

All Ears in Sacramento

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Rabbit Roundup:

Two Northern California Strays Find a Home



Li'l Smartie decided cuddle time with his human companion Heidi is much better than living in the wild.

Last fall as my husband and I were going on our daily walks in our mountain valley here in Northern California, we frequently saw two black bunnies in a yard near our home. We had recently lost our two black bunnies from old age so we thought these two would fill their empty cages very nicely. All we had to do was catch them! Their former people had moved out and left the bunnies behind. We later learned that the bunnies had run loose in the yard and across the County Road for three to four years, as the people had tired of feeding them! I don't know how they escaped becoming dinner for coyotes, raccoons, dogs, cats, skunks, owls, or hawks.

We invested in a live trap and put tempting food in it and caught the little white-tipped black rabbit in three days. After a quick trip to the vet to get him checked out and neutered, he bonded with our little dwarf Holland female, Pewee, in a very gentlemanly manner. He also loves to lie across my chest with his head on my shoulder. He has white circles around his eyes, making him look very wise, so we

named him Hercule Poirot, after the Agatha Christie character.

The other bunny was a different story! We put the trap out and tried for a couple months to catch him, offering him every kind of food we could think of. This was in early winter and he should have welcomed the food, but he seemed to have plenty. All we caught were two cats and a skunk. We even tried catching him with a net; no luck.

We gave up for a while, but every time we walked past and saw him darting around or sitting smugly under a bush, we'd say, "There's the Little Smartie*!" You can guess what his

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How to Rescue a Rabbit Running Loose

Catching a rabbit who doesn't want to be caught, as house rabbit people everywhere have learned, is difficult enough in the confines of your own living room. Outdoors, it can be impossible. But, as a matter of life and death, it's still worth a try. Here are a few suggestions.

1. The quickest way is to use a net. However, nets are not easy to obtain, and they require skill to use. If you're fortunate enough to have an animal shelter or Animal Control Department with the time, staff, and willingness, they're the ones for the job. They have the equipment and the expertise. So start your rescue using the telephone. Animal Control will be listed in the phone book under city or county services. If they won't send someone, call your local humane society or SPCA. It's possible that they can offer you some suggestions or even some person-power.

2. If your requests for help leave you back where you started, your next option is to get hold of a humane trap. These can often be rented from the shelter or animal control. In many areas, you can rent them from commercial companies. Check the phone directory under "traps." The best trap has openings at both ends, so that before it's sprung it looks like a wire tunnel. Rabbits are less reluctant to enter if it looks like it's got more than one way out.

Some skill is required in setting the control on the trap so that it springs at a fairly light touch from the rabbit's foot. Practice using the controls at home until you get a sense of how they work. You can, in effect, make the trip-plate bigger by setting a piece of cardboard on top of it, and putting the bait on that. Use something with a strong, tempting (to a rabbit) aroma as bait. Bananas are a good first choice. Next would be grated carrot, as grating tends to release a stronger smell. Drape a sheet over the whole trap. This will make it less scary to enter and less stressful for the bunny once he's inside. Place the trap in a shady, somewhat secluded spot, for the same reasons. You must check the trap at least every 4-6 hours. All your good inten-

tions will be wasted if the rabbit dies of stress/shock from being trapped in the trap.

As you can see, humane traps are far from ideal. They require an investment in time, money, and effort. They are stressful for the rabbit, of course; but so is living outdoors, unprotected. This is rescue work at its most fundamental, and that bunny is lucky that someone has finally come along who is willing to at least try to save her life.

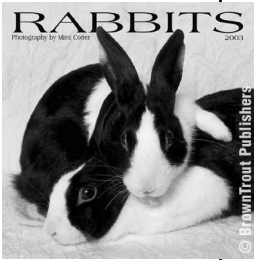
3. A much slower method is to make friends with the rabbit. Keep going back, as many times a day as you can, trying to get a little closer each time. This is a time-consuming task; try to enlist a friend or two to share it. When you approach her, do so crouching low and from the side. If she can see you only from one eye, her distance vision will be less acute. Sometimes a rabbit who runs from you is actually enough of a "people rabbit" that you'll be able to get near her once she gets over her initial terror. Take treats with you—bananas, breakfast cereal, bread, apple, etc. Place them on the ground, and sit quietly about 10 feet away from them. Try putting the treats into a front-opening (not top-opening) animal carrier. Attach a piece of wire to the door, so that you can push it shut from a few feet away.

If you do succeed in rescuing the rabbit, you have three new choices ahead of you. You can adopt her yourself; you can try to find a good home for her; or you can take her to the shelter, where she will either be adopted or euthanized. If at all possible, keep her at your home for at least a few days before taking her to the shelter. This will give her a chance to begin to recover from the extremely stressful experiences of living unprotected and of being trapped, which will in turn make her more adoptable. The House Rabbit Society has extensive written information to help you with the first two options. We are also available by telephone for medical or behavioral emergencies.

—Amy Espie

National Educator

(reprinted from www.rabbit.org)



NEW!

2003 Calendar

See page 7 for details

Hints From Heloise

This letter appeared in the October 28 edition of the *Sacramento Bee*. Anyone interested in taking Heloise up on her request to hear more bunny tales can contact her at Heloise@compuserve.com, or write to: Heloise, P.O. Box 795000, San Antonio, TX 78279-5000. Don't forget to mention the National House Rabbit Society web site (www.rabbit.org) in your letter!

DEAR HELOISE: Thank you for positively promoting bunnies as pets; we are hoping it will have the added benefit of decreasing the devaluation and mistreatment of these adorable creatures by humans. We have had two bunnies and discovered that if they are properly socialized, they make wonderful pets. They are compatible with other pets, affectionate, trainable and always humorous. They are not appropriate pets for children who aren't taught how to handle them properly.
—Dianne, Kelsey and Twink, Omaha, Neb.

DIANNE: You're welcome, and I'd love to hear more bunny tales from my readers.

Rabbit Roundup *continued from page 1*

name ended up being! We kept telling him that if he'd just get in that trap, he'd soon find himself in the Bunny Dreamhouse with his buddy, Poirot, but he wouldn't listen.

Finally after about a month, in January, we decided that we'd try to catch him one more time and if we didn't succeed, we'd let him stay in the wild as we thought he might be happier there. Well, we finally offered him something he didn't have plenty of—we put some used sawdust from our female bunny's cage in the trap. Even though she is spayed, her scent was the boy bunny's downfall. In three hours, we had Li'l Smartie in the trap and it just took a woman to do it!

We thought he'd be wild and would require time to tame down. No way! He was perfectly tame right away and after his trip to the vet to be checked over and neutered, he has become the tamest bunny we've ever had! We can pick him up right off the floor, he jumps up in our laps and loves to sit on my chest and exchange kisses. The only thing he doesn't get to do is play with Pewee. Poirot has claimed her for his own and runs Li'l Smartie off anytime he gets too near.

But that's okay, Li'l Smartie has the run of the living room and our laps. His one request

is that we take him out of his cage twice a day so he can go to the bathroom in the litter box in the corner as he will NOT go in his cage! That makes him the easiest bunny of all to clean up after. He seems to have no problem in waiting 12 hours or more to go the bathroom. People do seem to get a strange expression when we tell them we have to get home to take our bunny out to go to the bathroom!

Well, both these two bunnies now agree that they have found Bunny Heaven! It's warm in winter, cool in summer. There are no predators to fear. They get fresh grass and bits of clover, even carrots, bottoms and all, fresh out of the garden. There's always plenty of bunny pellets, bits of apple, even a slice of dried banana daily. Best of all, they have humans that they have trained very satisfactorily to answer their every need! Their humans are glad they persisted until they caught them as the empty cages are now full again.

— Heidi Marsh



Heidi and Poirot

**due to the family nature of this publication, some names have been changed!*

Bathing Beauties (er...Bunnies)

A few years ago, I got an e-mail from a woman who was shopping at a pet supply store and noticed a bottle of “bunny shampoo.” She eagerly bought a bottle, and then contacted the SHRS to find out just how often to use the stuff.

Fortunately, she wrote to ask for advice before she actually drew a bath. Unfortunately, she’d just been bitten by the bug of consumerism. In other words, just because manufacturers make it, doesn’t mean it’s a good idea to use it.

In general, rabbits hardly ever need baths. A normal rabbit doesn’t smell like much of anything at all (this trait actually helps non-domestic rabbits to survive in the wild). Like cats, they use their tongues to keep their fur tidy, and any rabbit who lives indoors isn’t going to get too dusty anyway.

If your bunny does get something on his fur, or if he develops an unpleasant odor, he might need some assistance in cleaning himself. In these cases, a quick sponge bath or a “butt bath” may be appropriate.



The least stressful way to clean a messy bunny is to apply a warm washcloth to the affected area.

Tips for touchups (sponge bathing)

From time to time (particularly if your rabbit is elderly, obese, or has a history of digestive problems), pick up the bunny and check his rear area. Some bunnies get messy around the tail if they eat too many vegetables or if they aren’t feeling well. If your bunny has a tendency to get behind on his grooming, you might want to keep alcohol-free baby wipes on hand for quick cleanup. If it’s a mess that can’t be swiftly cleaned up with a paper towel or baby wipe, you might have to turn on the tap.

