

Inside this issue:

Reflections	1
Three Firsts	2
Adoptable Buns	3
Vet Column: Keeping Your Rabbit Healthy	4
Santa Fe National Forest Rescue	5
Rio Rancho Lionhead Rescue	6



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kirstin@newmexicohrs.org

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Write for Rabbit Tracks!

Is there a topic that hasn't been covered in *Rabbit Tracks* that you would like to see? Flex your writing muscles in our next issue! Contact: editor@newmexicohrs.org

Summer issue deadline:
Sunday, June 3rd

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Thanks to Iris Klimczuk and Marie Arrowsmith for newsletter production!

REFLECTIONS

by Bill Velasquez, NMHRS outgoing President, Volunteer since 2006

I often tell people that working on bondings is the most important and rewarding work that I have done in my life. The ability to facilitate love between two tiny souls is something that I have been so fortunate to participate in over the last eleven years of volunteering with the House Rabbit Society. I am always so amazed by how their courtships and relationships mirror human interactions. You can't tell me that they don't have feelings. They most definitely experience pain, loss and happiness in many of the same ways we do. I also tell people that if I had known I was going to spend so much time sitting on bathtub edges, tile floors and stairs in our house we would have designed them to be more comfortable when we built the house. I consider myself extremely blessed and fortunate to have been allowed to experience the private lives of so many wonderful rabbits over the years.

People say that time flies and in some respects I can agree with that, but in many areas of life it simply doesn't. Sometimes I feel like eleven years in rescue has yielded few results because we never catch up with the volume of rabbits that continually flow in to the shelters or are called in as strays, hoarding or abuse cases. Sometimes I feel like we have been marching in place forever. Then I think back on how far we have come and the many people that have brought us to where we are today. We have accomplished more than I ever imagined we would

when we rescued our first rabbit. I have been so fortunate to work with so many outstanding people in rescue and their names are too numerous to list individually. I am humbled and grateful to know every one of them.

Now the time has come for me to move on and allow fresh faces and ideas to shape our organization's bright future. I am thrilled to announce that Kirstin Tyler has taken over as Chapter Manager of the New Mexico House Rabbit Society. This change means that I will no longer be the central point of contact, nor will I have an active role in the governance of the organization. I will continue to work as a Licensed HRS Educator focusing on the things I am passionate about like outreach and pair bondings. So, I will still be around and I hope to continue to see many of you at events. Stop by and say, "Hi!"—I am usually in the back working on a bond.

A few other things like our mailing address will change, but for the most part the many great people that have made this organization what it is today will continue to be a part of it moving forward. This change should be transparent to most and I know that all of you will give Kirstin the same great support and encouragement that you have given me over the last eleven years. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your rabbits' lives. I have enjoyed meeting and talking to all of you and I wish you and your rabbits all the best!

Three firsts! First companion, first bunny, first NMHRS adoption of 2017!

by Kerrie Kiefer

Our son Kyle has always been fond of little animals and has asked us for years if he could get his own pet. He has also been very good about saving his money for things that he wants to purchase for himself.

For his 8th birthday in November 2016, he received cash gifts which he saved because he specifically wanted to buy his own pet. When he came to his father and me asking to use his savings for a pet, we told him to do a little research and let us know what he learned about the animals he had in mind.

First, he wanted a mouse, but then said he thought it would be bad since we have cats. Then he wanted a chinchilla, but after researching them, he found out that they weren't very playful pets. Kyle then looked up rabbits and fell in love with the idea of a pet rabbit. We asked him to research the cost of supplies to house the rabbit, food, and anything else that a rabbit may need, which he did.

Since Kyle seemed set on the idea of a pet rabbit, I went ahead and did a search for adoptable bunnies in Albuquerque and that's how I came across the New Mexico House Rabbit Society. I had never heard of them, but quickly learned they were the organization from which Kyle should adopt his first pet. I had him look through their adoptable rabbits and he found Biscuit! Kyle loved everything about her bio listing, especially the fact that she liked to play!

I completed the online application forms and we waited. After a couple of days, Kyle got antsy and kept asking if I had heard anything back. I then emailed with a follow up on the application, and we



Kerrie and her son Kyle take turns cuddling with Biscuit. Biscuit was spotted in April 2016 as a stray living near I-40 outside Albuquerque. Two dedicated volunteers managed to catch her during a lunch break. Now Biscuit has a loving forever home!

received the call to meet Biscuit at her foster's home. For both Kyle and me, it was love at first sight! Kyle was ready right then and there to bring her home.

