

All Ears in Sacramento

Number 25
Fall 2004

Inside this Issue:

Double Trouble	1
Rabbits Available for Adoption	3
Recent Adoptions.....	3
Upcoming Events	3
Raising a Bouncing Baby Bunny.....	4
The Rabbit Who Stole Christmas	6
SHRS Reorganization Efforts	7
Radkos for Rabbits.....	7
Keep in Touch!	8
Volunteer Opportunities	8

Contact Us:

tel: (916) 863-9690
fax: (916) 372-8858
email: mbat35@yahoo.com

www.allearsac.org

Sacramento House
Rabbit Society
PO Box 19850
Sacramento, CA 95819-0850



Double Trouble:

The loss of one rabbit friend opens up a volunteer's heart to two more

When we lost our beloved ten-year-old rabbit Vi in May, the thought of getting another rabbit was one I couldn't contemplate. Vi had shared our sunny kitchen with our bachelor bunny Hank – the two were never a bonded pair, but had been longtime neighbors in penned-off areas right next to each other. Now, with just Hank alone in the kitchen, the space seemed awkwardly empty. Hank seemed to adjust to the loss of Vi reasonably well, but it took me much longer to recover.

In late September, four months after Vi passed away, another HRS volunteer showed me photographs of some baby bunnies born at the Sacramento SPCA. The rabbits had been born to a mother who was rounded up in the large Galt rescue (see "Crisis in Galt," *All Ears in Sacramento*, Summer 2004). They were young, their eyes not yet open. As I looked at the picture, I saw that there amongst the many brown-spotted siblings, there were two babies that were the spitting image of Vi when I first met him nearly eleven years before – they had soft, grayish agouti fur, just the color of wild rabbits.

I couldn't get the picture out of my head, nor the thought of those babies starting their lives with such uncertainty. My resolve to not get another rabbit began to break down as I thought of all the reasons why I needed a baby bunny. Strangely, this was an unusual reaction for me – as a longtime rabbit rescuer, I have a soft spot for mature rabbits (everyone finds baby bunnies irresistible, so I like to rescue the ones who stand less of a chance of making it out of the shelter). But even beyond the bunnies' resemblance to Vi, I could see other reasons to do this. Perhaps this was our chance to find a friend for Hank, who had rejected many previous efforts to bond him with adult rabbits. Maybe, we thought, he'd be more likely to befriend a very young rabbit.

So, off to the shelter I went, with fellow HRS volunteers Barbara Koenigsmark and Deb Glassman in tow. Barbara had called ahead to let the shelter know that I was particularly interested in adopting one of the agouti bunnies, so when we arrived at the SPCA,

Double Trouble *continued from page 1*

the staff had isolated the two agouti babies together in a cage, with mom and siblings nowhere in site. This was an immediate quandary for me. How could I possibly split them up and leave one lonely baby behind? On top of that, one of them had a splayed back leg, and got around with a shuffling step. One sibling took care of the other. "Bring them both over," I told Barbara.

A short time later, I was back in the car with my two new little friends. Feeling fairly confident that I had a boy and a girl, I named them Nigel and Nora on our drive home. We set up an enclosure right next to Hank's space in the kitchen, and the two babies settled in, side by side.

Now, it had been almost nine years since we had had any baby bunnies in our house, but as a longtime HRS volunteer, I felt like I

was an old hand at bunny proofing. Right off the bat, I realized how rusty I was. I had always taken for granted the fact that neither Vi nor Hank (both mature, senior rabbits themselves) would venture far across the slippery wood laminate kitchen

