A word from our President, Mary Huey

“When I was a child I had a rabbit. He lived alone in an outside hutch.” If I have heard this once I have heard it a thousand times. But time changes all things and now I hear more frequently from people who have, or know someone who has, a spayed/neutered rabbit living in the house. When I hear this I cheer, silently!!! Another rabbit has moved “from the hutch into the home” and his family is getting acquainted with him on a much more personal level. Another happy rabbit, another happy family!

Over the fourteen years I have volunteered helping domestic rabbits, great advances in rabbit medicine have been made and there is a much better understanding of just how unique rabbits are as companion animals.

What are some of these changes, you ask!

We understand that each rabbit has his own unique personality which can only be demonstrated “out of the hutch and in the home”. We try to meet his social needs while understanding he is a prey animal and needs our protection from many things (raccoons, dogs, cats, flies, coyotes, hawks, owls, and small children).

We know that if our rabbit stops eating/drinking for more than 12 hours we must consider it an emergency and seek help from a rabbit savvy veterinarian.

We no longer use cedar and pine shavings for litter, nor do we feed pineapple juice when our rabbit doesn’t eat.

We are more aware of proper diet (no sugar, measured pellets, lots of hay) and of the importance of spay/neutering even if our rabbit lives alone. And we often find our single rabbit another rabbit companion.

Changes can bring renewed energy into each of our lives, including mine. Therefore, I have decided that I would like to work with Rabbit Advocates in a different capacity and I will be stepping down as President. Our new President, who will be selected in January 2004, will have a great group of rabbit supporters and volunteers with which to work. And I will be among them.

One thing you can count on. I will refocus my energy and continue to reap the many rewards of helping domestic rabbits. This will always be part of my life. Hoppy rabbiting. Everybun!!!

Oregon Neutermobile

The Oregon Neutermobile raises public awareness of the importance of spaying and neutering companion animals – including rabbits - and brings these services to rural and economically depressed communities around the state.

Visit their website, www.neutermobile.org, to learn more about their mission, view their schedule, and find out how you can support their efforts.

Rabbit Related Websites

by Kem Sypher

Rabbit welfare has become an issue not only in North America, but in many other places in the world as well. Here is a sample of organizations who do their part in promoting a better understanding of domestic rabbits:

Rabbit Welfare Association:
http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk

This is the premier rabbit welfare organization in Great Britain, and their slogan, “Because Rabbits Deserve Better,” says it all. From their shop, you can order the wonderful new book, “Living With A House rabbit,” a well written and profusely illustrated guide to the world of house rabbits. In addition, there are many other rabbit related items, for both you and your bunny. You can also subscribe to RWA’s excellent magazine “RabbitingOn.”

Singapore House Rabbits

Halfway around the world Singapore House Rabbits is providing information and assistance to those caring for rabbits in a domestic environment.
Continuing Education for Bunny Parents: Human-Rabbit Communication

Communication is at the heart of any relationship. What is your rabbit trying to tell you - and are you listening? Do you talk to your rabbit? What do you say, and what does your rabbit understand? Learn to understand and appreciate your companion rabbit. Sarah Yasutake & Shelley Cooper Hanel present two perspectives on the human-rabbit dialogue.

What Do You and Your Bunny Tell Each Other?

By Sarah Yasutake

When Janet Maass tells her bunnies, Mitsy and Max, that it’s time for their morning treat, the bunnies know that papaya treats are in store. They follow Janet downstairs to the kitchen, and if Janet tries to give them something other than papaya treats, they won’t eat it. A promise is a promise, and for Mitsy and Max, a morning treat means a papaya treat.

Sometimes when Janet is downstairs with Mitsy, and Max is upstairs in the bedroom, Janet will notice that Mitsy goes near the stairs and looks at Janet. Janet figures that Mitsy wants to be with her, but she also wants to be with Max, so she tells her, “It’s okay, go get Max, bring Max downstairs.” Sure enough, Mitsy will go upstairs and then come back down with Max behind her.

Mitsy and Max understand what Janet means when she says, “Come here.” They relax when she tells them calmly, over and over again, “It’s okay, it’s okay.” And at night, when she says, “Momma’s going bedtime,” not five minutes later the bunnies are on the foot of the bed.

The relationship Janet shares with her rabbits is undoubtedly stronger because of the time she has taken to read their language and help them read hers.

The following stories are from people around the country who have learned, in various ways, to communicate with their house rabbits.

“My rabbits know certain buzz words without any visual signing. These are words I can say out of the blue without moving and they respond appropriately if the mood strikes them: bunny salads, no, stop, come, home, nanna, raisins, and down. Interestingly enough, Mopsy and Tater do not like raisins, and I can say raisin in exactly the same tone as I say nanna and they won’t even budge, but when I say nanna it’s a full-on bunny charge!

“They know some words and sounds, but I think a large part of the comprehension comes from accompanied body language and tone from me. For example: the sound of running water in the kitchen sink (Mom must be washing veggies for us), clapping to stop behavior, silly bunny or funny bunny (elicits a blinky or at least a head shake from Chopper), laughter (makes Chopper and Mopsy get even sillier), Mopsy with da Moxy (same response as silly bunny in Chopper).

“Myn bunnies also communicate with nose twitching. When I lie on the floor near them and wiggle my nose, they respond by twitching theirs faster or slower depending on how fast I am wiggling mine.”

Michelle Lewis, Richmond, Virginia

Sophie & Fuzzy exchange secrets. Fuzzy and her companion Wuzzy are dwarf Angoras available for adoption (indoor home). Contact: ksypher@easystreet.com

“If we’re on the couch and Gunn is in the kitchen, out of our sight, doing something he isn’t supposed to, either Marcus or I can say, Gunn, no Bunny Trouble! or Gunn, don’t get in trouble! in a warning tone, and the little bugger comes flying out of the kitchen and darts into his cage... usually with an unappreciative thump at the end. We didn’t teach him this; we have no idea how he learned it. It’s just something he’s always done.

If Marcus catches Jayne doing something he’s not supposed to (chewing on the doorframe to try to get into the bedroom; digging at the carpet in front of the bathroom door, etc.), Jayne immediately smooshes down for petting. Jayne will also do this if we want him to go home, but he doesn’t want to. Marcus works nights, and usually gets home between 7:15 and 8:00 in the morning. At 7:00 sharp, Jayne starts wildly dancing in circles in his cage (11 pounds of excited bunny in a metal cage raises a serious racket!). He knows that Marcus always brings them treats when he gets home, and that he’ll be coming soon. I don’t know how Jayne learned to tell time. I never gave him any verbal cues, and he’s the only bunny that does this. But the dance very clearly says, “We’re coming soon!”"
Treats are comin’! Treats are comin’! Woo-hoo! Let’s eat! Let’s eat!
“I love my Big White Bunny.”

Juaacklyn Thorne, Detroit, Michigan

“If I tell Casper, Go get Andy, and shake the treat container, he’ll run off and return with Andy. Today I was about to pass out salads and Casper took off and returned with Andy. I called for Taylor, who was busy tearing up something in my room. She didn’t come until she heard them eating. Then she ran into the room and nipped me on the foot (You could have said it was food, slave!). I said, I guess Casper forgot to tell you to come eat. I was surprised that she didn’t nip him, too!”

Criss Mort, Belvedere, South Carolina

“When Sweetie was a young rabbit and could hear me still, I would call him to my side when he was in the yard by slapping my thigh with my hand hard several times. He would stop what he was doing and run to me. When I was teaching him what was safe to chew or not chew, I would clap my hands once hard and say, No, when he started after the wrong thing. It only took once, and he knew. With Inky, I just have to say, Inky, no, don’t do that, in a worried voice and he stops investigating the wrong things in the house.

“My rabbits seem to have learned my facial expressions really well. Sweetie once, when he was little, started chewing on a forbidden object when I suddenly walked into the opposite side of the large room. I stopped. He stopped chewing. I raised an eyebrow at him, whereupon he immediately shot up into the air, did a 180-degree turn and an overstated foot flick, and shot off somewhere. He read my expression exactly as, Hey, what exactly do you think you are doing? and he responded with that spectacular play leap and twist. I’ll never forget it.”

Heather McMurray, El Paso, Texas

Mr. B Speaks

By Shelley Cooper Hanel

I am an intelligent, handsome, curious, outgoing, and fun-loving house rabbit. Some say that I’m occasionally stubborn, too. My family includes three humans and a dog. After many months, they are learning to understand how I communicate. My name is Mr. B.

I’m always excited in the morning and bounce impatiently back and forth in my pen. My humans let me out to explore the bunny-proofed house before they go to work. I need to check out my surroundings to make sure all is as I left it the night before! If something has changed, I investigate, leaving my scent by rubbing my chin on everything to claim it as my own.

After my humans go to work, I am left alone to lounge all day in my pen. I sleep most of this time. Even if they do not go to work, I choose to stay in my pen because it is my home base and I can feel comfortably lazy.

Later in the day, I’m ready to explore again. My humans come home and let me out of my pen for the evening. When I’m happy and in a playful mood, I run like a crazy bunny - leaping in the air, jumping onto the sofa, down again, racing down the hall and coming back again. I circle my humans saying, “let’s play!” Then I get tired and need to kick back under the bed for a snooze.

When I feel that I need some loving, I try to get my human’s attention by nudging her or following her. Sometimes I have to nip her to tell her “I’m ready for some petting!” Humans don’t realize that it’s
Don’t be hesitant to interview prospective veterinarians prior to choosing one.

Choosing a Rabbit Savvy Veterinarian

By Valerie Madison

It is very important to find a good rabbit veterinarian before you have an emergency! It can be difficult, however, to find a veterinarian with skills in rabbit medicine. The domestic rabbit is not commonly studied in veterinary school, so special training and dedication to keeping up with the latest information is required. A good rabbit veterinarian will know, and be able to explain to you, the physiology, anatomy, nutrition and common diseases of rabbits.

You may want to ask other people with house rabbits which veterinarian they use, or ask your local rabbit rescue organizations for recommendations (see www.adoptarabbit.org and www.rabbit.org).

Different veterinarians have varying levels of experience with rabbits, so don’t be hesitant to interview prospective veterinarians prior to choosing one. Educate yourself in basic rabbit health care so that you’ll be able to evaluate the responses you receive. Here are a few questions to start with:

■ How many rabbits are seen at the clinic each week? Usually more is better, unless the rabbits being seen are considered livestock.

■ Which oral antibiotics are commonly prescribed for rabbits? Almost all antibiotics ending in “-cillin” can be deadly if administered orally.

■ Should food and water be removed the night before surgery? Rabbits should never be fasted.

■ What is the best way to prevent gastrointestinal slowdown? The veterinarian should tell you to provide your rabbit with a constant supply of good quality grass hay, daily exercise in a safe environment and frequent brushing.

■ What treatment will be used in the case of gastrointestinal slowdown? GI stasis may occur for several reasons: pain from another disorder or illness, stress, an intestinal blockage—in this case, surgery should be done only as a last resort—or insufficient dietary crude fiber. Treatment of the GI problem should include finding the source of the problem.

■ What special equipment is available at the clinic for rabbits? Isoflurane gas is the safest anesthetic for rabbits; a dental drill—not toe-nail trimmers—should be used to trim overgrown incisor teeth; and housing for rabbits within the clinic should be away from barking dogs and the odors of cats.

■ A competent rabbit veterinarian should be able to perform a complete physical exam and any necessary lab tests, be able to neuter or spay your rabbit, and perform routine procedures. At each visit, the vet should weigh your bunny (preferably in grams, to be most precise), examine the teeth, ask you about the diet of your rabbit, and be able to answer your questions or be willing to consult with other veterinarians for the answers.

■ It is important to discuss emergency care with your veterinarian. Ask if your vet sees emergencies, and if not, find out where they send emergencies.

■ Finally, let your veterinarian help you keep your rabbit healthy. An annual physical exam for your bunny can aid in early detection of any health problems, and allow you to maintain a relationship with the veterinarian.

Donations received after November 31 will be acknowledged in the next issue of the newsletter.
Mary would like to see a drastic decrease in the numbers of homeless rabbits, along with an increase in rabbit adoptions to “forever” homes.

By Sarah Yasutake

Mary Huey, outgoing president of the Rabbit Advocates, has always been a friend to animals. As a child growing up in Elmhurst, Illinois, she begged her parents long and hard for her first dog - a springer spaniel mix named Spot. Later, Mary worked with dogs and cats in vet clinics in Philadelphia, PA and Eugene, OR and as a volunteer with the Oregon Humane Society (OHS).

She also raised canaries (“Mary’s Canaries”) for many years. But it wasn’t until the early 1990s that Mary became interested in rabbits.

In fact, Mary took in two rabbits early on, when she knew next to nothing about their care or habits. Believe it or not, this was not successful, and they were given away. Years later, Mary got a brochure about rabbit care from the Washington House Rabbit Society. This brochure made Mary think seriously about having a rabbit as a pet again. Soon she adopted her first “learning” rabbit, Velvet.

Today the Rabbit Advocates have their own brochure available to the public. In the years that have passed since Velvet came into Mary’s home Mary has gone from working with the dogs at OHS to becoming a driving force behind improving conditions for rabbits both in and out of the shelter. She gathered a group of like-minded volunteers, and in 1999 – the first year of Mary’s retirement from teaching - the OHS Rabbit Advocates was founded.

Mary Huey with companions Gizmo, Laster, and Angel.

Mary has served as president of the Rabbit Advocates since it became a non-profit organization in May 2002. One of the many things Mary does for the group is answer the numerous phone calls coming into the Rabbit Advocates’ help line. Members of the public phone with questions about rabbits, and every week Mary spends hours returning these phone calls, educating people about the wonderful world of rabbits.

Mary has set an example as president by having the passion to encourage the involvement of many other rabbit lovers. She says she is proudest of how dedicated and supportive the Rabbit Advocates are as they work cooperatively toward helping domestic rabbits. She knows that involvement in the group has had a major impact on many Rabbit Advocates’ lives, including her own.

Mary would like to see a drastic decrease in the numbers of homeless rabbits, along with an increase in rabbit adoptions to “forever” homes. Thus, her long-range vision for the Rabbit Advocates is the creation of an independent adoption and education center.

Although Mary will step down from her position as president at the end of 2003, she plans to continue serving on the Rabbit Advocates’ Board of Directors and to be very involved with the group.

I just turn and run away flicking my feet, but sometimes I lunge at their hands or feet and then they finally get the hint. They tell me I am mean, but this is my way of saying, “Please leave me alone.”

At dinner time, I’m usually around to beg for scraps. Unfortunately, so is the dog, who gets jealous if I am handed a treat of banana. I growl at her, but she usually grabs it, only to discover that it was not a food she wanted, anyway. I can outsmart her, though, by grabbing the treat and running under the table where she can’t sit. If anyone tells you that food is not the way to a rabbit’s heart, they are definitely mistaken!

Sometimes in the evening my humans go downstairs to watch TV. This makes me mad because I’m not allowed to join them. I thump at them, “I am angry!” I also thump when I’m trying to warn my family of danger, like when there’s a cat on the front porch.

Observant humans may notice that rabbits also speak with their ears:

Ears forward - “What’s that you say?”
Ears back - Either “I don’t like that,” or “wake me for supper.” Here it’s important to know whether your rabbit is relaxed and resting or feeling threatened. If your rabbit puts his ears back, his tail up and growls, you’ll know it’s the latter.

One ear back, one ear forward - “I hear you but I’m not paying that much attention.”

Finally, it’s time for bed. When I hear a clicking sound from my human, that’s a signal for treat time and I come running! I’m happy to be safe in my pen, ready for a night’s rest.
Eventually, when Grace’s rabbit Tupelo died suddenly of a stroke, Grace was startled by the intensity of her grief. “It was as painful as losing a human family member,” she says. “You’ve lost a relationship,” explains Enid Traisman, a bereavement counselor who visited the Rabbit Advocates to talk about pet loss and the Pet Loss Support Program she has created at Portland’s Dove Lewis Emergency Animal Hospital. The loss of a companion animal whose life was closely intertwined with your own and the sudden absence of daily rituals can be as painful as losing a human relationship.

Grace was hurt by thoughtless comments made by people around her. “People told me to get over it; it’s just a rabbit. No one understood how special he was, how close we were.” This is what Enid Traisman calls ‘disenfranchised grief’, feelings that are not recognized or validated by those around us. Through a support group the bereaved person can share their feelings of grief with others who have experienced similar loss.

“Everyone grieves differently,” says Ms. Traisman, “there’s not a right way or wrong way.” She recommends memorializing your lost pet. For example, creating a garden is a way of remembering your companion.

Canadian writer Emily Margaret Stuparyk created a written memorial to her beloved Mini Rex rabbit Poochie. “Sorrow is the cost for having loved so deeply,” she writes. “The bond that I shared with Poochie was one that only the heart comprehends. She was a sweet, gentle, and loving animal. We were the best of friends, soul mates; we ate, played and slept together. Losing her created a huge void for me that no one can ever replace. Poochie taught me the greatest lesson in her short life – love to your fullest capacity each and every day.” Emily’s book of poetry began as a journal during a year of grieving. It also became a tribute to Poochie’s life and a gift to other bereaved animal lovers.

Grace chose to volunteer to help needy rabbits as a way of memorializing Tupelo. “I learned that Tupelo’s final gift to me was showing me how to grow in compassion for other animals. If I can help other rabbits to have happy lives, then that keeps Tupelo’s love alive.”

Most importantly, love your rabbit and cherish the gifts she gives you in life and in parting. “If you grieve, you can give your heart again,” says Enid Traisman.

“Everywhere” excerpted from the book “When Only the Love Remains: The Pain of Pet Loss” by Emily Margaret Stuparyk, Copyright(c)1998

To obtain Emily Stuparyk’s book, visit her website at: http://home.merlin.mb.ca/~stuparyk

The Pet Loss Support Group meets four times a month. There is no charge and drop-ins are welcome. Call Dove Lewis Emergency Animal Hospital at 503-228-7281 for more information.
Everywhere

Not anywhere,
Yet everywhere,
An empty red throne,
Curled up and sweet.

A spot by the window,
Her ghost lays quietly,
At times, moves stealthily
Through the room,
Searching for me.

I look no longer;
She’s in every animal
I love,
In every animal I see,
Every animal I touch.

Living all the rest of my days,
Without her, seems forever;
Optimism lies on the wings
Of a dove,
To carry me safely home.

---

Cookie & QTee
Cookie (l) is such a gentle, calm, sweet white bunny! She loves being petted and brushed, and is quite tolerant of being held and cuddled. Cookie is a house rabbit and is litter box trained. QTee (r) is a handsome guy, who now and then likes to present his spunky attitude! He needs an adult person who will respect his space. QTee was rescued from certain death after being set loose in a field—he needs only time, patience and love to learn to trust people again.

Contact: ovine22@yahoo.com

Pogo is a sweet yet shy medium size fellow who would love to get pats and loves from his new family. Found alone outside, he appears not to have had much people lovin’ until now. He needs an inside home that is quiet and one that will shower him with attention so he can get use to gentle handling. A very special boy!

Contact: kingcat01@yahoo.com

Norton is a sweet little dwarf bun who just needs some understanding and a home without a cage. He loves to be held and makes a great lap rabbit. He gets along well with cats. Norton is boss of the kitchen and has taken up residence in one of the cabinets. Norton is a smart little guy, too. He likes to throw his little toy ball with a bell inside, even without receiving a treat.

Contact: lorbushek@cs.com

BunnyBoy, aka HoneyBunny, is a mellow male who has lived in a home where he got lots of love and attention. His litter box habits are perfect. Some of his favorite treats are wheat grass and dandelions. He is timid about some things, but never acts out aggressively. He enjoys toys he can chew and has a stuffed toy that he enjoys grooming. BunnyBoy might like to go to a home where he lives with a new rabbit friend.

Contact: zenrabbit1@hotmail.com

---

EVENTS

MARCH 21
Rabbit Social Interaction

A fun and interactive presentation about social interactions between rabbits/rabbits, rabbits/humans, and rabbits/other furry creatures.
What kinds of body language have you observed, and what does it mean? Bring your stories and questions.

APRIL 17-18
Rabbit Advocates at Northwest Pet & Companion Fair

Visit our booth at the Portland Expo Center and let our volunteers help you with all your rabbit needs.
Meet adoptable rabbits, purchase supplies, and pick up the latest information on rabbit care.

Check our website, www.adoptarabbit.org, for outreach schedule and
More Ways to Help the Rabbits!

Donate to Our Garage Sale... OR Donate Your Car!

The Rabbit Advocates will be holding our second annual Laurelhurst Garage Sale fundraising event in June of 2004. We are just starting to accept donations, so if you have a box or two of items that you’ve been saving, or larger items that you would like to donate, please let us know and we’ll arrange a drop off or pick up.

In addition, we are now able to accept donated automobiles. The vehicle does not have to be running, but should be able to sell for at least $75 at public auction.

100% of the proceeds from the garage sale and car donations will go to the Rabbit Advocates, and you’ll be issued a donation receipt for your tax records.

If you have any questions about how to donate, please contact one of the volunteers listed below. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Chris Arends
(Garage Sale Items & Cars)
503-612-9270
carends44@comcast.net

Arlene MacMonagle
(Garage Sale Items)
503-232-6460
ituri2@aol.com

Got a rabbit question?
Call our HELP-LINE
503-617-1625

Rabbit Advocates
PO Box 14235
Portland
Oregon
97293-0235

Would you like to continue receiving our newsletter, or update your mailing address?
Or maybe make a comment or suggestion?
WRITE TO US AT newsletter@adoptarabbit.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED