

All Ears in Sacramento

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Tails of Adventure: Relocating with Rabbits

Moving is always a stressful experience, but when you're relocating with pets in tow, there's a whole new challenge involved. Here are two stories of SHRS members who moved cross-country with their pet rabbits – one by car, and one by plane. Even if you're not planning a big move any time in the future, there are still some interesting travel tips to be learned from the experts!

Driving West with Big Man and Little Girl

In late May 1999, I left Wisconsin and a career I spent 18 years building, to head back to California to build a new career and life. I was accompanied by two rabbits and as many possessions as I could stuff into my old Toyota hatchback. The rest of our belongings – mine and the rabbits' – were in storage back in Wisconsin, until we got ourselves established.

The two rabbits – formally known as Tyrone and Tina, but usually called "Big Man" and "Little Girl" – had been with me since late 1995 and mid-1996, respectively. The Big Man is a strikingly handsome, jet black, rotund (big-boned, not fat!) lop. He is rather a "spaz" – a trait my wife Tanya, in unreasonable moments, says he shares with me. Little Girl is a very small Angora mix, imperious and self-possessed.

After six years in Oshkosh, the bunnies and I were looking to live in a city with coffee houses, good restaurants, single women over the age of 20, and foreign movies. Asserting my will as the only one of the three who could drive, I also insisted on a city as near as possible to the Sierra. Sacramento was it.

The trip west was an adventure for us all. It wasn't easy for them because I didn't have anything approaching an optimal means of transport. The truth is, in working toward my departure from Wisconsin, I'd initially decided



Big Man takes care of Little Girl

to try to find the rabbits a new home and return to California solo. But after much half-hearted effort (half-hearted because I didn't really want to leave them), I finally resolved to take them with me, especially since the friends I was going to stay with in Fair Oaks for a month or so after arrival insisted that the rabbits were welcome.

A lot of stuff for short-term use was going in the car, thus limiting the bunnies' space. Their travel cage was a spare, barely large enough for one of them (especially since they were used to having the run of the house). And neither rabbit had ever used a drip bottle — both were used to drinking water from crockery. The little girl, who tended to stretch out next to the water bowl, got fairly wet the first day of the trip, until I figured out how

continued on page 2

much water to put in the bowl. The car was air conditioned, but packed tight it was pretty close. And the constant vibration, I think, was not pleasant for them. One can very quickly compare, while passing through the country on an interstate, just how much of a particular state's budget goes into road repair. The bunnies, better than I, can tell you that South Dakota pretty much lets things go.

Despite what must have seemed, for five days, like life inside a cement mixer, the rabbits were amazing. We'd stop several times a day and I'd find a shady place to take the cage out and let them stretch their legs. I'd put the

OUT. Yep, out to roam and hop – under constant supervision – for quite a while. If I was going to get dinner, I'd put them back into the cage, and I caged them at night. But they were out of the cage as much as I could arrange.

Big Man and Little Girl loved it. Each night upon our arrival at a motel, they'd come out of the cage somehow stronger. I definitely got the impression that they were increasingly enjoying traveling.

We saw a lot on the road west – drove through the Badlands, visited Wall Drug and stopped (in shade, of course) at Mt. Rushmore. We wanted to make a stop at the still-under-construction Crazy Horse monument, but there was no shade to be found and the day was quite hot, so we skipped it.

In terms of rabbit travel, I'd say the main problem was simply lack of room in the vehicle. I suppose the one big change I'd make is to have enough room for the rabbits to have a well-cushioned area in addition to their litter tray and water. I don't think I'd recommend using a drip bottle, because rabbits generally don't take in as much water in that way. I prefer the frequent monitoring of a small amount of water in a bowl.

For me, if not the bunnies, the best moment of the trip had to be crossing into California and into the Sierra Nevada. It felt very much like coming home. A few days after our arrival, I took up a position at a Sacramento advertising and marketing firm and never looked back. Tanya and I met that fall and were married last summer. Today, the rabbits live in a big (huge, by Tanya's measure), custom-built pen (which contains the travel cage in one corner as a familiar piece of pen furniture) in the study of our house. And they've been developing a friendship with a two-year old Golden Retriever named Mandy whom we adopted in December. Soon, I imagine, they'll be coming to terms with children (as will I, I suppose). The adventure Big Man, Little Girl and I started together in the spring of 1999 doesn't look like it's going to end any time soon.