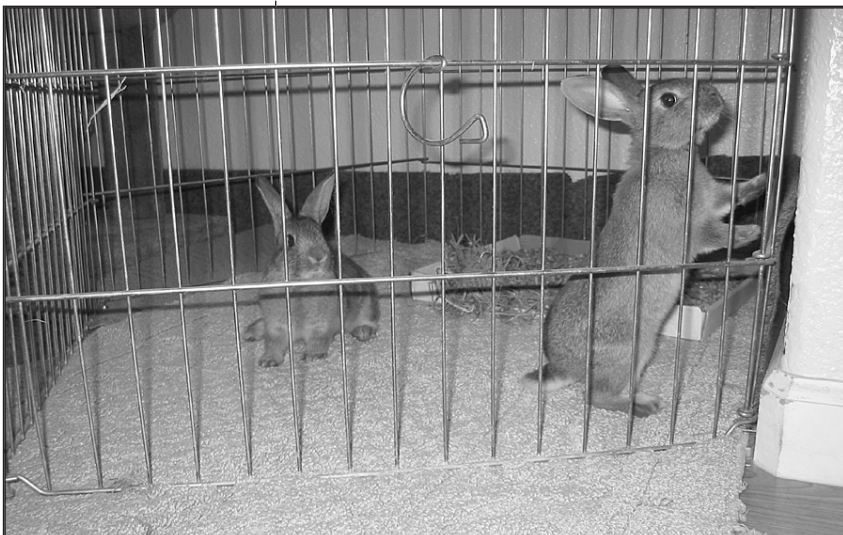
floor. But now, as I let little Nigel and Nora explore their new living space, I realized that the baby gate at the far end of the kitchen was going to have to be retrofitted to keep 6-week old babies in. They zoomed from carpet to hardwood and back again, without fear or hesitation. Any tiny hole or crevice was explored. The areas around the fridge had to be blocked, and I watched them nervously around the stove – luckily, that was one place too small for them to fit underneath. I used screen and cardboard to hastily block off areas that I deemed unsafe; to my amusement, Nora and Nigel would instantly be attracted to just those spots, inspecting and testing the boundaries, as though I had rubbed cranberry-and-carrot scent on the barricades. "Who are these little devils?" I thought. "I give them a space 100 times bigger than they came from and it still isn't enough?" But no living space is too big for bunnies, no matter their size or what they are accustomed to. And sure enough, it didn't take long before Nora the Explorer made her big break from the kitchen. One day I saw her flitting about the living room while I sat talking with a client (luckily, it was an animal-loving client!). I reinforced the gate, and kept feeding them as much as they could eat – bigger bunnies are definitely easier to keep track of!

At seven weeks old, our babies had their first veterinary checkup. They were two pounds each and growing like weeds. I spoke with Dr. Vicki Joseph about Nigel's leg, and she thought that it had probably been broken at the knee joint, and healed wrong. Because of his ability to get around on it, there was nothing to do but keep an eye on him, and take x-rays at the time of his neuter to figure out what had happened. Except that Dr. Joseph had some surprising news for me: Nigel won't be neutered, because after examining the bunny, she found that Nigel is most likely female. It was a funny case of déjà vu, as that's exactly what happened when I brought home Vi all those

continued on page 5

Top Photo: With their mama at the shelter

Bottom Photo: Settling into their new digs



Rabbits Available for Adoption



Buster is an affectionate dwarf Dutch boy. He needs twice-monthly teeth-trimming.



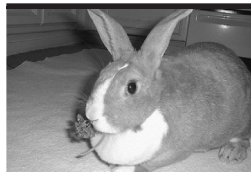
Fiona, Felicia and Finnegan (two girls and one boy) are friendly, playful siblings. They want to be adopted as a trio.



Sarah and Sam are a sweet, gentle bonded pair of mini rexes. Both are about 3 years old.



Enuff is an adult lop. Skittish at first, he soon will be kissing your hands. He needs his teeth trimmed every other month.



Tallulah Belle is a mellow and affectionate young adult female Dutch.



Mr. Bunny loves attention and to be petted. He enjoys playing with toys. He is being litter trained. The vet thinks his ears were surgically removed earlier in his life.



Tidbit has good litterbox habits and enjoys being handled. He needs his teeth trimmed occasionally.



Sweetie and Little Bigwig are a bonded brother and sister. They are friendly to people, dogs and cats.



Cream is a 2-year-old Florida White boy. He is very mellow and likes sitting on laps.

Recent Adoptions

Duchess was adopted by Suzanne Belko as a friend for her bunnies Humperdink and Petey

Natalie was adopted by Lisa Ham

Boo was adopted by Frank Yoachim

Lucky was adopted by Beverly Hinton

Quincy was adopted by Karin Boston

Samantha was adopted by Andrea Pomposo

All Ears in Sacramento is published quarterly by the Sacramento House Rabbit Society, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.

SHRS Manager
Margaret Batterman

Newsletter Editor
Kirsten Macintyre

Newsletter Design
HareLine Graphics

Letters to the editor and newsletter submissions may be sent to:

Sacramento House Rabbit Society
P.O. Box 19850
Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

tel: (916) 863-9690
fax: (916) 372-8858

email:
KMacinty@yahoo.com

Website:
www.allearsac.org

Upcoming Events

Adoption and Information Clinics

Are you thinking about adding a bunny to your household? Or are you just looking to learn more about the one you've already got? Regardless of whether you've had a rabbit for years or if you're new to the joys of rabbit companionship, you'll have a great time at our monthly Adoption and Information Clinics. Come ask us questions about bunny behavior, care, grooming, nutrition, or anything else you can think of. We have free printed information on a variety of topics, and, of course, we also have our fabulous fosters on hand, waiting for just the right family to come along! The adoption donation is \$50 (\$75 for two), and includes a copy of *The House Rabbit Handbook*.

If you already have a bunny, you're welcome to bring him or her to the Clinic in a secure carrier. We do offer nail trims for a \$5 donation, but please call our hotline at least 48 hours in advance to set an appointment time (so we'll be sure to have someone available for you!). Please also bring your own, sterilized clippers. Grooming and de-matting services are also available outside of Clinic hours, but by appointment only. Call our hotline for more information.

December 11
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

January 8
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Folsom PetCo
855 E. Bidwell Street

February 12
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Arden PetCo
1878 Arden Way

March 12
10:00 am – 3:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

Raising a Bouncing Baby Bunny:

How they're unique and what you need to know

Most of the rabbits available through the House Rabbit Society's foster network are adults (or at least young adults – we typically don't place them in adoptive homes until they are old enough to spay or neuter). However, we get many questions about how to care for very young bunnies, and fortunately our fosterers have learned a lot about raising young ones through trial and error. We can tell you that raising a litter of kits is very different from raising a litter of kittens or puppies! Here are some of the major differences and things you might not know about newborn rabbits:

1. A soon-to-be mother rabbit will build a nest for her youngsters with fur (pulled from her own stomach), hay, newspaper, and whatever other materials are within reach. Once the babies are born, she will not "sit" on them, and may in fact spend some time away from them, in another part of the pen or cage. She'll return to feed

them, most likely at night or early in the morning.

2. Mother rabbits only nurse their youngsters for about five minutes a day – mother's milk is very rich and a little will fill up their tiny stomachs quickly. Mothers prefer to nurse when they don't have a human audience, so there's no reason to worry if you don't see them eating. If their stomachs are round and pink and they're quiet most of the day, then they're just nursing when you aren't looking.
3. Unlike cats, mother rabbits don't lie down while nursing, but stand over their young to let them feed. After the babies eat, the mother will lick them to clean them and stimulate elimination.
4. If you're sure that the babies aren't eating, consult a vet. In some cases, hand-feeding may be necessary or helpful. The most typical substitute for mother's milk is Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR), which is given with an eyedropper or syringe; a vet can tell you how much to feed and when. Babies whose eyes are not yet open will need to be stimulated to urinate and defecate before eating. Older babies should be stimulated to do this after being handfed. A vet can also tell you if the babies should be handfed cecotropes (soft, nutrient-filled droppings produced and ingested by all rabbits). These can be collected from the mother, if she's healthy, or another older rabbit in the house.
5. Don't provide extra sources of heat for a newborn litter (unless recommended by a rabbit-savvy veterinarian). Babies are very sensitive to temperatures, and a heating pad (or even turning up the temperature in their room) can kill them. A hot water bottle covered with a layer of towels can be

Three-day-old babies in the nest made of mom's fur and hay. Mom is not always present.



helpful for a litter that is being neglected by a mother, but don't risk this without clear instructions from a vet.

6. After the babies' eyes open, at about 10 days old, you can introduce timothy hay, pellets, water and limited greens to their diet.
7. If the father is present or nearby, he will not harm the babies. However, he should be separated from the mother – a rabbit can get pregnant again on the same day she gives birth.

It's also all right to handle the babies, even if the mother doesn't know you well. Domestic rabbits aren't concerned with "human smells" and your presence shouldn't alarm the mother or cause her to reject the kits.

Domestic bunnies should be weaned entirely from their mother at about six weeks old. It's against Federal Law (the Animal Welfare Act of 1973) to separate them from their mother before they are eight weeks old. Many pet stores have been in violation of this law, resulting in the sales of bunnies who grow up with health and behavioral problems.

If all goes well, at 10 weeks you'll have a handful of bouncing, happy baby bunnies who are already nearing adolescence! At this time, it's best to take them to the vet to have them sexed, and then separate them to avoid another litter. Although they won't be ready for spays or



neuters for another few months, some bunnies are already sexually mature at this point.

You'll delight in their playful antics, including jumping, spinning, digging and exploring. And if you need some help with this next, new, exciting stage of parenting, never fear – we have experience and lots of advice to offer on that, too!

For more information on baby bunnies, see the following links:

<http://www.rabbit.org/care/babies.html>

<http://www.rabbit.org/care/newborn.html>

— Kirsten Macintyre

At six-days-old their fur has grown in but the babies' eyes are not yet open.

Double Trouble *continued from page 2*

years ago ("her" name was actually Violet until we found that she was a he at three months of age). Nigel, too, was destined for a name change – she became Fiona.

This news actually made life much easier for all of us, because if the babies had been male and female, I would have had to separate them after the age of three months to avoid any possibility of pregnancy (overpopulation issues aside, it is dangerous for so young a rabbit to be pregnant and have babies before being fully mature herself). There could also have been dominance issues between Hank and a young male reaching sexual maturity, with each boy wanting to prove himself "top

bunny." Dominance can still be an issue between girl rabbits – status is based on personality more than gender – but generally, the fighting is less severe. I plan to have Nora and Nigel/Fiona spayed at 6 months of age, and at that point I will feel much more sure of their relationship.

Nora and Fiona have brought so much fun and energy to our house, and they are a complete delight to have around. Every day is something new, and every day I watch them interact with Hank and form their own little family dynamic, which I will write more about in an upcoming issue.

— Jill Walker

Drop us a line!
We welcome your submissions to *All Ears in Sacramento*. If you live in the Sacramento area and have story ideas, photos, illustrations, or article topics, send them to the address on page 3. We can't return items, so please do not send originals.

The Rabbit Who Stole Christmas (or Tried To...)

Every time Christmas rolls around and I see advertisements for “The Grinch Who Stole Christmas,” I can’t help smiling as I think of my first rabbit, Madeleine, and the year she almost stole Christmas from me.

Well, more specifically, she tried to steal my Christmas tree.

It was one of my first post-college Christmases on my own, and I was determined to make my tiny house as festive as possible. Madeleine, my feisty little American fuzzy lop, was my constant companion, and she spent many evenings lounging at my feet as I cheerfully wrote holiday cards and unboxed Christmas ornaments to put on the insanely too-large tree I’d bought for my living room. Little did I know that my little rabbit was watching and planning – especially when I got the brilliant idea to make a hand-strung chain of popcorn and dried cranberries to encircle the tree.

I must have spent three hours with a needle and thread, stringing one piece after another. Foot after foot, I coiled the decorations on the couch next to me. Christmas carols played in the background. And Madeleine watched and

waited, biding her time.

It took me another hour with the step stool to hang the string up on my lovely tree. Exhausted, I stood back to admire the festive results.

No sooner had I padded down the hall to pour some eggnog when I heard a rustle. Then another rustle. Then silence for a moment, and then the frantic, mad clatter of Madeleine’s little feet scrambling on the hardwood floor. I knew that sound; she only ran that fast when she was up to something.

By the time I made it back to the living room, it was too late. It was like slow motion ... there was Madeleine, racing down the hall as fast as she could go, with one end of the cranberry-popcorn string clutched firmly in her mouth. The other end, of course, was still wrapped around the Christmas tree. As I stood there, screaming “NOOO!” my spectacular fir crashed to the middle of my living room floor. Ornaments shattered, the light string flickered and went out, and Madeleine just kept on going, zipping around the corner and under the bed, where it was safe from dreadful loud noises and her really upset human companion.

She would have taken the whole tree with her, I’m sure, if the darn popcorn string hadn’t broken midway.

I cleaned up the mess, righted my now-battered tree, made sure there was no fire hazard, and then went to seek out my little thief, to make sure she wasn’t scared half to death. Oh, she was fine, all right. Happily hunkered down under my bed, dining on her cranberries and popcorn. I poked my head under the bedskirt and there she was, twitching her nose and swishing her little cotton tail at me in defiance and utter glee.

That was my last Martha Stewart Christmas – no more cranberry and popcorn strings for our house, thanks!

Madeleine awaiting the delivery of some Christmas delights



SHRS Reorganization Efforts

Since the Sacramento House Rabbit Society chapter began in 1997, it has been growing nonstop. Like all HRS chapters, SHRS is a nonprofit organization run entirely by volunteers, most of whom give their weekends and evenings to our rabbit rescue, adoption and education efforts. Our small group of core volunteers and fosterers has been working mightily to keep up with the Sacramento area population growth and increased popularity of rabbits as house pets, but the more successful our efforts have been, the more our workload has increased.

Because of the increased demand, at our biannual volunteer meeting in September 2004 we decided that our chapter volunteers needed a respite from the many years of continuous work. We must reorganize and prioritize in order to continue meeting the needs of the chapter without further overburdening our valuable volunteers.

During this "downtime," we have suspended the daily answering of telephone hotline calls and emails, and we are not taking new foster bunnies into our program. Our

monthly adoption days at Petco will continue as always (we still have lots of bunnies available for adoption!) and SHRS volunteers may participate in other animal-related events on a case-by-case basis.

We view this as a temporary transition period, and hope to be back up and running at full steam in a few months. Our next volunteer meeting is set for March 20, 2005; at that time, we'll be looking at a new list of priorities and figuring out how best to "get our groove back." If you would like to attend to find out more about volunteering for the chapter, please email mbat35@yahoo.com.

We view this as a positive step in strengthening our chapter, and we appreciate your patience and continued support during this time. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for the chapter. Until then, enjoy these wonderful creatures and may they bring great joy and peace into your lives.

Sincerely,
Margaret-Rose Batterman
SHRS Chapter Manager



Radkos for Rabbits



The Sacramento House Rabbit Society is revisiting one of its most popular fundraisers for the 2004 Holiday Season – the sale of Christopher Radko, Slavic Treasures, Patricia Breen and other Christmas ornaments. These beautiful handmade glass figures were donated to our chapter more than a year ago, and all proceeds from sales go directly towards the care of the rabbits in our foster system.

Many, but not all, of the colorful keepsake ornaments have a rabbit theme. Most have never been out of the box and are in perfect condition, making a fine addition to a collection. Even if you're not a collector, they'll look lovely on a Christmas tree (or the tree of a rabbit-lover you know!). To view our catalog online, please visit: <http://www.alllearssac.org/Ornaments1.html>

The ornaments shown on this page are new to the collection, so please email shrs@macmail.com if you are interested in purchasing them. We thank you for your support, and wish you a wonderful holiday season!





Sacramento House Rabbit Society
 P.O. Box 19850
 Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

membership
 expiration date



Not a Member?

Sacramento House Rabbit Society depends on donations to keep running. Please fill out the form below to keep receiving *All Ears in Sacramento*, and to support local rabbits in need! *SHRS does not sell or share our member's information with any other organizations or companies.*

Keep in Touch!

Time to renew your membership? New to the House Rabbit Society? The annual membership to the House Rabbit Society is \$18. This includes a subscription to the quarterly *House Rabbit Journal*. The annual membership fee for the Sacramento Chapter, which includes the quarterly *All Ears in Sacramento*, is \$15. The House Rabbit Society is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. All membership fees are tax-deductible and go towards care expenses for the rabbits and for providing educational materials, such as these newsletters.

- Please sign me up for the National Membership, \$18
- Please sign me up for the Sacramento Membership, \$15
- Please sign me up for both for \$30
- I have enclosed an additional donation of \$_____
- I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

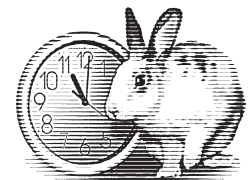
email address: _____

*Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:
 Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850*

Volunteer!

Would you like to help local rabbits and bunny-lovers? We could use volunteers in the following areas:

- Public Events (staffing education tables)
- Fundraising Events
- Distributing Literature
- Working with Shelters
- Transporting shelter rabbits to local adoption days
- Fostering



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY