



# THE Rabbit Advocate

PROVIDING INSIGHTS INTO THE LIVES OF HOUSE RABBITS

WINTER 2009



## Holiday Safety for Rabbit Households

by Guin Boostrom

With the holiday fast approaching, many of us will soon begin decorating our homes for winter festivities. As we do, it's good to keep in mind rabbit-safe ideas like these safety tips:

### Trees and decorations

One of the hallmarks of the beginning of the holiday season is the decorating of the Christmas tree. Christmas trees are very inviting to rabbits, both for hiding under and for nibbling. If your bunny will have access to the tree, you will want to make sure that it is not flocked and not sprayed with fire-retardant chemicals. Noshing on a few bites of non-chemically treated pine, spruce or fir will not hurt your bunny, but you may wish to consider covering the water in the tree stand with mesh to prevent your rabbit from drinking the dirty tree water.

You will also want to take steps to protect your ornaments, especially if you have wooden or paper ornaments. You may wish to reserve the lower branches of your tree for large ball-type ornaments that a bunny can't get his teeth around. Or you might want to purchase ornaments made of grape vine or wicker for the lower branches, with the idea that these ornaments are okay for bunny to eat, and will be replaced yearly. (Many of the bunny-specific online purveyors, such as Bunny Bytes and Busy Bunny, sell these types of ornaments.) Do not use tinsel as ingested tinsel can cause an intestinal blockage.

If your bunny is an inveterate digger, you will also want to carefully consider your choice of tree skirt. A plain sheet or an inexpensive drug store tree skirt may be a better option than the hand-embroidered family heirloom.

Christmas tree lights can pose a specific hazard for bunnies, as we all know that most rabbits seem to be inexorably



drawn to electrical cords. While normal household cords can be covered with protective tubing, for strands of Christmas tree lights, this isn't always a practical solution. If lights are something that you just can't bear to skip on your tree, it's an absolute must that you only allow your bunny around the tree when he or she will be well supervised. An exercise pen can be used to provide a barrier between your bunny and your tree during those times when you can't be watching closely

### Gift wrap and ribbon

Wrapped gifts under a tree or on the floor will prove too strong of a temptation for most rabbits. Not only will you be frustrated and disappointed to have your careful gift wrapping jobs ruined within minutes by your pint-sized nibbler, metallic wrapping papers and plastic-type ribbons can cause intestinal problems if ingested by a bunny. A better option is to arrange gifts attractively on a table. Or, again, if you feel like it just wouldn't be the holidays without gifts under the tree, consider encircling your tree with an exercise pen for the safety of your bunnies and the presents.

### Candles

Candles are an important part of Hanukkah celebrations, and many families like to light pine or other scented candles during the holiday season. Be very careful about having lighted candles on a table with a tablecloth that hangs low enough for bunny to grab with his or her teeth. Many bunnies cannot resist tugging on fabric that is dangling within reach, and you certainly don't want that to happen if there are burning candles on the table.

# Canadian rescue saves hundreds of bunnies

By Bob and Marie Sherman

(Note: Bob and Marie Sherman are Rabbit Advocates who recently moved to Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, where they have immediately developed a network of friends dedicated to helping domestic rabbits. They provide this account of a large and ongoing rabbit rescue in their new town.)

## Kelowna, B.C.

The population of abandoned domestic rabbits in the town of Kelowna, British Columbia, had grown so large that by early 2008, it grabbed headlines. “Dumped” household pets, and their feral babies, had become a nuisance for their chewing and digging in several parts of the city and the city government was pressed to take action.

A private company was contracted to “cull” the rabbit population. This was, of course, a euphemism for executing rabbits. While there was some dissent in city government, the plan proceeded and in 2008 hundreds of rabbits were slaughtered. This gained national attention in Canada, and public indignation began to build.

Meanwhile, a group called TRACS, “The Responsible Animal Care Society,” began capturing bunnies and locating them in sanctuaries provided by caring people. This saved many rabbits from slaughter. TRACS also campaigned to provide a humane solution for the rabbit population. Efforts were successful when, in early 2009, the city did not renew the private contract. Instead, TRACS won the contract. TRACS would coordinate volunteers to capture, house, and maintain the rabbits. The city allocated about \$12,000 for spaying and neutering. Through TRACS, so far about 600 rabbits have been saved from execution and are living happily at group sanctuaries in the Kelowna area. All this has happened because of the intense efforts of a relatively small number of dedicated volunteers.

## Our involvement

Soon after our move to Kelowna, we learned about TRACS and volunteered to help. We help clean five pens at one of the sanctuaries. These pens are



Photo: Bob Sherman

## A rabbit sanctuary in Kelowna, BC.

cleaned twice a week and together house about 160 rabbits at each sanctuary. All bunnies are provided health checks at least once a month, in addition to on-going observation. Most of the bunnies are very curious about their human helpers. We are also using our truck and trailer to move building materials for more shelters.

Having been involved with Rabbit Advocates and Oregon Humane Society, it was quite an adjustment to find rabbits sheltered in communal settings. However, with the sheer numbers, this arrangement is the only way to save the rabbits. Rabbit behavior is monitored closely. If some rabbits are not getting along, moving a bunny to a different penned area in the sanctuary tends to solve the conflict.

Efforts have been focused on capturing rabbits, building shelters, and securing donations for their on-going care. As we continue to volunteer, we would like to help with efforts to find forever homes for as many rabbits as possible. In a city of about 100,000 this will be a bit of a challenge. Still, it is a good feeling to know that at least our “Kelowna Rabbits” are safe and well cared for in their sanctuaries.

*As a footnote to this story, everyone should recognize how very important it is for Rabbit Advocates to capture and care for abandoned rabbits as quickly as possible. If ignored, abandoned rabbits achieve headline status.*

*For more information about the Kelowna Rabbits and TRACS, please see [www.tracs-bc.ca](http://www.tracs-bc.ca)*



Photo: Marie Sherman

**Pens that house rabbit colonies are cleaned twice weekly.**

# **Birthday gifts go to bunnies**

*John Langford began requesting gifts for bunnies instead of gifts for his birthday when he was only 6 years old.*

More than four years later, he still wants Rabbit Advocates to put his birthday gifts to good use for rabbit care.

At its September meeting, the Rabbit Advocates honored John for his generosity. The Advocate first featured John's fundraising program more than two years ago. Now 10 years old, John still asks his friends and family to give money to the rabbits instead of buying gifts. Mom Cheryl estimates John has single-handedly raised about \$400 for the Rabbit Advocates.

Charitable acts are a family tradition: John's sister Elizabeth began collecting donations for therapeutic horse riding programs for disabled children when she was just 9 years old.



**The altruistic Langford family includes James (front), John (back), Mom Cheryl, baby Sarah and Elizabeth.**

## **The Best Christmas Gift May Be the One Not Given**

by Lori Lacell

Christmas is the Super Bowl of gift-giving occasions. It becomes a quest for the perfect gift under the perfect tree that will create the perfect family Christmas. For many, giving a child a pet would seem to be the ideal Christmas gift. Before giving a rabbit or any animal as a gift there are a lot of things to consider first. So fix a mug of hot cider, pull up a chair and see how well you do on this True or False pop quiz on Christmas pets.

Pets teach children responsibility. False. Children learn responsibility best with adult-supervised activities that teach rewards for a job well done such as keeping their rooms clean or completing their homework. Caged pets require close adult supervision to ensure daily feeding and cleaning are done properly.

Small animals are easier for children to care for. False. Mice, hamsters and guinea pigs are mislabeled as "starter pets" because their size makes them easier to handle by children. The self-contained environment of a cage, complete with exercise wheels, toys, food and water dishes, gives the wrong impression that the animal is happiest in its own home and needs little interaction with the outside world. Improper feeding and handling

by unsupervised children can be harmful and even fatal to pets. Baby rabbits start small but quickly grow too big for children to easily handle. Rabbits are also more fragile and require specialized knowledge of and attention to their dietary and handling needs.

I had a rabbit when I was a kid. False. Your mother had a rabbit when you were a kid. All caged pets, require a reliable source of quality food and supplies that may not always be available at the local supermarket. Don't forget routine veterinary exams as well as emergency room visits are also needed. A pet's longevity can also be an important factor. Rabbits can live as long as 8 to 12 years. During that time a child's interests and priorities change with junior high, high school and even starting college. This means a responsible adult must be willing and able to provide life long care for a rabbit whenever necessary.

Before contemplating a pet rabbit, learn as much as you can about their specialized needs. Visit the Rabbit Advocate web site at [www.rabbitadvocates.org](http://www.rabbitadvocates.org) and join us during one of our monthly meetings held at the Oregon Humane Society.