It was suggested that we check out some of the other adoptable rabbits at the shelter to see if any of them might also appeal to us, so we did that the same day we met Biscuit. Kyle just didn't feel the same way about the other shelter rabbits as he did about Biscuit. We contacted Biscuit's foster the next day to let her know that we were sure we wanted to adopt Biscuit and found out about the next steps.

Although Kyle did the research and budgeting for the cost of Biscuit's food and supplies, I was asked to officially adopt Biscuit as the responsible adult. But Kyle is her human, and they are the cutest together! Biscuit gets so excited when he comes home, and she loves to play on Kyle's bed while he's reading before bed. She even cuddles with him at night while he's sleeping. We love our little Biscuit!

A Springtime Reminder from Bunny Vet Dr. Lyman

In springtime, you may have the good fortune of seeing a newborn wild cottontail rabbit (or a nest of them!). You will probably not see mom—she will be out eating and avoiding drawing attention to the special place she's hidden her offspring.

Many are tempted to 'rescue' these young rabbits as they appear abandoned—but they are not! The mother will return to the nest in the evening. Remind your friends to "Look but Leave" any wild baby bunnies they find. They will have a significantly higher chance of surviving if they are left undisturbed.

WANT TO WORK WITH SHELTER BUNS?

Get in touch with a
volunteer coordinator:

Ned (ABQ):

Iris (Santa Fe):

Victoria (Rio Rancho):

nednever@aol.com

iris@newmexicohrs.org

pereztori10@aol.com

Looking for their forever home!

Adoptable Buns

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



DUSTY
Spayed 1 yr old female
Contact: Liz - pelletinpelletout@yahoo.com

Hi! I'm Dusty! I'm a gentle, sweet, very friendly girl with a few special medical needs. I was found hiding under a trailer earlier this year and I will do best in a single animal home, where I can have plenty of attention. My fosterer Liz says I am a wonderful rabbit!

Hi, I'm Pumpkin, a super friendly girl who loves people and attention! I love to greet you when you come home and also love to have supervised outdoor playtime. I was in foster care with a fractured leg, but it has now completely healed. I'm very outgoing and also very sweet. I get along fine with my foster mom's cats and small dogs.



PUMPKIN
Spayed 7 mo old female
Contact: Liz - pelletinpelletout@yahoo.com



ASHER
Neutered 1 yr old male
Santa Fe Animal Shelter & Humane Society
Contact: Iris- iris@newmexicohrs.org

Well Hello There! I'm Asher. I am soooo loving and one of my favorite things is to take long snoozy afternoon naps. Everyone says I am an adorable affectionate bunny! I'm also an albino rabbit so I should be housed out of bright sunlight since I lack pigment in my cute little red eyes.

Hi, I'm Icicle! I'm a real cutie lionhead angora mix. Contact Liz if you are interested in meeting me.

Hi, I'm Lt. Dan! I am a sweet hunk of a bun recently arrived to Santa Fe from a partner shelter. I am very friendly and once I get to know you, I don't mind being picked up and cuddled. I am a big boy—there are about 8 lbs of me to love! I'm neutered and working on my litterbox habits. I am really looking forward to living indoors at my forever home.



ICICLE
Neutered 6 mo old male
Contact: Liz - pelletinpelletout@yahoo.com



LT DAN
Neutered male (age unknown)
Santa Fe Animal Shelter & Humane Society
Contact: Iris- iris@newmexicohrs.org

And now a word from a bunny vet!

KEEPING YOUR RABBIT HEALTHY:

Proper Diet and an Annual Wellness Exam are Key

Dr. Bridget Lyman

Rabbits make wonderful companions and, with proper care, can live up to ten to twelve years. Here are some tips to make sure your fluffy friend stays healthy for years to come!



Santa Fe vet Dr. Bridget Lyman poses with her bunny, Gus.

DIET

Rabbits are obligate herbivores and require a diet that is high in fiber. Ideally, your bunny should eat 2-4 tablespoons per day of a complete and balanced pelleted rabbit food. Avoid foods that have brightly colored bits, corn kernels, seeds, or other unnecessary items. Rabbits will often pick out the 'junk food' in these mixes and avoid eating the nutritious pellets, setting them up for a nutritional disaster. A good rabbit diet will be supplemented with vitamins & minerals, and you should not need to add any additional supplements to the diet unless specifically recommended by your veterinarian.

