



THE Rabbit Advocate



PROVIDING INSIGHTS INTO THE LIVES OF HOUSE RABBITS

SUMMER 2006

Focus on Adoption: Matchmaker, Matchmaker *by Angela Jones*

Rabbits are social animals, and companionship is one of their most important needs. For our foster parents, it's part of their job to ensure that their wards find homes where they will form close bonds with a person or another rabbit.



It takes time to find the right partner, and it takes patience to create a strong and lasting bond.

Our foster parents are happy to provide ongoing support throughout the process. If you're thinking about adopting a rabbit, or seeking a companion for a rabbit you already have, allow our foster parents to help you make the perfect match.—Ed.

Dating can sometimes bring out the worst in someone. Dexter was no exception.

A male English spot, Dexter is always on the move, curious and fearless. His favorite pastimes are eating (of course) and lounging under an adoring human hand.

But after a year with our family, Dexter's affections had been repeatedly rebuffed by the cat, and his humans couldn't

spend enough time with him to fill the void. I feared our only child was lonely.

"Rabbits can die of loneliness," a friend said, who had a bachelor at the time as well. "They mate for life." This became my mantra through what turned out to be a lengthy series of "speed dates" and some general socializing for my little Dexter.

Within an hour of starting my research I had found seasoned Rabbit Advocate volunteer Valerie Madison, who over the years has focused her efforts on rescuing and fostering rabbits at her Portland home. Some of her foster rabbits are in bonded pairs, but many are still looking for that special someone.

After a couple of weeks of carting him around town for his dates, it was clear that Dex was no Romeo. As Valerie paraded her available females one by one before him, each endured (and a few did not) a snorting, biting, threatening monster who managed to take a taste of a few volunteers as well. Who was this rabbit?

Valerie had a few more docile females she thought Dex should meet and encouraged me to give it one more try. There were a couple of girls who inspired less aggression but for the most part it was more of the same. Finally, Valerie looked at me and said, "Well, there is one more female left but Bella is extremely timid. I don't know."

For most of the pet meet Bella, twice Dex's size, was frozen on one corner of the rug. He circled her slowly several times, sniffed at her nose and mounted her. Ten minutes later he hopped back to his own corner and sat with his ears back. It was the best I had seen. "I'll take her."

Valerie trapped Bella two years ago in a backyard near Sandy

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Top 10 Reasons Big White Bunnies are Awesome Companions!

10. You can hear them coming when they run down the hall.
9. There's more bunny to warm up your lap.
8. Their serene white faces always look innocent, even while making mischief.
7. Their ability to reach higher makes them able to help with more home-decorating projects, yours or theirs!
6. They are a real presence when they enter a room (everyone will turn and stare!).
5. They can steal an entire apple off your plate and take off! (And they can't hide well in the shadows, so retrieving stolen items is easy.)
4. You can always tell when they've been playing in the fireplace.
3. They look especially cute with orange carrot-stains on their chin.



2. Their beautiful light-colored eyes reflect love and gratitude whenever they look at you.
1. They always complement your décor.

Lily and Snowbell (left) are two beautiful black eyed girls who were born and living wild in SE Portland before they were rescued. An irresponsible owner had let a male and female loose and they had babies. The mother was killed by a car and these two had little chance for survival with predators given their white color. We rescued them and they have since been spayed. We need to find a loving indoor safe home for them. They get along just fine with kids but need more attention than they are getting as foster rabbits.

Contact: ituri@aol.com



Miss July, the model for the Rabbit Advocate Easter ad, is a very photogenic girl.

photo: Kam Sypher

A Little Extra Care

Some of our foster rabbits are looking for a very special home where a loving person will give them a little extra care. These rabbits have physical conditions which require ongoing maintenance or attention. But there are rewards for those who are willing to rise to the task. Often the extra time spent with a special-needs bun creates a special bond between the rabbit and her person.

Jewel (right) is a 2 (almost 3) year-old pretty good sized black bunny. She is very calm and docile when held, but set her free and she loves to run and play! She's not yet litter-trained, but would make a great house-rabbit. She's very lovable and would definitely flourish indoors with lots of attention. Unfortunately, Jewel was born with a problem. Her teeth grow very

rapidly and must be trimmed by the vet every 3 weeks or so. Also, once a year her molars must be trimmed. Jewel needs a home where she will get the attention she deserves; to just get loved on all the time.



photo: Brian Zulauf

She requires frequent medical attention, but will pay you back by being adorable and sweet.

Contact: karanimal84@yahoo.com



photo: Mary Thompson

Milly & Winky (above) are a bonded pair of small rabbits. Milly loves to groom Winky. That's good, because Winky is dependent on Milly for some of his grooming, especially his ears. He has a genetic trait that caused his legs to grow at an unusual angle. You'd be surprised how well this sweet and feisty boy gets around. Milly is easygoing and loves to run around too.

Contact: ovine22@yahoo.com

Adoptable House Rabbits

*All rabbits shown here and on the
Rabbit Advocate website
(www.adoptarabbit.org)
have been spayed or neutered.*

Doesn't Anyone Want Me?

Sometimes a rabbit languishes in foster care for months, or even years, without finding her forever home. Perhaps she is shy and retreats to the back of her pen when there is a visitor. Perhaps he has a torn ear, or is blind in one eye. Whatever the reason, these very special buns, who have been passed over again and again, deserve loving homes. Their foster parents continue to hope that someone will walk through the door and say, "I'll take the one who needs me the most."



Margot and Etheline (left) are a pair of sisters who are a year old. These girls are very bonded to one another. Margot is the outgoing sister and Etheline hangs back a bit. Both are active and want to get out and play once they see they are in a safe place. Margot blazes the trail and Etheline follows. These girls were born in a shelter and came to foster care when they were a few weeks old. They had six siblings, all of which are super friendly. These girls would love to come and play at your house.

Contact: zenrabbit1@hotmail.com

TOP REASONS TO ADOPT A RABBIT

You are saving a life.

There's something calming about holding a rabbit.

A rabbit is a quiet companion.

Every rabbit has a unique personality.

Rabbits have a delightful sense of humor.

A binky is an expression of pure joy.

Their poop will help your garden bloom.

Your home will be filled with the sweet smell of hay.

You didn't really need those electrical cords, anyway.

Rabbit people are nice people—doesn't that sound like you?



Kramer (above) is a darling dark brown neutered boy between 1-2 years old. He was found running loose in a park in the summer of 2005. This guy is so sweet and wonderful. His head is the best for kissing and he really loves getting loved. His face is just sweet and he is so friendly. He would love a place of his own to run and play. He would be fine in a family situation with gentle older children. Come meet this wonderful guy—you will fall in love.

Contact: zenrabbit1@hotmail.com

RA Volunteer Speaks at School

One of the students who saw Lorraine's presentation discussed it with her family and they decided that she was ready to make a ten year commitment.

Volunteer Lorraine Bushek and her rabbit Billybob brought a pre-Easter educational presentation to all three of the third grade classes at the Oregon Episcopal School.

Lorraine was invited to speak at the school by Karen Corsini, a third grade teacher who is also a bunny foster parent. Karen's foster bun, Cloud, was only three weeks old when she took him in. He was underweight and suffering from an abscess, requiring surgery and special care. Since Lorraine lives close to the school, she offered to stop by and take a look at Cloud. That



Cloud with Oregon Episcopal School students who have learned that a real rabbit is a ten year commitment.

visit evolved into a presentation to fifty children. "I really appreciated her flexibility and willingness to speak to a large group of children with about an hour to prepare!" said Karen.

As the students sat in a 'bunny circle,' Lorraine spoke about the difference between a plush 'Easter Bunny' and a real rabbit, which is a ten year commitment. She also spoke about the basics of rabbit care, especially the importance of a proper diet.

One of the students who saw Lorraine's presentation discussed it with her family and they decided that she was ready to make a ten year commitment. The student adopted a rabbit at the Rabbit Advocates' pre-Easter 'Look Before You Hop' event. "She ended up finding Lorraine at the event and getting lots more care information," said teacher Karen Corsini. "The impact of education lasts forever!"

Keep Your Rabbit Cool in Summer Heat

As temperatures rise, think of your rabbit friend! Rabbits suffer in hot weather, so take these simple steps to keep your bunny comfortable and safe.

An air conditioned room is ideal, but if this is not possible, be sure the rabbit has a shaded, well-ventilated living area. Remember, the sun moves during the day. A room that is shady in the morning may be stifling by mid-afternoon.

Always have plenty of drinking water available. Your rabbit may drink more than usual on a hot day.

Fill an empty milk or juice container with water and freeze it. Your rabbit will cuddle up to it when he needs to cool down.



Illustration: Richard Hoyer

Heat stroke is an emergency situation. If your rabbit is panting, limp or unresponsive, mist his ears with cool water and see a vet immediately.

...Matchmaker, Matchmaker, continued from page 1

Boulevard and I-205. She was surviving on dog food while nursing a new litter. Bella had another litter soon after settling into her new home. "I have learned that an unfixed rabbit is a pregnant rabbit," Valerie said. Bella's age is a mystery and it is unknown whether Bella had ever been handled by humans.

After a few months most of Bella's offspring had moved on to another home with RA Emilie Mathews. But Bella remained aloof, clamoring to hide when a human came into her space and frantic at any attempts to pick her up. "She was one I figured I would have forever," Valerie said.

We had set up a roomy pen for Bella adjacent to Dex's space in our basement computer room. At first Bella logged the hours huddling in her tube or hiding under the hay in her litterbox. And Dexter spent most of his time on the other side of the room bored with the thought, it seemed, of socializing with another rabbit.

They were complete opposites: Bella, an experienced mother, knew she was a rabbit and Dexter, an inexperienced rabbit thought he was human.

This went on for months with pet meets each night on the bathroom floor (our neutral

zone). Bella struck her usual pose of fear and Dexter would snort at any move she made. My partner Denise and I became discouraged.

Slowly, however, Bella settled into the relationship and began to run to Dexter for comfort when humans entered the room. Dex prickled at first but after many months of switching them into each other's spaces he gradually became accustomed to the idea of sharing his space with another rabbit. Bella through time and patience had melted his crusty façade. Dexter was in love.

It has been six months since my friend Ann warned me of the deep loneliness that can kill a rabbit. She also found a partner for her male, Junior, and successfully bonded her couple in less than two weeks. "One bunny is cute but two are so incredible" she said. Of course, at the time I didn't know what she meant. But now Bella and Dexter are inseparable. Many volunteers said that often the rabbits will take on traits of each other. In Bella's case, a hard-to-adopt rabbit has become more curious and even takes food from my hand. And her patience with our aggressive boy has matured him and made him a content rabbit.

It was well worth the wait...

KUDOS

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Donations received after May 10, 2006 will be acknowledged in the next issue.

RA Volunteer Participates in Reno Rescue

RA volunteer Harmony Van Eaton spent her spring break doing something uniquely rewarding. She and friend Rex Whistler headed to the Best Friends rescue ranch to assist with 1,000 rabbits removed from a single backyard in Reno.

Best Friends, an organization located in Kanab, Utah, has taken on the monumental task of building shelters, organizing spays and neuters, and putting together an adoption campaign for the Reno rabbits. Harmony's friend Rex fell in love with a small, cuddly bunny and became the first person to adopt one of the rescued rabbits.

Here is Harmony's story.—Ed.

March 26th, 2006. We drove up the potholed dirt road to the rabbit ranch, and the first thing we noticed was motion. Over a thousand rabbits, in motion. Eighty-five cages, with roughly fifteen adults in each, and the cages containing babies had many more per cage. It was so overwhelming that I lost my balance and fell down three times in the first day! We went up to the

house on the property to meet the Best Friends employees and ask where to start. They were feeling just as overwhelmed as we were. To give you an idea, it takes three to four solid hours just to feed and water these rabbits, if you work as fast as you can. Rabbits were being shuttled to local vets for spay/neuter appointments, several a day, which by Rabbit Advocate standards is fantastic, but when you are looking at such massive numbers, it feels like grains of sand on the beach. As we were feeding the rabbits, we noticed every cage with girls in it had multiple litters, new ones every day. With about half of the rabbits being unspayed girls, that's a lot of pregnant bunnies. Part way through the first day, we discovered boys mixed into the girls' cages, so we decided that we should recheck the sexing. Easier said than done! These are not tame rabbits, for the most part, they are feral and terri-



Harmony and Rex were the first to adopt a needy bunny from the Best Friends Reno rescue ranch.

fied of being caught. I had to buy leather gloves, because these rabbits were fighting for their lives.

Our days were long, we are talking 18 hours long. The weather in Reno is pretty harsh, we were getting snow still. When it got too dark to work outside, we would go inside the house, where there were sick, injured rabbits, and babies that needed to be bottle fed, everywhere. You can imagine how hard it was to go to bed in that situation. In fact, I took one tiny baby home, and I kept him alive for one week and then lost him. I named him Modoc, because we drove through Modoc tribal territory on the way home. Now I understand how attached those of you who attempt bottle feeding can get. I had kept him in my shirt

continued on next page

More Than We Bargained For!



photo: Kern Sypner

What do you do when the rabbit you've just rescued presents you with a litter of little ones? Or when the rabbit you went to rescue from the woodpile turns out to be a litter of four? Well, you take a deep breath. You enjoy the babies, and watch them grow... and very soon, it's time to find permanent homes for them.

That's what happened to our rescuers — not once, but several times this spring.

For foster parents who are already caring for several adult rabbits, caring for a litter of little ones is a big job.

Young rabbits grow surprisingly fast. They are weaned at 4-6 weeks, and males may be mature at just 4 months. Youngsters are active and full of life. They need lots of exercise and time to explore their world. They are a delight to observe as they hop and leap for joy!

Would you like to give a good home to a young rabbit? Better still, consider adopting a pair! Siblings have already developed strong bonds. They will be spayed/neutered prior to adoption. Fill out our online adoption application at www.adoptarabbit.org, and specify that you're interested in one of these youngsters.

Thank You to Our Vets!

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the following veterinarians and staffs for their services to our rescued rabbits:

**Dr. Chris Wilson,
Beaverton Pet Clinic**

**Dr. Mark Burgess,
Southwest Animal Hospital
Beaverton**

**Dr. Katrina Ramsell,
Southwest Animal Hospital**

**Dr. Ken DeReamer,
Paws & Claws Pet Medical Center
Troutdale**

We'd love to add more names to this list! Please call us at 503- 617-1625 if you are a rabbit-savvy vet who is able to donate services to help rescued rabbits.

"I've seen the wreckage of bunny breeding, and it's not pretty."

for a week, and I had phantom feelings of him there for a whole week after losing him. I still miss him.

The people from Best Friends and the other volunteers were great, we had moments where we disagreed on the best ways to do something, but that was only because we were all so passionate and this was such a crisis situation. Best Friends has always been a no kill sanctuary, which I respect so much, but with these kind of numbers, the amount of rabbits in need of immediate attention were too many for even a team of vets working round the clock. Those of us who know how vicious rabbit fighting can be can imagine the numbers of serious injuries we saw. The simplest way to say it was that it was a rabbit lover's

nightmare, they are like victims of war, rabbit refugees. Best Friends, in an article about the Reno Rabbits, explained the mental illness that is animal hoarding. It is absolutely cruel, and I can only hope that our society can create stronger laws and a safety system to protect the innocent from this crime.

We stayed at the rabbit ranch for one whirlwind of a week, and then it was time to go back to school. It was incredibly hard to leave, we just kept wanting to do one more thing, for one more rabbit. It was difficult for an animal lover to see those things, but I'm so glad I went, and I would do it again in a heartbeat. This experience just really drove home that the work we do as Rabbit Advocates here in Portland, relentlessly promoting spaying and neutering, is so critically important. I've seen the wreckage of bunny breeding, and it's not pretty.

Saving Sylvie

Abandoned outdoors and badly injured by a predator, the little black rabbit seemed fated for a sad end. But a kind person found Sylvie and cared enough to start her along a journey of healing that will bring her, some day, to a loving forever home. Is there room in your home for this special girl?

Sylvie suffered wounds at the base of her spine and a dislocated hip. An x-ray showed that she'd suffered a past fracture to her pelvis – further evidence of the hardships she'd faced outdoors in the urban wilderness. Rabbit Advocate volunteer Lorraine Bushek worked hard to stabilize her condition and consulted with veterinarian Chris Wilson of Beaverton Pet Clinic to determine the best way to restore mobility.

It was not possible to relocate the hip joint, and the recommended course of action was to surgically remove the femoral hip ball. The surgery was done at the same

photo: Lorraine Bushek



time Sylvie was spayed, and as of this writing she is recovering nicely. Her wounds are healing, her spine has straightened, she holds her leg in the proper position and she has taken some careful, hesitant hops. While she may never be able to run and jump like most rabbits, Sylvie is able to get around well and can hop in and out of her litter box.

Sylvie has been sweet and trusting through her terrible ordeal. She thrives on love and kindness and is waiting for a gentle, caring person to take her home.

Contact: lorbushek@gmail.com

Web Links and Binks

www.hopperhome.com/bunny_blog.html

Hopperhome's Bunny Blog provides links to the best rabbit-related sites on the web, from the silly to the serious. Educational information, news about rescue groups, and useful products are prominently featured. You'll also find fun stuff: a photo of a rabbit wedding, a list of the best chocolate bunnies, even a lavender plant that sprouts bunny ears!

Upcoming Meetings & Events

The Rabbit Advocates meet at the Oregon Humane Society, 1067 NE Columbia Boulevard, Portland, Oregon, on the third Sunday of every month (or as noted) from 4:00 - 6:00 PM. Meetings include a "Bunny Basics" Q & A session where we invite your questions about any aspect of rabbit care. The public is welcome!

No July Meeting

See you in August

August 20, 4–6pm General Meeting

Dr. Ross Weinstein, a rabbit vet from North Portland Veterinary Hospital, will talk about *E. cuniculi*, a parasite that is one of the causes of head tilt in rabbits. (topic may change)

September 17, 4–6pm General Meeting

The Truth About Lab Results.

October 15, 4–6pm General Meeting

Why Does My Rabbit...?



photos: Kem Sypher

**This
is a child's toy.**

**This
is a ten year
commitment.**

Look for these future programs: Rabbit Ophthalmology, Acupuncture, Rabbit Safe Meds, and Understanding Your Bunny's Immune Response

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