### **Rabbit Benefactor**

Christine and Karen Stamper

### **Rabbit Rescuer**

Elizabeth and Keith Olson  
Andre and Diane Sauvageau  
Monica Mueller  
Jessica Linsky in memory of Snowbunny

### **Rabbit Sponsor**

Julia Heydon, in memory of Noggin  
Barbara Silverman  
Heidi Harvey  
Kathy Fitzgerald in memory of Riley and in appreciation of Valerie Madison  
Bonnie and Dean McFadden in memory of Odie and in appreciation of Oreo

### **Bunny Friend**

Richard and Roxanne Bennett  
Christopher York  
Susan and Mark Rice  
Eleni Kehagiaras  
June Yamrick  
Teresa and David Cornelius  
Heidi Harvey and Craig Roethler  
Karla Saindon-Hayes  
Shannon and Michael Rinck  
Lillian Laskey in memory of Little B  
Kathi Lamm  
Joann Myers  
Kenneth Dillon in memory of "Leo" Dillon  
Jill and James McArthur  
Guin Boostrom in appreciation of Christine Stamper  
Kate Tierney  
Curtis and Kristine Smith  
Emily Stuparyk in loving memory of dear little Suzy Bear rabbit

Donations received after Oct. 26, 2009, will be gratefully acknowledged in the next issue of The Rabbit Advocate.

# Second Annual Holiday Gift Guide

by Sarah Yasutake

## Rabbit Advocates' Suggestions for Presents for Bunnies and the People Who Love Them

### Gifts for Bunny Lovers



#### Rabbit Charm Bracelet

Gold rabbit charms and teal glass beads combine to create a beautiful bracelet. Hand made by a rabbit rescuer in Massachusetts who is generously donating 75 percent of the proceeds from the sale of this bracelet to the Rabbit Advocates. \$20, [twobunniesandagirl.etsy.com](http://twobunniesandagirl.etsy.com)

#### Californian Rabbits Fine Art Print

Richard Murray's painting of a trio of Californians captures the graceful beauty of these gentle creatures. \$23.99 unframed or \$99.99 framed. [www.art.com](http://www.art.com)

#### Holiday Wreath

Locally created wreath using Northwest fir, cedar and other plants. All proceeds benefit the medical fund. \$15, local delivery only. email [cs@colonialbusinessforms.net](mailto:cs@colonialbusinessforms.net)

#### Rabbit Print Blouse

A pretty plum-colored cotton tank top with delicate neckline pleats and an all-over rabbit print. \$88. Sale price \$59.99. [usa.frenchconnection.com](http://usa.frenchconnection.com)



#### Bunny Rug

A soft green background contrasts with cream-colored silhouettes of bunnies playing beneath an oak tree. \$199. [www.potterybarnkids.com](http://www.potterybarnkids.com)



#### Flying Bunny Notebook

This simple 80-page notebook features screenprints on the front and back covers of a white bunny hopping in the clouds. \$7. [www.buyolympia.com](http://www.buyolympia.com)



#### ABC Bunnies Hand-Embroidered Onesie

This sweet long-sleeved onesie would make a wonderful and unique baby gift. It features a hand-embroidered design of two bunnies holding hands next to a set of "ABC" blocks. \$20. [sillysockmonkeys.etsy.com](http://sillysockmonkeys.etsy.com)

## **“Love a Lagomorph” Bumper Sticker**

This fun bumper sticker was designed by Rabbit Advocates volunteer Karin Grasberger, and all proceeds go towards our medical fund. \$3, to purchase, contact Karin at (503) 235-5622.

## **2010 Rabbit Advocates Calendar**

This wonderful calendar features photos of local bunnies taken by local photographers, and is produced right here in Portland. \$18. Proceeds go to the RA Medical Fund. Email [cs@colonialbusinessforms.net](mailto:cs@colonialbusinessforms.net)



## **Rabbit Advocates Logo Merchandise**

Let the world know how much you love your rabbit by proudly wearing a Rabbit Advocates t-shirt, polo, or sweatshirt. Available in a variety of colors and unisex sizes S-4XL. \$14-\$30, email [cs@colonialbusinessforms.net](mailto:cs@colonialbusinessforms.net)



## **Gifts for Bunnies**

### **Maze Haven**

An innovative kit allows you to create a horizontal or vertical maze for your bunny with cubby holes, pathways, and hideouts. \$29.95, [www.leithpetwerks.com](http://www.leithpetwerks.com)



### **Critter Cookies**

Homemade bunny treats made with whole-wheat flour, canned pumpkin, and additional flavors including, banana, parsley, and celery. \$4.00 and up, [www.cookiesforcritters.com](http://www.cookiesforcritters.com)

### **“Don’t Breed, Don’t Buy... Adopt” Food Bowl**

Okay, maybe your bunny doesn’t need to be reminded not to breed or buy, but this cute food dish sends the right message! \$19.99. [www.bunnylovershop.com](http://www.bunnylovershop.com)



### **Garden Treats with Rose Petals**

Spoil your bunny with a healthy treat made from rosemary, bay leaves, oats, wheat, barley, and rose petals. \$5, [www.bunnybunchboutique.com](http://www.bunnybunchboutique.com)

### **Bunny Pinata**

A toy and a treat in one, this is a must for shredders. A 14-inch-long natural kraft paper roll is filled with orchard grass, rose petals, red clover blossoms, and other goodies. \$6.49. [www.bunnybytes.com](http://www.bunnybytes.com)



### **Sasquatch Pet Bed**

It looks like a gigantic, fleece-lined clog, but it’s a bed for your bunny! Measuring 31x14x14 inches, this shoe-shaped bed is easy to clean and provides a good place for burrowing. \$99.95. [www.busybunny.com](http://www.busybunny.com)



# Angora rabbits celebrated

*Angora is eight times more insulating than sheep's wool and so it is often mixed with wool so that garments are not too warm to wear. Angora and jersey wooly rabbits produce a coat of long, luxurious hair that must be groomed weekly.*



Angora rabbits are alluring but the prospect of their care makes people think twice about adopting these loving pets. Potential adopters fear the necessary grooming requirements to care for hair-producing rabbits like angoras and jersey woolies. To demystify the care of these rabbit breeds, Rabbit Advocates earlier this year celebrated angoras and jersey woolies with its own fiber festival.

Angora fiber comes from these classes of rabbits and is praised for its silkiness next to the skin and its insulating properties. Angora is eight times more insulating than sheep's wool and so it is often mixed with wool so that garments are not too warm to wear. Angora and jersey wooly rabbits produce a coat of long, luxurious hair that must be groomed weekly. This hair molts constantly and if it is not brushed or plucked out, it can easily mat against the body.

Angora and jersey wooly rabbits are known for their gentle, mellow personalities. Some spinners can sit with their bunny in their lap, plucking loose hair and spinning it directly into yarn. Because the hair grows quickly and sheds so often, angora and jersey wooly rabbits must be

kept indoors. During the fiber festival, Rabbit Advocate Kem Sypher demonstrated how he simply plucks the loose hair from his dwarf jersey woolies, Fuzzy and Wuzzy.

The fiber festival included demonstrations of all phases of angora yarn preparation, including grooming of the rabbits. Rabbit Advocates Valerie Madison and Susan LaRue gave one of Valerie's foster angora rabbits a hair cut. Sue Carter took angora hair, mixed it with wool, and prepared it for spinning into yarn using a drum carder. She then used a drop spindle, a small, travel-sized way to spin the prepared fiber into yarn. Jennifer Augello brought her spinning wheel and created yarn. She brought with her a sample of the angora-blend yarn she has spun, along with knitted items she made. Finally, Leann Bleakney and Bobbi Waggoner auctioned items they had knitted using angora-blend yarns.



**Susan LaRue and Valerie Madison give an angora bunny a haircut while Sue Carter uses her drop spindle to spin yarn.**



**Sue Carter prepares fiber "roving" with her drum carder. She then spins the fiber into yarn.**



**Jennifer Augello uses a spinning wheel to blend a combination of fibers, including angora from volunteer Valerie Madison's foster rabbits, into yarn.**

# Holiday safety for rabbit households *cont. from page 1*

## Poisonous Plants

Many people like to decorate their homes with sprigs of holly or mistletoe during the holidays. Both holly and mistletoe berries are listed on the House Rabbit Society's list of plants toxic to rabbits. As the berries can drop off when the plants begin to dry out, it's best not to have these in any room of your home that bunny will have access to.

Poinsettia toxicity is the subject of much heated debate. For many years it was believed that poinsettias were in the same category as holly and mistletoe—deadly toxins. More recently, studies have shown that while poinsettias may cause mild stomach upset, they aren't poisonous per se. Some Rabbit Advocates have reported that their rabbits eat poinsettia leaves with no ill health effects at all, and indeed seem to enjoy them. As poinsettias can cause mild stomach upset, if you don't already know that poinsettias are okay with your rabbit, it's probably best to not encourage your rabbits to eat them by having poinsettias at ground level.

## Treat foods

As those of us who have rabbits know, rabbits have an insatiable sweet tooth. However, the cookies and candies we tend to have in our homes at the holidays aren't good for rabbits. Chocolate can be a toxin to rabbits, and foil or plastic candy wrappers can cause intestinal blockages. Be sure to keep these items up high enough that bunny can't reach them. Even holiday treats that aren't poisonous to rabbits, such as dried cranberries, should be given to rabbits in moderation. Just like people, bunnies can gain weight over the holiday if we let them over-indulge.



*Bailey checks out the holiday decorations*

## Holiday guests

For many of us, the holidays mean visits from friends and family. They can also mean lots of excitement and children who are even more exuberant than usual. Be mindful of your rabbit's temperament in handling the kind of chaos the holiday season can bring to your household. Make sure your bunny has a place to relax away from the holiday hustle and bustle.

## Holiday travel

For many of us, the holidays might mean traveling out of town, and in most instances, bringing bunny with us isn't an option. While you may be tempted to leave your rabbit at home alone for a few days with an adequate supply of food and water, this is usually not the best solution. As prey animals, rabbits can hide their illnesses for quite some time before we humans notice. The net result is that by the time a rabbit becomes noticeably ill to a human, the rabbit is usually quite sick and needs immediate veterinary care to stay alive. A rabbit that looked fine when you left Friday afternoon could be deathly ill by Sunday evening when you return. For this reason, it's much better to arrange for an experienced bunny person to look after your pet. An e-mail to Rabbit Advocates can help put you in touch with people who would be able to take care of your rabbit in your absence.

By following these health and safety tips, we hope that you and your bunnies have a healthy, hoppy holiday season!

Photo: Kem Sypher

## 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. Katrina Ramsell,**  
Northwest Exotic Pet Vet

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

**Dr. Ken DeReamer**  
Paws and Claws Pet Medical Center  
Troutdale

**Dr. Ross Weinstein**  
North Portland Veterinary Hospital  
Portland

**Dr. Mary Blankenvoort, Dr. Peter Davis**  
St. Johns Veterinary Clinic, Portland

**Dr. Rebecca Prull**  
Dogwood Pet Hospital, Gresham

**Dr. Sheri Schlorman**  
Creswell Veterinary Hospital, Creswell

**Dr. Matt Fricke**  
McKenzie Animal Hospital, Springfield

**Dr. Doug Ferro**  
Barclay Hills Animal Clinic, Oregon City

*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.*

## The Rabbit Advocate

*The Rabbit Advocate is published  
three times a year.*

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# Upcoming Meetings & Events

*Rabbit Advocates general meetings are held at the Oregon Humane Society, 1067 NE Columbia Blvd., the third Sunday of each month from 3:30-5:30 p.m. in the Education Hall. Meetings include a "bunny basics" question and answer session on bunny behavior and care. The public is welcome. Please park in the gravel parking lot just west of the shelter building.*

## General Meetings

**No general meeting in December**

**Check the website for 2010 schedule**

## Bunny's Best Bites

**Volunteers blend and bag different types of hay to create Bunny's Best Bites, our own custom blend of hay. For more information about the hay parties, go to the RA website or contact volunteer Jan at [jhhutto2@msn.com](mailto:jhhutto2@msn.com)**

## 2009 Hay Packing

**(10am & noon unless otherwise specified)**

**November 28 (10am & noon)**

## Adoption Outreaches

**Each month, Rabbit Advocates showcase foster rabbits available for adoption. Adoption outreaches are held at Western Pet Supply, 6908 SW Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway. Volunteers are also on hand to provide grooming and nail trimming services. A donation is appreciated for this service. Adoption outreaches are held the second Saturday of each month from noon-3 p.m.**

## 2009/2010

**December 12**

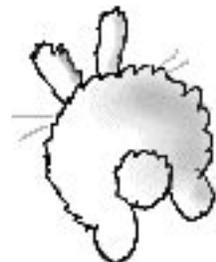
**January 9**

**February 13**

**March 13**

**April 10**

**May 8**



**[www.rabbitadvocates.org](http://www.rabbitadvocates.org)**