The rest of a bunny's diet should be hay. Hay should comprise 75-85% of their daily food consumption. The benefits of hay are almost limitless—it stimulates normal intestinal motility, provides nutrition to the healthy bacteria in a rabbit's gut, helps to keep teeth properly worn down, and provides an interesting source of forage for a rabbit.

Rabbits under 6 months of age should eat alfalfa hay—its higher

protein content helps their rapid growth. Alfalfa can also be fed in other specific cases when recommended by a vet – for example, to an underweight or sick older rabbit. Adult rabbits (older than 6 months) should eat timothy hay. Other types of hay, like orchard grass or oat hay, may be offered in small amounts to provide variety.

The third component of a rabbit's diet is fresh vegetables. Offer 1-2 cups per day of any of a variety of vegetables (see rabbit.org for a complete listing). If you'd like to grow a garden for your bunny, you might try planting parsley, carrots, cabbage, romaine lettuce, sunflowers (they like the leaves!), and dandelions.

Radishes and turnips have tasty leaves and you can offer limited portions of the root of these plants as well. Raspberry and strawberry plant leaves are also delectable and the occasional berry is a real treat for your bunny. More info on suitable plants can be found at www.rabbit.org.

VETERINARY CARE

Rabbits should have a physical exam performed by a competent rabbit veterinarian once a year. Not every veterinarian see rabbits, but these are familiar with the unique needs of rabbits: <https://newmexicohrs.org/list-of-vets/> A thorough physical exam will include an assessment of many organs and systems. The teeth (front teeth and molars) should be viewed at every exam to ensure they are wearing properly. The eyes should be examined for cataracts or inflammatory eye conditions.

A good ear exam using a cone will reveal ear wax, mites, or infection that could be problematic. Your rabbit veterinarian will

listen to your bunny's heart & lungs to determine if there are any cardiopulmonary concerns. Palpation of the abdomen can help determine if a stomach or intestinal problem is present, assess kidney size and shape, and reveal if any bladder stones are lurking within.

And of course, a good exam always includes a thorough look through your bunny's fur to check for parasites, dermatitis, or abscesses. Abscesses are not uncommon in rabbits; they can develop as a result of a wound, dental disease, or parasites. They usually require aggressive treatment, and because rabbits can hide them so well, regular wellness exams will help make sure they don't go unnoticed.

Special attention is required for new young bunnies and senior rabbits. Juvenile bunnies will generally reach puberty between 4-6 months of age. Males should be neutered around this time to decrease the chance they will contribute to unwanted litters and to decrease urine-marking behavior. Consider spaying female bunnies at the same age, both to reduce unwanted litters and to prevent uterine and mammary tumors that can occur later in life.

In the US, house rabbits do not generally need to be vaccinated. Rabbits are vulnerable to a few infectious diseases for which effective vaccines exist; however, those diseases (myxomatosis and rabbit hemorrhagic disease) are not present endemically in this country and thus not a risk.

There are, however, a few diseases of local importance that rabbits may be exposed to if they spend

(continued on page 7)

Santa Fe National Forest Rabbit Rescue

by Angie Rizzo

In early October, my husband, Ryan, and I went for a hike on the mountain to see the changing aspen leaves, happy to make it before the winter transition. On the way back, we decided to take the forest road home so that we could enjoy the day a bit longer. The sun was warm that late afternoon and we were able to keep the car windows down as we descended the mountain.

About halfway down, I saw what looked like a rabbit-shaped lawn ornament on the opposite side of the road. I then noticed that there was a family standing in a grassy grove looking into the woods just beyond the rabbit lawn ornament. Once closer, it became clear the rabbit was real and animated, and the family was looking at more of these snow-white rabbits frolicking in the woods.

We stopped the car to investigate this surreal scene. The family showed us where the majority of the colony was, just a little further by the creek. When I saw how many rabbits there were I quickly became horrified. The family didn't realize the direness of the situation and seemed charmed to see white bunnies hopping around.

I did a count and landed on twelve. The rabbits were not skittish or afraid of people. Many were happily lounging about, grazing on fresh grass, drinking from the stream, and chasing one another. They would not let me pet them, but they also did not run away from me.

Ryan and I were not prepared to capture them, so we took our GPS coordinates and some pictures. It was nearing sunset as we worriedly drove off. I had never come across anything like that before and was unsure of what to do—should we just have tried to catch a few? I had many doubts and concerns running through my head on the long drive home.

I phoned Iris as soon as we reached the house, who suggested I call Animal Control first thing in the morning with the GPS coordinates. She offered her assistance if they needed extra help. When I alerted Animal Control Monday morning, they told me that there was already a call in and that they would send a van up that day.

All day at work, I worried for the rabbits in the forest, wondering if Animal Control had found them. I checked in with Iris in the early evening, who told me that she had followed up with both the Animal Shelter, who had no knowledge of the abandoned rabbits, and Animal Control, and that the rabbits had not yet been rescued. It was up to us to do something about it, so Tuesday morning we met at dawn and



A small colony of twelve rabbits were discovered in the Santa Fe National Forest. While this may seem like an idyllic habitat, domesticated rabbits will not survive long in a wild setting.

went in search of the rabbits in my Subaru, loaded X-pens, hay, pellets, carriers, brooms, and bananas.

We drove up the rutted mountain road slowly and carefully, being cautious to not get stuck. I recognized the location of the abandoned rabbits the moment I saw it, so we parked the car to look around.

At first, I did not see any rabbits and my heart began to drop, but then I spotted a pair grazing in a thicket of low-lying greenery. The first two were remarkably easy to catch, hopping towards us. One was lured into a carrier by a piece of banana, and the other we quickly rounded up with the aid of an X-pen.

We further scouted the area and found another bun a ways off grazing by the creek. He took a little more time, but eventually, he too was lured into a carrier with banana. We could not see any others for a while after that. I went further down the creek and discovered a deceased gray and white spotted rabbit in the creek. The sight was emotionally triggering,

(continued on page 6)

FOREST RABBIT RESCUE

(continued from page 5)

and I felt awful that we did not get there in time to save this little one.

Iris urged me to keep looking and then, we spotted a little long-haired brown rabbit (now known as Zora) sitting next to a rotted out stump. Upon approaching her, she disappeared inside of it. Iris and I peered in and saw nothing—until two rabbits poked their heads out! They had found themselves the most protected ‘burrow’ in the area, which of course, was a difficult place to lure them out of.

This stump was situated on the edge of a steep bank of the creek which made it very difficult to maneuver around. We devised a plan of setting up an X-pen enclosure on one side, with Iris on the other side with a broom. We lured them out as best we could with treats and patience. They emerged one at a time, and we were so happy to capture them both!

We saw no more bunnies, so we headed down the mountain so I could get to work and Iris delivered the five rabbits to the shelter. The next day, she and volunteer Liz Sharp drove back up to the remote location and were able to find one more rabbit, Lucky.

In the end, six of the twelve rabbits were saved. I am grateful that we were able to rescue as many as we did, and that those rabbits will go on to live peaceful lives with loving families.



Former forest bunny Reginald, left, with his new companion Jessie, right, is one of two forest rescues that have found their forever homes. Reginald and Jessie found love thanks to the patient and heartfelt work of master bonder Bill Velasquez.

RIO RANCHO ANGORA LIONHEAD RESCUE BY LIZ SHARP, NMHRS BOARD MEMBER



The Jeanette Kelly family was all smiles on adoption day for bunnies Lionel, Puff, Fluff, and Lupita! A total of 18 dwarf angora lionheads were rescued by NMHRS volunteers after being abandoned at a Rio Rancho residence in September. Nearly all have found loving homes (one adoptable is currently featured on Page 3). Thanks to all who rescued, fostered, and adopted!

Last August, NMHRS got a call from a homeowner in Rio Rancho about some lionhead rabbits roaming free in the street and surrounding yards.

Our Director asked me to investigate. Upon arrival, I could not believe what I saw - little lionheads, everywhere! A breeder had vacated his residence, releasing his 18 unwanted rabbits.

It took several days of trips, herding, and humanely trapping these little bunnies to get them all to safety. Many thanks to wranglers Kirsten, Eric, Matt, Jackie, Donna, Erin, Fred, and Jenni.

Special thanks to Kariana Atkinson, DVM of Petroglyph Animal Hospital for vet & foster care. All but two rabbits have now found forever homes! Without everyone’s help, this rescue would not have been possible.

