbit Society Volunteer?

My husband and I rescued our first bunny in 1999. Paul was at a hiking trailhead in Hyde Park in Santa Fe when someone drove up and dumped a domestic bunny out of a car! The others at the trailhead said that bunny would not last overnight in the forest, so they all banded together to catch him, not an easy task. My husband brought him home, a beautiful lop brindle-colored male we named Mopsy. I recall saying to Paul, "A rabbit? What are we going to do with a rabbit?" Well, within a week Mopsy had us wrapped around his little paws. We fell in love with him and he was with us for 7 years before he passed away. I knew nothing about having a house rabbit at the time. I went to the library and discovered the House Rabbit Handbook. That got us started on our way to caring for him.

I first became aware of NMHRS in 2011 when I began to volunteer at the Santa Fe Animal Shelter and learned about HRS. I became both an SFAS and NMHRS volunteer.

You're involved with a number of things inside NMHRS, from fostering, to working with shelter bunnies and assisting at events. What is the most rewarding?

I have to say that both fostering and working with shelter bunnies are my first loves. So many bunnies come through the Santa Fe shelter, it is a delight caring for them, learning their stories, and watching them get adopted into loving homes.

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

I retired last July after working full time my entire adult life. I have no shortage of projects and interests including learning to quilt, learning to play the cello, volunteering for Kitchen Angels in Santa Fe as a meal delivery driver, renovating projects at home, getting together with friends, gardening and more! In fact, I have to leave one a day a week with no commitments so I can catch up at home.



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

I currently have NMHRS fosters, two lionhead mix boys Basil and Clover, who are very closely bonded. They are about 1 to 1-1/2 years old. They were surrendered to the Santa Fe shelter last August, and Basil had multiple fractures in his right hind leg. The shelter vet operated and put a pin in his tibia. Iris fostered the

little ones for a month before she moved to Canada, and then we took them in. Basil eventually lost all of the toes on his right foot due to lack of circulation during the healing process, but he gets along just fine, binkies and all. Clover is more reserved. They groom each other equally and it is difficult to tell which is the more dominant.

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

Move forward and bring a bunny or two into your home! They are such loving creatures, self-train at litterbox habits, and multiple rabbits are no more effort than one. They bring such a calming effect to our household and I find myself constantly interacting with them, talking and singing to them throughout the day. Paul plays the violin and I play the cello, and I often wonder what they think about the live music in the house!

What is your favorite pop culture rabbit reference?

I enjoy the bunnies in *Watership Down*, and the singing bunny in the Skittles commercial.

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Happily Ever After for Mercury!

by Ginny Greininger

Mercury, a stray Hotot picked up on one of Santa Fe's busiest streets, found his new home last month. We first met him after he was brought in by Animal Control with a nasty infection in his right eye. The vets at Santa Fe Animal Shelter (SFAS) started him on medications and his eye began to improve.

Bill Velasquez, NMHRS president, offered to have NMHRS fund Mercury's visit to Santa Fe animal eye specialist, Dr. Peiffer. Mercury was taken to see Dr. Peiffer and he went through a very thorough eye exam, including dilation and measuring of pressure. He was diagnosed with an eyelid laceration and corneal infection due to some sort of trauma. We will never know if this happened in his former home or on the street. Dr. Peiffer advised that the SFAS vets were spot on with their treatment and said they should continue on that path. He asked to see Mercury for a follow up in two weeks. NMHRS was fully ready to fund both visits, but Dr. Peiffer astonished us all by saying, "No charge!"

Mercury continued to improve and was then neutered. Despite his injury, he was perhaps the most confident, social and outgoing bunny our group of volunteers at SFAS has ever met. His new parents, Angie and Ryan, fell in love with him at the shelter. They went home to ready the house for Mercury and adopted him the next day, facilitated and educated by SFAS bunny volunteer Elizabeth Schroder.

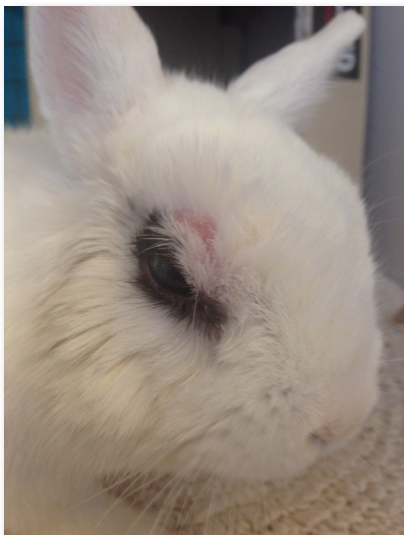


Mercury's new parents, Ryan and Angie.

A couple of weeks ago Elizabeth was lucky enough to drop by their house to give them a new adopter bag (furnished for new rabbit adopters at SFAS by NMHRS) just as a party in Mercury's honor was starting! The jolly-good-fellow was happy, relaxed, and digging his new home. But mostly he was loving his parents, Angie and Ryan, who are everything we hope new rabbit parents will be: loving, conscientious, and eager to learn about rabbit care.

The highlight for Elizabeth, knowing the lover-boy ham that Mercury is, was watching him take center stage in the middle of a lovely group of friends who all sat down on the floor in a circle to meet him. One of them even brought him a sweet little bunch of homegrown parsley.

It was a very gratifying moment. We don't always know how life plays out for our little charges when they leave the shelter, but in Mercury's case, we can know for sure he got the happiest of endings. We were reminded that it is such a privilege and a blessing to serve the buns, and to be a part of this wonderful team.



Mercury after several weeks of treatment for eye infection and laceration

Want to work with shelter buns?

Get in touch with a volunteer coordinator:

Ned (ABQ):

nednever@aol.com

Iris (Santa Fe):

iris.klimczuk@gmail.com

Victoria (Rio Rancho):

pereztori10@aol.com

COMPOSTING

(continued from page 2)

made containers although they can make the process faster and neater.

A word of warning, if your bunny is sickly or on any medication, don't use their waste for the garden, dispose of it safely in the trash.

Finally, if you find you're collecting

too much bunny compost, Sandoval County Master Gardeners will gladly accept it. You can find their details at sandovalmastergardeners.org.

Local resources on composting:

ABQ - <http://tinyurl.com/abq-compost>

Bernalillo County - <http://tinyurl.com/bco-compost>

Santa Fe - <http://tinyurl.com/sfe-compost>

BOOK REVIEW: *Frost Dancers*

Reviewed by Kerrie Bushway

a book by Garry Kilworth

If you've read *Watership Down* and have been looking for another "story from the rabbits' point of view" ever since, this is a satisfying read. Very similiar, yet oh so different.

Skelter, a mountain hare, finds himself caught as part of a round-up of hares for a dog course far from his mountain home. He witnesses the brutality of the dog course, but (spoiler!) manages to escape, and now finding himself in a strange land (the lowlands of England), he must adjust to an entirely different society of strange creatures and navigate their odd social structures. Kilworth creates a very complete world of the differences between mountain hares and their lowland cousins, who have a much stricter clanlike society, and a relentlessly elitist attitude toward those malodorous slattern relatives, the rabbits. (We learn that hares are real snobs.)

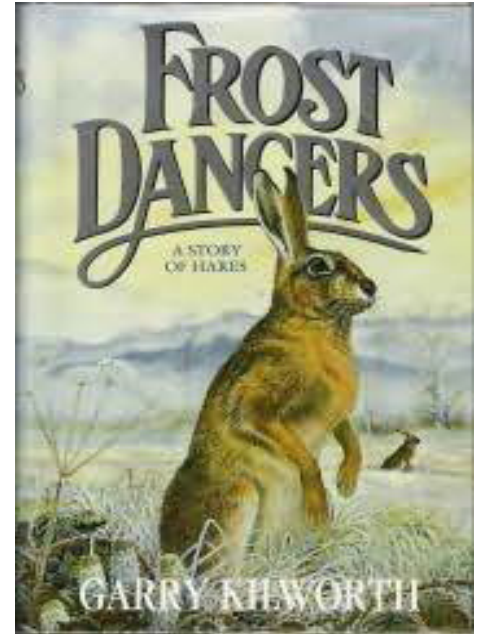
As with most animal stories, there are scenes of death that are just as traumatizing as those in *Watership Down*. However, there is a difference. The body count is high, but it's almost completely suffered and committed by the animal kingdom. The humans, except for the dog course and a hunting scene near the end, save their violence to inflict on other humans. In fact, hares look upon human objects (such as red tractors) as good luck totems and live in harmony with the neighboring farmers—perhaps because they don't destroy everything they touch and move on, like those rabbits!

The main culprit in the animal-on-animal violence is a menacing creature called a "flogre" by the terrorized local wildlife, who turns out to be a tragic figure as well. This is no Kehaar of *Watership*, but Bubba, a harpy eagle who was brought to England from the Amazon rainforest by a man Bubba only knows as "Mother." When "Mother" died, Bubba escaped into the wild and begins to fulfill his instinct as a killing machine. With no predator like this in England, Bubba is 100% an invasive species. The commentary of introducing exotic species into foreign habitats is not declared outright, but the nuance is there.

There are quite a few memorable supporting characters: Skelter's mountain girlfriend Rushie; the loner hedgehog, Jittie; and the erudite, almost Shakespearean otter, Stigand. Each character had their own personality and way of speaking, which I thought would be difficult to do with so many hares, but Kilworth pulled it off, from the misfit scrappy hares all the way up to the majestic cold-hearted leaders of the hare clan that Skelter found himself trying to assimilate into.

In the last 15 pages or so there is a heart-pounding chase that had me on the edge of my seat. I couldn't tell how it would end, but it had a good final BANG! after a series of emotional roller coasters.

I definitely recommend this for anyone wanting an additional lagomorph fiction fix. Kilworth has also written other animal-centric novels surrounding foxes, wolves, and mice.



The Frost Dancers
(1992)
Garry Kilworth, 400 pages

Where to Find: An ebook version can be bought on Amazon (remember to use Amazon Smile through the link on our website at newmexicohrs.org, or directly via tinyurl.com/nm-hrs.

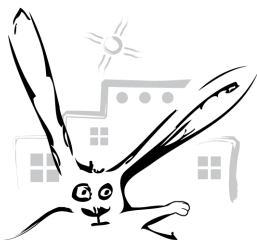
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Have you read a rabbit-themed book and want to share your impressions with other readers? See your review in the next issue of Rabbit Tracks!



New Mexico

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

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- **Use** your skills to help us with our website, PR and outreach, newsletter, and more!
- **Join** NMHRS and become a supporter!
- **Make** a donation to support our work helping homeless rabbits in New Mexico!

We also accept donations of food and other needed supplies.

- ☐ I would like to support New Mexico House Rabbit Society.
- ☐ \$30 for combined national House Rabbit Society and New Mexico HRS
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