Don’t be daunted by a disgusting mess. Even if it’s caked on, you can remove the mess in just a few minutes. Start by making a warm compress out of a washcloth or a piece of old flannel soaked in warm water. Wrap the bunny in a towel to keep him still—or have someone else hold him—while you hold the damp cloth over the hardened stuff. This should make it easier to pull the mess off within a few minutes. If the mess is too big to be removed in this way, you can try a “butt bath.” Fill the sink with lukewarm water and, being very cautious to keep a good grip on the bunny and support his hindquarters, very gently dip his tail end into it. (Again, it’s helpful to have a second person present to assist if the rabbit tries to squirm away.) If the rabbit can’t stand to be even partially submerged, go back to the compress method. It may take longer, but it’s



worth it if it's less upsetting to the rabbit.

Once you get the feces cleaned off, take care to thoroughly dry the bunny. If it's a warm day, you can dry him off with a towel and let him air dry the rest of the way (keep an ear open for angry thumps once you set him down – we guarantee he will be mad at you about the bath!). Some people also find that their rabbits don't mind being blow-dried on a cool or warm setting. Be sure the rabbit doesn't stay wet, though, as it's critical that they maintain their normal body temperature of 102 degrees.

Other notes and helpful hints

Although we've heard a few stories of rabbits who loved to paddle around the family swimming pool, we've heard far more stories of rabbits who were terrified of water. This is just one of the many reasons why you shouldn't ever submerge a rabbit.

Don't even think about submerging an angora (long-haired) rabbit! Although it might seem to be the logical solution for a bunny whose long fur is tangled, getting the fur wet will only make the fibers interlock and create a bigger mess. Tangled angora fur should be shaved or professionally combed out.

Most rabbit vets no longer suggest flea shampoos or pyrethrin dips for rabbits (again, because some rabbits react so negatively to baths). Other products, including Advantage, will kill fleas quickly without getting the rabbit wet. If your rabbit has fleas, call a rabbit-savvy veterinarian to determine the best course of action.

Don't use just any soap on a rabbit, as they have very delicate skin. Many soaps made for dogs are even too harsh. Generally, baby sham-



Far Left: A "butt bath" can be a very effective way to spot clean a rabbit.

Near Left: Dry your bunny thoroughly after bathing.

Below: Some rabbits don't mind the sound of a blow dryer. Keep it on a cool or warm setting, never hot.

poo is gentle enough. Better yet, ask your veterinarian for a specific recommendation.

For quick stain removal (including urine stains on fur), you can use waterless pet shampoo or a vinegar and cornstarch paste. Use the vinegar

to dampen the fur and then apply the cornstarch. Allow the paste to dry before brushing it out (cornstarch is also a wonderful agent to help keep mats under control in long-haired pets).

Don't forget to clean the rabbit's cage, too, and let both dry completely before he returns home. Finally, use good judgment—it's never a good idea to bathe a sick bunny (don't even get her wet).

—Kirsten Macintyre



Additional resources

For more information on bathing bunnies, visit the following web links:

<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/groom.html#Baths>

<http://www.rabbit.org/journal/warren-wise/fleas.html>

<http://www.leithpetwerks.com/Bunfun/bath.html>

<http://www.snowcrest.net/lightind/bettyann/tinyr10.html#Splash>

Recent Adoptions

Freckles and Sunshine were adopted by Hayley Mann

Anika (now Dottie) was adopted by Laurie Fisher

Lily and Logan were adopted by Amanda Currier

Zorro was adopted by the Groc family

Little White Paws was adopted by Heather

Rabbits Available for Adoption



Velvet is a female rabbit who is loving and playful.



Damon is a fun, active young lop boy.



Christopher is a young Netherland Dwarf make who likes to be petted and give kisses.



Pierre is an energetic and curious young male.



Elderberry is a boy who enjoys exploring his surroundings and being petted.



Flower is a mellow girl with excellent litterbox habits.



Tommy Bahama is a 2-month old, sweet and playful boy.



Brandon and Penny are a one year old girl/boy pair. They will need to be adopted as a couple. They are very independent and curious.



Gibson is a two year old mini-rex. He enjoys sitting in laps and being petted.



Henri and Sabine* are a pair of bonded grey angoras. Henri likes to cuddle; Sabine is more independent. They would like a family who would enjoy brushing their long, soft coats.



Thumper is a mini-lop boy who likes to play with humans and sit on their laps.



Meg is an energetic 3-month old girl looking for a good home.



Alexander* is a sweet Angora with cotton-candy soft fur; however his coat is high maintenance. He needs a home with a family who will love to spend time with him.

** Henri, Sabine, and Alexander are currently living at the HRS center in Richmond so please call the hotline ahead of time to make arrangements for them to visit Sacramento.*

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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!

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: _____

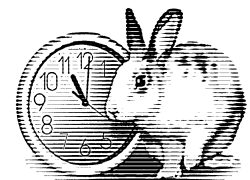
email address: _____

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 rabbits to the National Headquarters in Richmond
- Fostering



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY