MUSKRAT LOVE
Bunny Bonding – What to Expect
by BILL VELASQUEZ, NMHRS Chapter President

I recently discovered that what I think of as pop culture may be stalled in the 70’s and 80’s. Much to my amazement, not everyone remembers the Captain and Tennille. I was never a fan and maybe the fact that their music has not transitioned in to modern pop culture like the Stones and the Eagles isn’t a bad thing, but we have certainly all at one time in our lives related to the lyrics:
And they whirl and they twirl and they tango
Singing and Jinging a Jango
Floating like the heavens above
Looks like Muskrat Love

The lyrics conjure up feelings of spring romance, the twinkle in our eyes and the flutter of our hearts that accompanies the birth of new love. I have spent the last 10 years facilitating bunny love and the fact that it parallels our own human courtship rituals and experiences fascinates me. Surely no one can witness the process without realizing that rabbits have emotions and feelings. They feel the same pains and thrills that we humans experience when falling in love. The one major difference seems to be their unwavering commitment to life long bonds.

We are often asked to help with bunny bondings. There is a lot of time and thought that needs to go in to each pairing. You can’t just throw any two rabbits together and expect them to get along. First meetings range from love at first sight to, “I want to kill you” – you know, just like people. Because of this the process can take anywhere from a few days to several weeks. We always try to arrange meetings so that the resident bachelor/bachelorette meets 3 eligible bunnies. Bonds can be boy-boy, boy-girl or girl-girl, you know, just like people. We usually settle on a pairing that seems like it will be the easiest and work from there. The pairing is usually one of, “I kinda like you”, but “I need to get to know you better first”. Sometimes the bond does not progress past the third day. This is the point when they seem to get comfortable enough to show their true feelings for each other.

We have had some bunnies that we have had to attempt bondings with up to five times before one sticks. Just like people, some bunnies are very particular about whom they want to spend the rest of their lives with!

The full description of the process could fill way more space than this article is intended to convey. What (continued on page 2)
you need to understand is that the bonding process is a result of the time you are willing to put in to it. NMHRS is available to help you in many different ways and our availability is somewhat demand driven. Sometimes we go weeks without a bonding on the schedule and sometimes we have several at once, so your patience is appreciated. The bondings, in general, follow three steps and there are always exceptions to every rule. Step one is the courtship and chase, step two is the great grooming stand-off and step three is the snuggle and first night jitters phase that eventually leads to a solid bond.

A bonding attempt at the ABQ shelter. Interested, but cautious rabbits, scope one another out. The Georgia House Rabbit Society has put together a helpful bonding guide, with examples of bunny body language during bonding, which can be downloaded here: http://tinyurl.com/jpwmezp.

We are available to help you in three categories:
1) Initial introductions, consult and advisement throughout the process. NMHRS does this work without expecting a donation.
2) Introduction of your resident rabbit to a city shelter rabbit with NMHRS performing the initial bonding work (usually involves 1-3 weeks in our home). We request a donation of $25 for this service.
3) Introduction of your resident rabbit to an NMHRS rabbit with NMHRS performing the initial bonding work (usually involves 1-3 weeks in our home). This is included in our adoption donation fee of $75 for your first rabbit and $50 for subsequent rabbits.

For me, facilitating bondings is some of the most rewarding work I do in life. There is no greater gift than giving these tiny souls the gift of love. I look forward to talking to you in depth about bonding your rabbit and how we can help. Rabbits are very social creatures and crave companions of their kind. Of course, just like people, we do come across the rare single that just wants to be single. Before contacting us, please make sure you are ready for the process by reviewing the information at this link:

http://rabbit.org/are-two-rabbits-right-for-you-2/

What happens when Albuquerque Animal Welfare, Santa Fe Animal Shelter and Humane Society and NMHRS team up to find bunnies a home? You get the wonderful bond of Nigel and Venus! Nigel was adopted from CABQ and his Mum came to us for help finding him a girl. We found him a girl named Venus who was a stray that came in to SF Animal Shelter. After 4 weeks of bonding - courtesy of NMHRS, they went home together a bonded pair!

The hard work of bonding pays off! Miss Primrose dozes in absolute contentment snuggled up to her new mate Buddah.
Chef is the definition of “quirky”. We’re pretty sure Chef believes in conspiracy theories and can see the dead. No, really. He has a perpetual worried expression on his face but that never stops him from having fun. He enjoys running around, exploring everything he can, and digging through packing paper.

He can often be found sitting with all of his paws in a straight line. He is very happy to greet you and will let you pick him up but once you’re holding him he gets very nervous and squirms until you put him down or will try to leap out of your hands (so for his safety, don’t plan on picking him up). He has quite possibly the best set of whiskers in the history of rabbits. His motto is “You can’t spell ‘mischief’ without ‘Chef’.”

He loves to chew on cardboard and will work very hard on turning a box into a pile of confetti. He particularly enjoys dandelion greens, cilantro, and collard greens. His litterbox skills get an 8 out 10 but he’s still learning. This very sweet boy needs a quiet home.

Zorro is currently being fostered for the Albuquerque East Side Animal Shelter but you can register your interest with his foster carer by emailing KirstinBTyler@gmail.com.

This is DJ, a mixed breed bunny rabbit and (more importantly) an aspiring New Mexican mountaineer. Perhaps inspired by the Sandias, this boy is an energetic climber. He will attempt to ascend walls, blinds, his kennel... He will climb up to the window sill, through the blinds, to sit on the window ledge.

He’s energetic, curious, and funny. He is very social and absolutely loves getting pet on the head. If you’ve ever wanted the spirit of a puppy in the body of a rabbit then DJ is what you’re looking for.

He’s about 7 months old right now and has been in foster since early August. He’ll be medium sized when adult. He has good litter box skills which are improving daily. His favourite treats are carrot and cucumber.

Need a little more excitement in your life? This one will keep you busy. Can you offer patient supervision and an assault course of furniture challenges?

DJ is currently being fostered for the Albuquerque East Side Animal Shelter, but you can register your interest with his foster carer by emailing KirstinBTyler@gmail.com.

Biscuit is a wonderful, outgoing Palomino female, about 2-3 years old and weighs 7.5 lbs. Known to NMHRS as one the original “Route 66” bunnies, she was spotted as a stray living near I-40 outside Albuquerque and two of our dedicated volunteers managed to catch her during their lunch break!

She’s a sweetheart and very “dog-like” – she stands on her hind legs and begs for food and to come out every time she sees her foster mom. Biscuit follows her around, loves to be petted and knows her way back to her pen. Even though she is a slightly larger bunny, she has amazing litter skills and loves her Timothy hay. She will hop right over to you for love and does not mind being picked up and handled (see our video!). She likes toys with bells in them and loves to toss them around, and likes hay balls to chew. Sometimes this experienced road warrior can be rambunctious and she needs a quiet environment.

Want to give this loving girl a home? Contact crissstarr@hotmail.com
All about that bond!

Inspired by our Bunny Bonding article? Looking for a new companion for yourself or a new friend for that special lagomorph in your life? If so, then get ready to bond!

1. Be prepared with your bunny first aid kit. A first aid kit is important to have on hand to help address emergencies until you can get to your rabbit friendly vet. It is also useful during the bonding process, as bonding tussles can result in injury that may require attention.

- Flexible tip digital rectal thermometer
- Petroleum jelly (100% pure for lubricating thermometer)
- Critical Care Formula by Oxbow
- Simethicone (infant gas drops)
- Canned pumpkin (to stimulate appetite and gut movement during GI stasis)
- Oral feeding syringes 10cc (curved tip)
- 1 cc curved tip oral syringes (for medication)
- Saline eye drops (non-medicated saline only)
- First aid scissors (blunt end)
- Non stick bandages of various sizes and shapes
- 3M Vet wrap (flexible wrap for covering dressings)
- Tweezers
- Vetericyn Wound & Skin Care (expensive but excellent product, available through Amazon)
- Neosporin
- Saline eye solution (pure saline only – for flushing eyes)
- Cotton swabs
- Cotton balls
- Bag Balm / Desitin / A & D Original Ointment (skin irritations)
- Kwik Stop (stypic powder for a bleeding nail – do not use on open skin wounds)
- Q-tips (to apply stypic powder)
- Snugglesafe pet heating pad or hot water bottle (avoid using electric heating pads as they can overheat your rabbit or pose a shock risk if rabbit chews cord)
- Pedialyte electrolyte powder (unflavored)
- Stethoscope (for checking gut sounds or breathing)


2. Come to our next adoption event to meet potential companions! Bring bunny for FREE nail trim and well-health check!

House Rabbit Adoption Event
Saturday, February 18th
12-4pm

At PetSmart 3561 Zafarano Drive (across from Target)

FREE nail trims and well-health checks for local rabbits Visit and fall in love with your new furry friend

Sponsored by New Mexico House Rabbit Society and Santa Fe Animal Shelter

Santa Fe PetSmart at 3561 Zafarano Drive

3. Begin your bonding journey! These recent matches illustrate how great bunny love can be, and how bonding persistence pays off. Remember, NM HRS can help with speed dating and bonding potential mates!

Feifers pictured w/ bondmate BB
Miss Dogwood and Mr. Bunny
I confess to having been fairly uninformed about rabbits when the first one joined our family years ago. We had decided on a rabbit because my husband had allergies to cats and we had young children at home. A rabbit seemed the ideal quiet, cute, cuddly, undemanding pet, requiring no stinky poop to scoop, nor daily outdoor walks.

Our local Virginia animal shelter directed our family to the friendliest, best-behaved bunny of the half dozen awaiting homes, and so it was that BunBun came to us. His paltry $5 adoption fee did not prepare me for the true expense of rabbit care. This became apparent the next morning when I was handed the $60 vet bill to cover the cost of pain meds for his post-neuter recovery. It didn’t take long before BunBun needed his first butt bath in the kitchen sink because we overfed him greens, and I remember thinking there must be a lot more to rabbit care than I realized.

It was then that I stumbled across House Rabbit Society online and my eyes were opened to what proper rabbit care looked like. I dispensed with the too-small pet store cage, sipper bottle, wood chips and muesli-style food a pet-store sales associate had recommended. I replaced with them a litter box, plain timothy pellets and hay, and a heavy ceramic water bowl. The poopy-butt episodes disappeared as he adjusted to a healthier diet with the correct proportion of greens.

We were pleased how well BunBun acclimated to our family. The kids loved him as much as we parents did. Many “bunny sleepovers” took place in our family room, where BunBun scampered over sleeping bags to inspect the occupants or watched over us from his perch atop the sofa back.

When I began to wonder whether BunBun might like a rabbit companion, Trixie joined us from a nearby Maryland county shelter. Their rabbit volunteer held a few speed dates, gave me some helpful tips on bonding them at home, and assured me it would go well. I never dreamed that one day I would volunteer at my local shelter, speed-dating and bonding rabbits for others! In a couple weeks, I had bonded Trixie and BunBun, who enjoyed six blissful years together.

When our family made several moves to new cities, we went to great lengths to bring our bunnies along when we traveled cross-country and across borders by car, jet, ferry, and even seaplane. I vividly remember a cross-country flight when, to our great delight, the pilot welcomed “special passengers Trixie and BunBun” over the intercom!

In one city, where a university campus was overrun with hundreds of dumped pet rabbits and their offspring, a controversial cull was announced. I felt powerless to help in any meaningful way until my daughter and I drove to the campus to scoop up three innocent baby bunnies to fill the void that BunBun’s and Trixie’s passing had left a few months earlier.
Advocating for Rabbits
(continued from page 5)

A relocation some months later put me near the route where some of these university rabbits-spared a cull by public outcry and a few determined rescuers-had been offered sanctuary in Texas. I became an alternate driver for the final leg of one bunny transport, and was able to witness the release of these once-doomed university rabbits into the safety of their new sanctuary.

That experience led me to become more involved in rabbit rescue. When I attended my first adoption event at the New Mexico House Rabbit Society (NMHRS) in Albuquerque, I was hooked. I also began to volunteer at the Santa Fe animal shelter, where I dropped in to exercise and socialize the rabbits. Soon, I was changing litter boxes, cleaning food and water dishes, and tidying up bunny kennels. The shelter asked me to foster their special-needs, sick, and behaviorally-challenged rabbits because I had the expertise and available space.

When visitors noticed the bunnies romping in the hallways during exercise time, I shared basics of proper rabbit care, diet and housing, and dispelled common myths about rabbits. I helped screen potential rabbit adopters, snapped cute bunny pictures, and wrote accompanying biographies for each adoptable rabbit for the shelter’s Facebook page and website.

Upon my request, the old wooden rabbit hutch disappeared, kennel identification tags with cute photos and bunny biographies were posted, and the rabbit room received attractive, visible signs.

The shelter’s educational outreach director invited me to speak about house rabbits during Critter Camps, week-long animal sheltering experiences for children aged 9-13. In addition to spending floor time with the bunnies and learning about proper care, a favorite activity is making bunny treat bags: paper lunch bags filled with hay, a small piece of dried fruit, a pinecone, willow wisps, dried rose petals, and toilet paper roll rings.

I still felt like there was more to be done to help rabbits find good homes, so I organized several off-site joint adoption events for the Santa Fe Animal Shelter & Humane Society and the New Mexico House Rabbit Society at the Santa Fe PetSmart.

After volunteering with NMHRS and my local shelter for several years, I became a House Rabbit Society Educator. I now benefit from the expertise of other rabbit-savvy educators across the country, and I learn useful, new information daily through the HRS educator email groups.

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

Time to start thinking about the QUILT RAFFLE!

Production has started on the annual raffle quilt. Despite the disapproving (but very cute) looks on these quilt square bunny faces, this quilt is 100% bunny-approved! Check out our website and Facebook pages for details on the raffle, usually held in July.
Compassionate Shopping with Leaping Bunny
by Renee Tetzloff

My bunny education started with Hugsley, a rabbit I bought impulsively, without knowing what rabbits liked, what their personalities were like, and even what they ate! I sort of muddled through with poor little Hugs. Since then I’ve had three other rabbits—all house rabbits—and I’ve learned a lot about these sweet creatures and made a point to try to do my best by them.

I knew about cruelty-free shopping, but until I received a pamphlet from the Portland, Oregon HRS that pictured a rabbit with a weeping eye, I wasn’t fully aware of the impacts of animal testing. I read the article and discovered that mascara and other cosmetics are often tested on rabbits, causing all kinds of horrible abuse and sad injuries.

The article described Leaping Bunny products, which are certified by PETA to be free of testing on animals. I made up my mind right then and there to use Leaping Bunny-recommended beauty and household products as much as possible. So began my search. Right away, unbeknownst to me, I found I already had one LB product! YAY!

Since we are on a very low income and these products can be expensive, I started looking at our local Grocery Outlet and the Marshall’s store in Portland, which both carry lower priced items. Right away, I was able to purchase a small arsenal of LB things to use!

I also found a Compassionate Shopping Guide online, which the Coalition for Consumer Information of Cosmetics mailed to me (you can also download a handy app to your phone from the Leaping Bunny website). There are tons of safe, responsible products out there! One of my personal favorites is Andalou Naturals. A few others are Avalon Organics, Giovanni Cosmetics, and ACURE. Just look on the back of products to see the LB symbol, which looks like a rabbit taking a leap.

This is the address for the shopping guide:

The Coalition for Consumer Information of Cosmetics (CCIC)
P.O. Box 56537
Philadelphia, PA 19111

Here are some links to learn more about compassionate shopping and cruelty-free products:


What is Leaping Bunny? Cruelty-free shopping can be confusing, sometimes misleading, and ultimately frustrating since many companies have begun designing their own bunny logos, abiding by their own definition of ‘cruelty-free’ or ‘animal friendly’ without the participation of animal protection groups. In response, eight national animal protection groups banded together to form the Coalition for Consumer Information on Cosmetics (CCIC). The CCIC promotes a single comprehensive standard and an internationally recognized Leaping Bunny Logo. LB works with companies to help make shopping for animal-friendly products easier and more trustworthy. Look for the Leaping Bunny logo on your favorite product.
Are you a supporter of New Mexico HRS?

How you can help:

- Volunteer to be a shelter volunteer, fosterer, or outreach volunteer!
- 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
  - [ ] $20 for combined national House Rabbit Society and New Mexico HRS [Students or Seniors]

[ ] I would like to make an additional donation in the amount of $________________

[ ] I would like to volunteer for ____________________________

[ ] Check enclosed (payable to NM HRS)

[ ] Pay by credit card (circle one)
  - VISA
  - Mastercard
  - AmEx
  - Discover

Card # ____________________________
Expiration date (mm/yyyy) ____________________________
Security Code __________  Billing Zip Code __________
Signature ____________________________

Send your donation to:
NMHRS
PO Box 95226
Albuquerque, NM 87199

New Mexico House Rabbit Society is a non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible as provided by law.