A WORD FROM A BUNNY VET: KEEPING YOUR RABBIT HEALTHY

(continued from page 4)

time outdoors, for which there are no vaccines. Wild rabbits are the primary reservoir for *tularemia*, a highly contagious bacterial disease. It can be transmitted to dogs, cats, humans, and your pet rabbit through contact with an affected wild rabbit or through a tick bite.

Plague—yes, the bacterial disease you remember as the “Black Death” from history class—is also present in New Mexico. It is primarily transmitted to dogs, cats, humans, and potentially also your rabbit through flea bites or contact with an infected wild animal.

The symptoms of both of these diseases can include fever, swollen lymph nodes, and lethargy. Both are treatable with the right antibiotics, but require immediate veterinary attention. The risk of your rabbit acquiring either of these diseases is low, but if your bunny spends a significant amount of time outdoors or spends time with a dog or cat who goes outdoors, consider asking your veterinarian about rabbit-safe flea and tick prevention.

Senior rabbits should have screening bloodwork performed at least annually. This will help detect the onset of chronic conditions that can occur in elderly rabbits, allowing for early treatment and better long term management. Senior bunnies are also prone to developing arthritis, for which many treatments are available. If you have a senior rabbit who isn't hopping as well as a youngster, consult your local rabbit veterinarian for options.

Savvy rabbit owners should also be familiar with medications that must be avoided. While generally safe & effective in dogs and cats, products that contain fipronil, like Frontline™, are lethal to rabbits. Additionally, certain antibiotics can destroy a rabbit's critically important populations of healthy gut bacteria.

Specifically, make sure your bunny avoids oral administration of penicillins (i.e. amoxicillin), cephalosporins (i.e. cephalixin), and lincosamides (i.e. clindamycin). In rare cases, these medications are given to rabbits by injection—but this should only be under the supervision of an experienced rabbit veterinarian.

Rabbit health warnings

- ▶ Difficulty breathing
- ▶ Severe diarrhoea
- ▶ Grinding teeth loudly
- ▶ Loss of weight
- ▶ They are limp, floppy & cold
- ▶ Difference in behaviour
- ▶ Doesn't come to greet you
- ▶ Not interested in food
- ▶ Hunched up
- ▶ Hiding/sitting in a corner
- ▶ Not drinking/Drinking too much
- ▶ Sitting in same place all day
- ▶ Lets you pick them up when usually they don't
- ▶ Laying down and getting up again quickly
- ▶ Difference in droppings
- ▶ No droppings in tray
- ▶ Watery/creamy eyes
- ▶ Wet nose/discharge/sneezing
- ▶ Wet fur around the mouth

The earlier you spot any illness signs the better as rabbits are prey animals and will hide their illnesses.

Always check they are eating their food and hay everyday.

Just by observing their behaviour closely everyday you will be able to notice quickly when they are not well.

Please act quickly if you see any of the above signs. Contact your vet asap as your rabbits health can deteriorate very quickly!

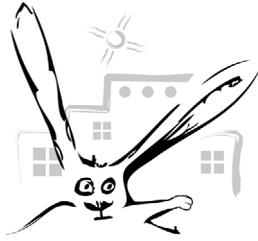
Graphic used with permission from Best4Bunny.com

OUTSIDE TIME

Some house rabbits are fortunate enough to spend time outdoors occasionally. This provides wonderful enrichment—new smells, new leaves and grass to eat, and interesting places to dig. Free roam in the yard should be supervised to ensure your rabbit doesn't escape, get into things he or she shouldn't be eating, and most importantly—to prevent predation. Raptors, coyotes, bobcats, domestic dogs & cats, and other predators pose a real risk to pet rabbits. Please keep a careful eye out—even in well-developed areas—for unwanted attention and always supervise your rabbit outdoors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Bridget Lyman practices small animal and exotic pet medicine at Smith Veterinary Hospital in Santa Fe. She graduated from North Carolina State University with a focus on small mammal medicine. She has a deep appreciation for the special friendship that rabbits offer, and a sincere interest in their unique medical needs. She has had two wonderful rabbits of her own and suspects there will be more in her future.



New Mexico

HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

9445 Coors Blvd NW #142
Albuquerque, NM 87114

A non-profit 501(c)3 organization
505-435-9916
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www.newmexicohrs.org

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