— Mark L. Kleinman



At the motels, I never hid the fact that I had rabbits when I checked in. But I did lie a little.

cage up on a table and hold each rabbit in my lap for a little bit of massage and relaxation. Then I'd catch a quick nap before driving a few more hours. All humor aside, their companionship was a treasure to me during this very uncertain passage.

At the motels, I never hid the fact that I had rabbits when I checked in. But I did lie a little. I told the motel managers that the rabbits lived in the cage and that's where they'd be all night long. The reactions I received ranged from "no problem" to a skeptical "okay" to "no problem, but there's a pet fee." We were never turned away and, as I recall, my little lie about never letting them out of the cage got me into at least two establishments where pets were not allowed.

Okay, about the lie. I always moved the rabbits into the motel room first, since it was usually air-conditioned. Then I moved whatever luggage was going in the room. Then I'd build a luggage barricade around the area that's just outside the bathroom – sort of a little closet-dressing area. Then, I'd LET THE BUNNIES

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.

Flying East with Hopkins and Haley

We moved to the Sacramento area at the beginning of 1996 when Andy took a job at Intel in Folsom. Cindy was looking for a teaching job for the fall and did not know anyone in the area. Before our move to California, we had been researching rabbits as pets since Andy is not allergic to them. Hopkins, a Holland lop, joined our family and we became familiar with the House Rabbit Society through the *House Rabbit Handbook*. When Cindy started teaching, we thought Hopkins was lonely and found him a friend, Haley, another Holland lop. Soon after, we became involved in the Sacramento House Rabbit Society, and remained fairly active throughout the rest of our time in California.

In the fall of 2000, we decided to move to the east coast to be closer to family. After about three months of searching, Andy found a job in Manassas, Virginia, and we began to plan for our move. We knew that with two bunnies and a young daughter, Ashley, that we should fly across country. But many of the airlines we contacted did not accept pets on the plane (they would allow them only in the cargo hold, or not at all). Eventually, we found a nonstop flight on Delta where we could have the bunnies in the cabin. An interesting note was the airline allowed only two pet carriers per flight. We reserved both slots to make sure both our bunnies could be on board if they had to ride in separate carriers.

Before the flight, we had to get a certificate of health from our vet testifying to the well being of the bunnies, and we had to find pet-friendly lodging on both ends of the trip. We also had to purchase one airline-approved carrier for them (we also got an extra one in case the airline decided they were too big to fly together).

At the airport, we checked the rabbits' cage with their litter pan and basic supplies. Everything went smoothly. Surprisingly, the airline employees did not ask to see the certificate of health, but it was still good to have. They also allowed the rabbits to travel in a single carrier and only charged us for one carrier rather than two (when we made the reservations, we got the impression that Delta charged by animal and not by the carrier).

We had our hands full with our daughter, bunnies, car seat, etc. When we got to the security gate,

we were told that our rabbits needed to be removed from their carrier and carried through the metal detector. We were a bit concerned, as Haley is easily startled, and we did not want to lose a bunny in the airport! It was quite a sight. First we sent the pet carrier, car seat, diaper bag, and backpack through the X-ray machine. Then Cindy marched through with Ashley in front pouch and Hopkins



Our rabbits needed to be carried through the metal detector...we did not want to lose a bunny in the airport!

clutched in her arms, and Andy followed with Haley. We reassembled the caravan on the other side.

Although Haley and Hopkins were scared and shaking, the flight went fine. It was much better for them to be able to fly in the same carrier. We put the carrier under the seat, and they cuddled up together. With larger bunnies, this may not be possible. At the end of the flight, we got everyone off the plane and into the rental car, where we were able to rub their heads and give them some raisins to ease their fears.

Once in Virginia, we lodged at an extended stay hotel, which seems to be better about letting guests stay with pets. After four days in the small hotel room, we found an apartment. This was a challenge, since many of them would not accept any pets and some specifically forbid bunnies. But we convinced the apartment manager that they would not be a problem. (She said, "They just stay in their cage. Right?" Andy's reply, with a straight face, was "They are like fish. We just sit around and watch them.") We lived there for five months, until we found our current house. The rabbits love having more space to run in.

While the move was stressful, the rabbits are in good health and everything worked out. The best recommendations we can make to someone facing a long move like this would be to plan your trip in detail and to double check all arrangements you make in order to confirm nothing has changed. With the recent airport security changes, traveling with pets may be even more complicated, so make sure you start your research project early.

Unfortunately, Andy is changing jobs and we are on the move again. We'll keep you posted on our next adventure in rabbit travel. Hopefully, this one will only require a car!

— Andrew and Cindy Irwin

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Obesity in Rabbits

Bunnysitters

The SHRS keeps a list of local people who are interested in bunnysitting for a fee or for a sitting exchange arrangement. Rates and experience vary, so please make sure you are personally comfortable with your bunnysitter, and ask for references. The SHRS provides this list as a service, and holds no liability for bunnysitters. If you would like to have your name added to this list, contact us at (916) 863-9690.

Bunnysitter Exchange

Karen Blaine.....726-4637
Danny Popp.....966-7805
Stevilynn
Saunders.....344-8917

Sacto Bunnysitters

Animeals.....646-4663
Christine John722-5301
Bonni McMurray ...451-6389

Folsom to Foothill Bunnysitters

Brian Barry...(530) 644-7387
Ravilla Irvin...(530) 676-2273
Charlene Welty.....933-0530

Elk Grove Area Bunnysitters

Wanda
Turner.....(209) 933-0895

Many people assume that a chubby rabbit is a well-fed rabbit, and a well-fed rabbit is a healthy rabbit. Actually, this is not the case; obesity is a major factor in many diseases and other health problems of rabbits. If you want your rabbit to live a long life, free of medical problems and emergency trips to the vet, you should monitor his weight and take steps to slim him down if he's already on the hefty side.

How do you know if your rabbit is obese? As a general guideline, you should be able to easily feel your rabbit's ribs when gently rubbing your fingers back and forth over the rib cage (but your rabbit should never be so thin that you can easily see the ribs). If you feel a soft spongy layer between the skin and ribs, your rabbit may be too fat. Look for extra flaps of skin around the hind end, which is another sign of obesity. For females, look at the dewlap (the roll of skin under the chin). It should not be so large as to interfere with eating or drinking. If you are in doubt about your rabbit's weight, please consult with your veterinarian.

Obesity places additional stress on the rabbit's body. The extra body weight places excessive pressure on the feet (especially the hind feet). This increased pressure can negatively affect blood supply to the foot, resulting in pressure necrosis (tissue that dies due to poor blood circulation) and secondary bacterial infection of the skin called pododermatitis or "sore hocks." Pododermatitis ulcerations can

range from superficial raw spots to wounds that are deep enough to involve the bone. Other factors can add to the risk of pododermatitis, including foot trauma from sharp surfaces (such as exposed wire cage bottoms), moist or dirty surfaces inside the cage, and excessive stomping of the feet. An obese rabbit may also be unable to turn his head far enough to clean himself, thus allowing urine and feces to collect on the feet. Urine is caustic and can result in burns called "urine scald." These are spots where the skin is red and the fur has rubbed off. The surrounding fur may be stained yellow, and there may be a strong odor of urine.

Obese rabbits may also have difficulty breathing. Although rabbits are athletic animals, they have relatively small chest cavities. Added fat in the abdomen puts pressure on the diaphragm, making it difficult for the animal to expand the lungs and breathe. The excess fat also provides excessive insulation, making it difficult for the animal to avoid overheating in warm weather.

Obesity may prevent a rabbit from consuming cecotropes, or "night droppings," that provide important nutrients and vitamins. The rabbit digestive system eliminates fiber rapidly, digesting only the non-fiber portion of the diet. Hard feces produced from fiber are excreted during the first four hours after feeding. Meanwhile, the non-fiber portion of the diet is moved into the cecum where it is fermented by bacteria. This fermentation produces amino acids, volatile fatty acids and vitamins necessary for good rabbit health. This fermented product becomes the cecotropes. The cecotropes are soft, sticky and covered with mucous. They are excreted selectively and consumed directly from the anus during the four-to eight-hour period following the rabbit's



The dewlap, or roll of skin beneath the chin, should not be so big that it interferes with the rabbit's ability to eat or drink. This is one of the easiest ways to tell if a female rabbit is overweight.

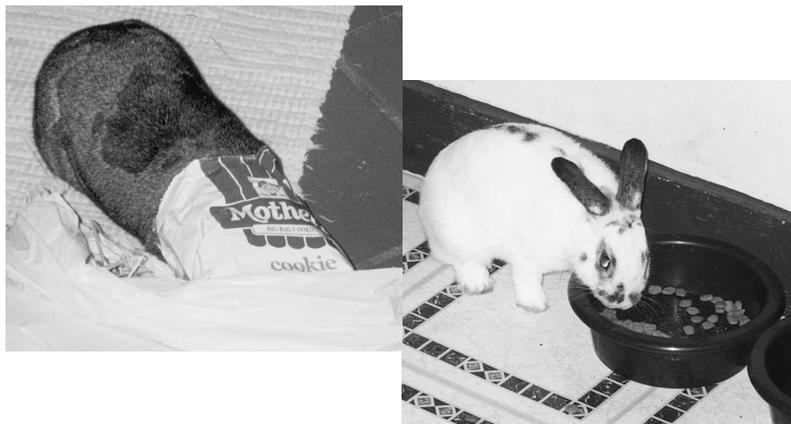
meal. Consumption of cecotropes (called “coprotrophy”) makes the products of fermentation available to the animal. If the rabbit cannot consume the cecotrophs, he may experience nutritional deficiencies.

Lastly, obesity predisposes the rabbit to hepatic lipidosis, or fatty liver. This can cause serious problems if a rabbit suddenly stops eating for any reason, or if the owner of an obese rabbit tries to slim him down too quickly. In obese rabbits, anorexia (a decreased food intake) will result in the large amounts of body fat being mobilized and sent to the liver for an energy source. However, in obese rabbits, the liver is already infiltrated with fat, and the additional fat accumulates faster than it can be converted into useable energy. This can result in damage to the liver. Wool block, toxins, enteritis, organ failure, oral pain, or even stress may trigger anorexia.

Preventing obesity and its related disorders is easier than correcting obesity, so let’s begin with prevention. Just as with humans, exercise plays a major role in preventing obesity. Many caged rabbits suffer from a lack of exercise; caregivers need to make certain that their rabbits have safe housing that is large enough for the rabbit to move around in. They also need to make certain that the rabbits have supervised time outside of the enclosure for play and exercise. If you have more than one rabbit and the rabbits are not spayed or neutered and bonded, it may be advisable to let them exercise separately to avoid potential fighting.

Diet is also an extremely important aspect of rabbit health and prevention of obesity. Rabbit pellets should have crude fiber content greater than 17 percent. Below are feeding recommendations for house rabbits:

- 1/8-1/4 cup alfalfa or timothy pellets per 5 lbs optimum body weight daily. (Do not feed free choice pellets except to baby bunnies, pregnant or lactating does. Most rabbits will eat more than they need to, if given the opportunity.)
- Timothy hay or other grass hay, fed free choice. Hay is high in fiber and low in calories. Alfalfa hay can be offered as a limited treat due to calories and high calcium content.



- An iodized salt lick is recommended (although not all rabbits like them). The iodine counteracts the tendency of cabbage, kale, mustard greens and similar food to produce goiter, an enlargement of the thyroid gland.
- Small amounts of leafy greens (broccoli, kale, etc.)
- Small pieces of carrots, apples, etc.
- Fresh water should be also available at all times. Water bottles are generally better than bowls for preventing contamination and waste (some rabbits tend to defecate or sit in bowls).
- **Do not** feed seeds, nuts, candy, cookies or other similar dessert-type treats. Processed foods for humans (and often ones made for animals as well) are both high in calories and hard for rabbit digestive systems to handle.

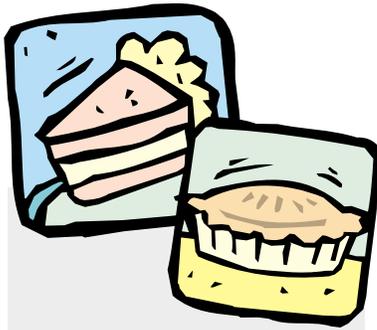
So what do you do if your rabbit is already too chubby? Because of the risk of hepatic lipidosis, obese rabbits need to lose weight gradually. The best method of weight loss is a combination of exercise and diet management. Increase the rabbit’s exercise and play time to help burn up extra calories while slowly decreasing calorie intake by reducing the amount of feed per day. Pay particular attention to the amount of pellets offered and continue to offer unlimited amounts of hay.

A healthy rabbit is a happy rabbit...proper weight management will both extend the life of your pet and reduce the risk of medical problems later on.

– Dr. Craig Dinger, DVM
Bird and Pet Clinic of Roseville

Left: Although your rabbit may have a sweet tooth, don't give into the urge to indulge him with human treats. (And watch what you leave lying around!)

Right: Some bunnies will steal cat or dog food, but this is dangerous – not only is it fattening, but rabbits' digestive systems lack the ability to break down kibble as well as cats and dogs can, making an impaction possible.



March Bake Sale

The Sacramento House Rabbit Society will be holding its annual pre-Easter Bake Sale in conjunction with its March Adoption Event at the Fair Oaks PetCo. All treats are homemade by our volunteers – ranging from pies and cookies to Susan King's famous garlic dog biscuits for your canine friends. Stop by and pick out dessert for your family or a snack for yourself while you visit with our foster bunnies. All proceeds go towards rabbit rescue – the two months after Easter are traditionally our busiest time of year. We appreciate your support!

Remembering a Special Rabbit

Last spring, when our family lost our beloved Kitsilano to old age, our longtime veterinarian made a donation in her name to the U.C. Davis Companion Animal Memorial Fund. We were pleasantly surprised, and very touched — what a nice tribute to our wonderful rabbit!

We have since done some asking around to find out what other options are available for remembering a special pet. Although it's always heartbreaking to lose a friend, helping other animals in his or her name can be a great step towards healing. Here are a few ideas to tuck away.

UC Davis Companion Animal Memorial Fund:

Supports studies into many different problems confronting small domestic animals, including rabbits. Donations go towards providing necessary resources to find answers to the diseases that cause pain and suffering among pets. For more information, call The School of Veterinary Medicine at (510) 752-7024.

National House Rabbit Society:

To make a memorial gift to the National House Rabbit Society, you can call the Richmond Adoption Center, at (510) 970-7575 or write to The House Rabbit Society, 148 Broadway, Richmond, CA 94804. You can also find more information on their web site: <http://www.rabbit.org/hrs-info/donation.html>.

Sacramento House Rabbit Society: The Sacramento House Rabbit Society also accepts donations, and sends out Donation Certificates in appreciation of donors' generosity. Call our hotline at (916) 863-9690 or visit our web site's premium page at <http://www.allearssac.org/shopping.html>.



Sacramento SPCA Memorial Tiles and Bricks:

The Sacramento SPCA is offering two ways to honor, recognize, or memorialize a beloved pet, friend, or family member.

Their new facility, which is being built behind the current location on Florin-Perkins Road, will include a tile wall and a brick walkway. For \$40, you can purchase a tile and decorate it yourself at Color Me Mine in Folsom. The tiles, which are limited to 800, will become part of a permanent wall mosaic. Inscribed bricks are also available for \$50; these will become a permanent part of the new facility's walkway. The 4-inch by 8-inch bricks can hold a message of up to three lines, at 15 characters per line. For more information on either the tiles or the bricks, call the SSPCA at (916) 383-7387, ext. 9103 or 9105.

— Kirsten Macintyre

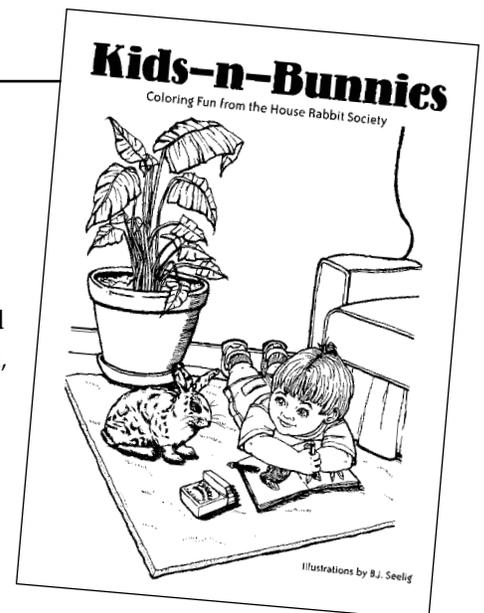
Help Us Spread the Word About Rabbits and Easter

Easter comes early this year, and with it comes the onslaught of baby bunnies bought as impulse pets. Every year, the House Rabbit Society works to get the word out that bringing home a rabbit requires careful thought and planning beforehand, and that the commitment continues long after the festivities of Easter have gone.

This year, we are asking for your help in spreading the word. In this issue of *All Ears in Sacramento*, you will find an order form for a coloring book. The coloring book is free (one per household) and contains information about proper rabbit care. If you know someone who is thinking about getting a bunny for Easter, please pass the order form to her. Parents and children can read the book together, and decide if they are ready to bring a bunny into their family.

We want to make sure that rabbits are a welcome addition to any family, and knowledge is the most powerful way to make that happen. Thanks for your help!

Do you need more order forms? They are available from our website at www.allearssac.org. Coloring books may also be ordered by emailing kamagurka@mail.com. You may photocopy the order form as well.



Rabbits Available for Adoption

see page 7 for adoption event details



Velvet is a female rabbit who is very loving and playful.



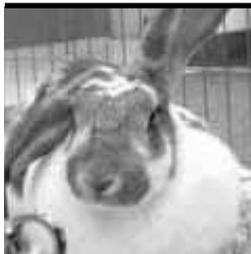
Pierre is an energetic and curious young male.



Elderberry is a boy who enjoys exploring his surroundings. He loves to be petted on the nose.



Beatrix is a fun-loving, easygoing bunny who loves to spend time with her human friends.



Dorothy is a lop mix. She is very friendly and loves to be held on your lap and petted.



Damon is a fun, active young Lop boy.



Brandon and Penny are a young male and female. These buns are bonded and will need to be adopted together. They are fun loving pair who will provide you with endless hours of entertainment.



Zorro is a young boy who loves to be petted. He is very friendly, extremely curious about everything, and too busy to be held for long!

Recent Adoptions

Lucille (now Cinnabun) was adopted by Brandy Goodwin as a companion for her boy Speckles.

Radar was adopted by Deborah Hirsch as a companion for her boy Hip Hop.

Klondike was adopted by Linda Balesteri.

Sophie was adopted by Lisa Keliher as a companion for her boy Thumper.

Dody & Jody were adopted by the Weber family.

Cassidy was adopted by Gabriella Lo as a friend for her boy Bun Bun.

Nutmeg was adopted by Eva Lew as a companion for Masa.

Misty was adopted by Sue Loehrer as a companion to her grey lop Moco.

Cocoa was adopted by Donna Wasiczko as a companion for her recently adopted baby bunny from the El Dorado Shelter.

Buffy (now Millie) was adopted by Elizabeth and Jeremiah Jenne as their first bun.

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. Our experienced "rabbit wranglers" can trim your rabbit's nails for a \$5 donation. We've recently added a new service as well – de-tangling matted bunny fur. If your rabbit has stubborn knots that you just can't get out, call our bunny line in advance (916-863-9690) and make arrangements to bring him to the Clinic for a makeover. We have clippers, combs, and lots of patience. Donations of \$10 per hour are appreciated!

March 9
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

April 13
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Elk Grove PetCo
7715 Laguna Blvd.

May 11
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Davis PetCo
1341 West Covell

June 8
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Folsom PetCo
879 East Bidwell

Bring your bunny to any Clinic for a \$5 nail trim – no appointment necessary!



Sacramento House Rabbit Society
 P.O. Box 13371
 Sacramento, CA 95813-0371

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: _____

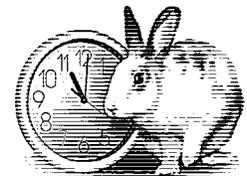
email address: _____

Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:
 Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 13371, Sacramento, CA 95813-0371

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