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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:
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Winter issue deadline:
Sunday, December 3rd

I DIDN'T CHOOSE THE RABBIT LIFE, THE RABBIT LIFE CHOSE ME

by Kirstin Tyler, *NMHRs Volunteer*

In January 2016 - two months after my husband and I had moved to Albuquerque from San Diego - it occurred to me that I could now foster animals since I owned my own house, something I wasn't able to do in my no-pets-allowed apartment. I grew up with pet rats and guinea pigs so I sought out a small mammal rescue. Unable to find one, I applied to be a fosterer with the city of Albuquerque animal

shelter. They approved me and then asked if I wanted to foster cats, dogs, or both. I emailed back and said "I don't want cats or dogs, I want small mammals like rats or guinea pigs. If you need me to, I could take a rabbit."

I didn't really want a rabbit. They take a lot of specialized care. While I was in college my mom started

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One of Kirstin's former fosters, Chef, was fostered with his brother starting at 4 weeks old. Both of them were fostered for a year before being adopted by Kirstin.

RABBIT LIFE

(continued from page 1)

volunteering at a rabbit rescue frequently and adopted a pair of her own, so while I had been around rabbits before and had rudimentary knowledge of their care, I knew I was more prepared for a small rodent than a lagomorph.

The shelter wrote back, "We usually don't have small mammals, but we have a baby rabbit here. Can you come get him today?" I was not expecting to have to start fostering immediately, but I left work early that day and headed to the shelter for the first time. While filling out my foster contract, a vet tech walked in. The Foster Coordinator said, "Kirstin is here to take the rabbit," to which the vet tech replied, "All of them?"

I looked up from my contract. "How many are there?"

"We have four. Can you take them?"

I explained that at that moment I didn't even have a cage, so I would take home the one rabbit I came for and then figure out how to get equipped for three more rabbits who were too young to spay or neuter, and return for them. This was on a Thursday.

I brought home a very tiny and fluffy bunny and made a makeshift enclosure by flipping my old couches over (we had just bought new furniture and were planning on getting rid of the old stuff) in my empty living room and setting them adjacent to a corner so that the four "walls" of the cage were a sofa, a loveseat, and the two actual walls of the room. My husband and I then dashed to Wal-Mart where we bought some rabbit supplies and I roamed the produce section with my mom on the phone telling me which greens to buy.

I had seen the New Mexico House Rabbit Society email address on the rabbit cage plaques in the shelter so I sent an email on Friday explaining that I was new to the area and had just taken home a rabbit from the shelter. If they

could provide me with appropriate cages, I would take the other three. They agreed, and on Saturday bought 3 spacious and safe indoor rabbit cages and three full sets of supplies for the young rabbits.

Now fully prepared, on Sunday I went to the shelter to meet with shelter volunteer and NMHRS board member, Ned. On a tour of the shelter, I noticed that there was a new baby rabbit in addition to the three I had agreed to foster. I soon learned just how many young rabbits end up in shelters, looking for foster and forever homes.

"I'm going to need another cage!"

I left the shelter with four rabbits that day, going from zero to five rabbits in four days. While I never set out to foster buns, they certainly stole my heart. I have since fostered fourteen rabbits and have fully embraced my new life as a NMHRS volunteer, shelter foster mommy, and house rabbit advocate.



Kirstin's first foster, Cornelia, who was adopted by Kirstin and is now bonded with Chef and his brother Zorro.

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

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



PANDA

Hi, my name is Panda and I'm a 10 month old black and white dutch rabbit and I weigh 5 pounds. When I was a baby, my nine siblings and I were dropped off at the animal shelter. My foster mom took my brother and I into her home and we have been with her for nine months. I have grown up with dogs, cats, a turtle, and my foster mom's rabbit. His name is Bugsy and we have decided that although we aren't the best of friends we try and maintain a peaceful coexistence. My foster mom tells me everyday how I'm such a sweet bunny. I love to be petted and I don't mind if you hold me for a few minutes as long as I feel safe. I am litter box trained and some of my favorite food is cilantro, green leaf lettuce and bananas! I would be happy to meet you and would be grateful if you offer me a forever home.

Hello! Our names are Papa G Fluff and Nintje!

We are a bonded, spayed & neutered pair both just over a year old. Our mom is looking for a really good indoor-only home for us, preferably with someone who has had rabbits before. She is joining the military, moving across country, and sadly can't take us along. Nintje is a female Dutch who enjoys being petted on her ears and will tolerate being held. Papa G is a single-maned lionhead who does not enjoy being pet and is not the biggest fan of being held. He also sheds a lot and will need to be brushed. Both are litterbox trained. We will come with our litterbox, hay, food, and our nice enclosure, for which Mom is asking a rehoming fee.

PAPA G FLUFF



Only respond if interested and if prepared for a bonded rabbit pair. Mom will be asking to see where we will live and she would love to stay in contact: khjones8118@gmail.com

NINTJE

At 5 months, Daphne is the perfect age to find her forever home. Fostered in a rich, stimulating environment, she's had a head start as a practiced house bunny and is ready to form a bond with her new companion(s). Daphne was brought to NMHRS with 3 brothers and sisters after being found as strays. She was only a couple months old so she has grown up around humans and is very comfortable around them.

Daphne loves to lounge around and gaze up at you with her head on the ground. However, she is not lazy and enjoys exploring her environment. She is very sweet and likes to be pet on her head. She's very good at being picked up.

Daphne is currently being fostered for the Albuquerque East Side Animal Shelter, but you can register your interest with her foster carer via email kirstin@newmexicohrs.org.

DAPHNE



CAPTAIN



This is Captain, a Dutch-mix bunny rabbit with so much love to give. He's energetic, curious, social, and absolutely loves getting pet on the head. He is always happy to see you and often runs right up to you looking for pets. If you've ever wanted the spirit of a puppy in the body of a rabbit then Captain is who you're looking for.

He's about a year old right now and has been in foster since early August of last year. He is super sweet and loves to "chin" everything. He has excellent litter box skills. His favorite foods are romaine, collard greens, cilantro, and cucumber, but he is always excited for any green vegetable, especially anything with a crunch (like the center of romaine leaves or the stalk of a collard green).

Captain is currently being fostered for the Albuquerque East Side Animal Shelter, but you can register your interest with his foster carer via email: kirstin@newmexicohrs.org.

Whiskey is an active boy, always looking for something to do. He also has the longest eyelashes... sure to win anyone's heart. He'll enjoy a home with plenty of physical challenges. He likes playing in, around and on top of his cardboard box and will spend lots of time tearing up newspaper for fun. At meal times, he loves his pellets. He also enjoys eating salad, but isn't greedy and eats it slowly over the course of many hours. He draws the line at cucumber however, failing to see the appeal. He has excellent litter box skills. He loves to receive a petting, and can be picked up.

WHISKEY



At 5 months old and neutered, Whiskey is looking forward to finding his forever home. Can you accommodate this industrious bun with plenty of activity in your home?

Whiskey is currently being fostered for the Albuquerque East Side Animal Shelter, but you can register your interest with his foster carer via email: kirstin@newmexicohrs.org.

Bunny Monitoring and the “Wascally” Rabbit by Brittany Ban

For some rabbits standard bunny proofing just doesn't protect them from all household hazards. There are certain rabbits that can usually find something unhealthy to chew on no matter what. If you have one of these mischievous rabbits, it is very important to be able to monitor them during their free range playtime.

My Harrison is one of these wascally-type rabbits. He reminds me of a goat: they like to nibble on many objects and eat them. I provide a wide variety of bunny safe toys for the rabbits, both inside and outside their crates. However, when Harrison is out, I have to be quite vigilant of his activities. For me, this means no messing around on the phone or iPad.

Some typically bunny-safe toys are not Harrison-safe. This includes cardboard boxes and phone books. He can play with each of these items sometimes for as long as five minutes, depending on his mood, before he will start ingesting parts of the boxes and phone books. Left to his own devices, he will plant himself on said toys and binge. It took me a while to realize how his eating of these normally bunny safe paper toys was hurting his stomach. The next day he wouldn't be his normal happy self. He wouldn't eat or have bowel movements for a while. So while these items are out in my living room, Harrison isn't allowed to play with them for extended amounts of time and I remove them as soon as I notice him eating the parts. He even has a method of swallowing hard to eat pieces by chewing and throwing his head back repeatedly. When I see this behavior I know he has something in his mouth and he is trying to get rid of the evidence and will rush over and attempt to extract the forbidden item from his mouth. Now that I have Harrison-proofed, it's usually

just some paper or piece of a cardboard box. However, in the past these items have included foam from a flip flop, foam from a yoga mat, carpet fibers, straps and canvas from a backpack, a ball of rabbit hair, pieces of a towel, pieces of a paper towel, duct tape, fabric from a chair, fabric from a throw pillow and stuffing from a throw pillow. Once some puzzle pieces disappeared, and I have my suspicions about them ending up in someone's stomach. At an NMHRS event I put Harrison in an ex-pen with the usual small piece of carpet. Within one minute he was eating the carpet, which we removed immediately. There is a plastic mat underlining his house and natural grass mats which provide him with a soft spot to relax. Once a corner of the plastic mat curled up, and he ate pieces of it so the mat is now flush with the floor.

Unfortunately, the results of eating these types of materials can result in the rabbit dying due to an intestinal blockage. I've had a couple close calls with Harrison. The first time he ingested parts of a towel that had been wrapped around the outside of the crate to prevent drafts. The second time he ate pieces from a throw pillow. Both times his temperature was dangerously low, he was cool to the touch, and he hadn't eaten or had any bowel movements for an extended amount of time. Luckily, Harrison recovered both times. Since then, I watch him very closely when he is out and I spend a lot of time giving him my undivided attention. He is older now and not quite as rambunctious as he used to be.

While some bunnies can be perfectly fine running free range, chewing on phone books and cardboard, I am convinced that for some rabbits this is not a viable option. My other rabbit,

Snowbunny, also likes to chew, but I have noticed he doesn't ingest the materials. Be aware of what your bunny plays with, and if the bunny is swallowing dangerous ingredients. When it comes to bunny proofing for a wascally rabbit, some often overlooked items include:

- shoes, slippers and flip flops
- purses and hand bags
- exercise equipment (ex, knee wraps, foam covered weights, exercise mats, gloves)
- plastic bags
- towels
- sponges
- house plants
- pet food bowls with rubber on the bottom
- curtains, blankets, sheets
- bunny toys with rope (I've seen some for sale with cotton rope—a definite no-no for ingesting!)
- tissues, napkins, and paper towels
- pillows, cushions
- upholstered furniture



Naturally inquisitive bunnies (like Whiskey, see page 3) enjoy exploring their environments; make sure you've rabbit-proofed appropriately to keep bunny safe.

Flying the Rabbit-Friendly Skies

by Iris Klimczuk-Massion



Smokey enjoys her dinner of hay & cilantro at 35,000 ft recently on a non-stop Alaska Airlines flight from Seattle bound for Albuquerque.

Flying in-cabin with rabbits is easy with a little advance planning. My rabbits are now seasoned travellers. Here's what you need to know.

Currently, only 3 US airlines transport rabbits domestically in-cabin for a fee: Frontier, United, and Alaska Airlines. Westjet, serving Canadian destinations from some US cities, is a fourth one. You'll need to phone the carrier to let them know you're carrying a pet on-board with you after booking your own ticket online, since the number of pets allowed in-cabin per flight is limited.

Upon arrival at the airport, you'll need to line up for assistance so an agent can check-in you and your rabbit and to pay the additional pet transport fee.

Then you will proceed to the trickiest part of flying with a rabbit, which for me is passing through TSA security. Here, your rabbit must be removed and carried thru the metal detector with you while its carrier is x-rayed separately.

If your rabbit is skittish, ask the TSA agent for a private screening room where your rabbit will be contained in the event it should decide to bolt. If you have multiple rabbits, you may need to ask a fellow traveller or TSA

agent for assistance carrying your buns through security.

Rabbits typically fly very well and veterinarians do not advise sedation. All animals must remain in their carriers for the duration of the flight for their safety.

A soft-sided, top and front-opening carrier conforming to the airline's required specific dimensions allows for some flexibility to fit under the seat in front of you. Lining the bottom of your carrier with a disposable puppy pee pad is a good idea and bring along extras to replace them when soiled or torn, as you will be underway for several hours.

In my experience, offering water to drink in a dish can result in a wet rabbit and carrier in-flight. I recommend bringing along fresh greens like cilantro, parsley, or mixed

salad greens instead to help keep bunny hydrated. Another option is to moisten pelleted food with water in a small lightweight bowl, if your rabbit will eat them that way, either before boarding or during the flight.

Bring hay in a large ziploc bag and place some inside the carrier to munch on, and have a 24 ounce bag with you in case of flight delays, etc. I carry a several day supply of pelleted food with me in case their regular pellet is not available at our destination or my checked bag gets lost and I need to transition them to another food pellet.

Currently, it is not necessary to have a health certificate to transport your rabbit in-cabin domestically. If transporting via the cargo hold - which I don't recommend unless in-cabin is not an option - the airline usually requires a veterinary health certificate. This means a vet visit is needed within 10 days of your flight and an extra cost. Always double check all

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FLYING WITH RABBITS
(continued from page 5)



Pleased to be on terra firma again after flying home on Alaska Airlines' rabbit-friendly skies are Babycakes, age 12, (left), Nico (middle) and Smokey (right), both age 7.

requirements for transporting your rabbit with your chosen airline well in advance.

Note that code share flights on other carriers typically do not honor their partner airlines' pet transportation policies, so be sure the flight you book is flown on a jet operated by United, Frontier, or Alaska Airlines.

Whether or not you choose to fly with your rabbit or to leave it behind with a pet-sitter when you travel is a personal decision. In my experience, having travelled with my rabbits across the country by car and by jet, I think flying in-cabin is much easier on both the rabbit and its human than several days of driving with overnight hotel stays. Being well-prepared always pays off and makes for a smooth flying experience.

Bon voyage!

..... *Is a Rabbit Right for your Child?*
by Kirstin Tyler

As a serial fosterer I am often approached by families interested in adopting a rabbit because one of the children really wants one. There are many things to consider when deciding if a rabbit is right for your child.

First, rabbits are prey animals, and if they don't have their feet on the ground, they think they are being swooped up to be eaten. While cute and cuddly, they don't really love to be picked up, which is sometimes hard for young kids to understand.

Second, a rabbit's skeleton is very light (up to 50% less dense than a cat's) but they have very powerful back legs. If you pick up a rabbit incorrectly and they try to get away from you they are capable of kicking so hard that they break a bone or even their own spine. They may also painfully kick, scratch, or bite to get away. Even though children are shorter than adults, a rabbit can still be severely injured from being dropped by a child. Only adults should pick up a rabbit.

Rabbits need multiple hours of daily exercise, so do not plan on bringing home a rabbit and keeping her in a small cage in the corner of your child's room. If you must keep them in a cage for part of the day it should be at least 4x4 and tall enough that the bun can stand up on her hind legs. They take up much more room than a hamster. The ideal situation is for them to have free access to bunny-proofed parts of your home like a house cat. They can be litter box trained like cats, but they must have rabbit-safe litter and their boxes need to be changed at least every other day.

Rabbits need to be socialized and can become depressed if they are ignored. Unlike a dog, they cannot demand attention. Rabbits can live 10 years (or more) which means that if your child is going to go away for college, there needs to be a plan for the rabbit. Too many are abandoned when teens loose interest.

While not exactly high maintenance, rabbits do require more attention than other pets. They need to be brushed regularly and will require nail trimming. (NMHRS offers free rabbit nail trims at most of our events.) Daily meals should include unlimited hay, a measured amount of pellets, and fresh greens, Like many prey animals, they hide their illnesses, and require a watchful eye and immediate action if signs of illness, such as inappetence are exhibited.

Ultimately, rabbits are not "starter" pets. When adopting a rabbit, the adult is the one taking on the responsibility of the daily time and effort over the next decade. Therefore, the question is not whether a rabbit is right for your child, but rather if a rabbit is right for you, the parent.

BUNNIES GET UPDATED SPACE AT SANTA FE ANIMAL SHELTER AND HUMANE

by Ginny Greninger

Earlier this year the Santa Fe Animal Shelter and Human Society's (SFAS) new Executive Director, Dr. Jennifer Steketee, (formerly Medical Director) re-envisioned the SFAS adoption building space. The bunnies had been housed behind the General Store off the main lobby, and often the only time we had visitors was when someone in the General Store wandered to the back of the space.

Wanting to both create increased revenue for the Store by expanding, and to give the bunnies a better opportunity for increased viewing, Dr. Steketee decided to house the bunnies and all of their supplies in a room visible as one first enters the adoption building. The NMHRS kennels were relocated to that room, along with the addition of a roomy storage cabinet for our entire bunny supplies, food, hay, etc. Palin Wiltshire designed and produced an eye-catching banner featuring her Mirame.



We were on hand when the kennels and bunnies were moved and to transfer all of the supplies. The former room had west-facing windows and the afternoon sun was always an issue. The new room has north-facing windows and thus is much cooler in the afternoon. There were a few tweaks needed in the new space, such as blocking the HVAC vents from blowing on the kennels, and removing the door to the room to allow for better ventilation. The Director was very responsive to our request for tweaks and all of the issues have been resolved. They bought new large bins for alfalfa and timothy hay storage that are a great asset. The room also has a closet. The door was removed to allow for greater access and Dr. Steketee hung an attractive bunny curtain.

We have room to expand for nine bunnies thanks to NMHRS kennels. Currently we have our Flemish Giant, Queen Elizabeth, and another larger bunny, Bart, in double condo kennels. After some adjustment to the new space for both the bunnies and volunteers, we have settled in. We are so grateful to all of the SFAS bunny volunteers who provide 6-7 day shifts so the rabbits are exercised and well taken care of. Thanks to Julie, Bonnie, Amy, Elizabeth, Joan, Palin, Ginny and others that substitute as needed.



A bunny-themed curtain brightens up the new space (above). The likeness of Mirame beckons visitors into the new space (right), while newly configured kennels (center) allow for more flexibility housing residents on their journeys to find their forever homes.



New Mexico HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

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