

Quarterly News from the
Sacramento House Rabbit Society

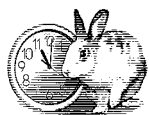
All Ears in Sacramento



Number 34
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Treasuring Your Older Bun

by Josie Thompson, DVM, Civic Feline Clinic, Walnut Creek

What a blessing to have your beloved bun for his entire life—which by comparison to ours is all too short. The average life span of a bun used to be four to five years, but now we are seeing our rabbits live 10 years and up. To what do we owe this good fortune? I credit the love and devotion of owners of house rabbits. Those who have demanded good care from their veterinarians have created a demand for knowledge that is continuing to grow on the professional level. When I was in veterinary school in Colorado from 1974 through 1978, we heard not a single word on the rabbit as pet. Even cats were relegated to last position and lumped in with dog lectures (as if they were the same!). Now all major Veterinary Meetings have lectures on rabbits as pets and textbooks are being written on all aspects of rabbit medicine and surgery and preventive health care.

So what can you expect from your aging rabbit and what should you be looking for to keep him healthy? Paying attention to the basics early in life and staying in tune with your rabbit's needs will get you a long way. These basics are: spaying females before one year of age, feeding a high fiber, low carbohydrate diet, making sure teeth are normal and nails are trimmed and providing a safe but stimulating environment. Observation of normal daily activity will increase the chance that you will spot a problem while it can still be solved.

What to Watch For

Some specific problems of older rabbits are similar to those found in other small mammals. We can observe each body system for signs of disease. All older animals can suffer from kidney failure or chronic



Simethicone:

The Home Remedy That's Not Just Hot Air

Throughout my years of having bunnies in the house, I've amassed a veterinary medicine chest with antibiotics and salves to deal with everything from a broken toenail to an ear infection. But there's one item that I'd never be without, and it's something that I think every bunny owner should have on hand: Simethicone. This little miracle elixir is the first thing I always try when one of my rabbits stops eating for no apparent reason. If you notice your bunny's loss of appetite right away, a quick dose of simethicone can help you determine whether you're facing a serious problem versus a simple tummy ache, and it may prevent an unnecessary and expensive trip to the vet.

What is it?

Simethicone is an inert agent used for babies with gas. It works by changing the surface tension of the gas bubbles—basically, it causes all the little gas bubbles in your rabbit's tummy to merge into one big gas bubble, which is then easier to pop. Many little bubbles also exert a greater pressure on

your rabbit's stomach, causing more pain than a few large bubbles would.

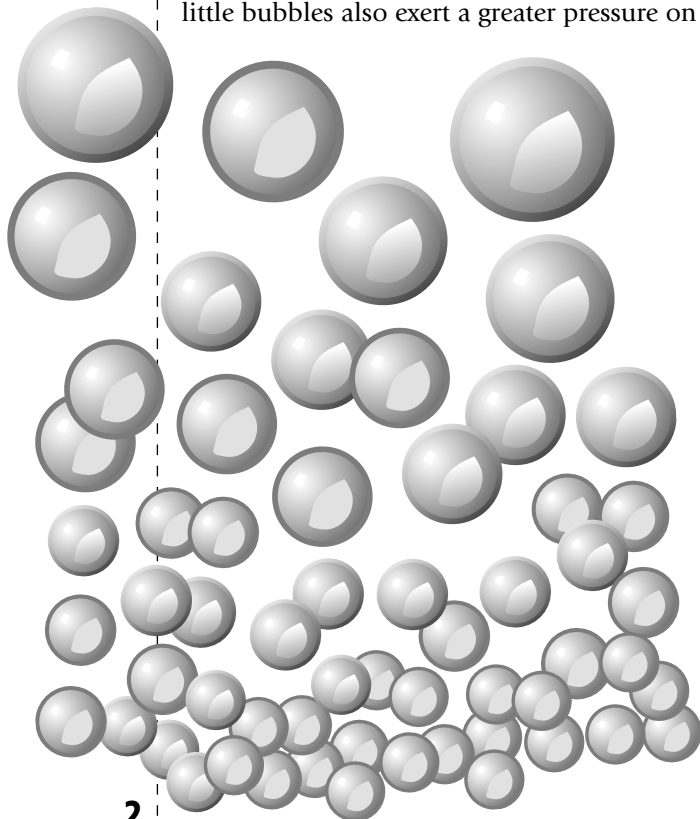
It is marketed under many names (such as children's Gas-X) and can be found in any drugstore in the infant care section. It may be pink or milky white, depending on what brand you purchase (and the generic store brand is perfectly fine). It usually comes with a small dropper; if not, ask the pharmacist for one; they'll probably give one to you at no charge. A little bottle of simethicone shouldn't be more than a few dollars.

When to use it

If you suspect your bunny isn't eating, first try bribery with a favorite food (bananas, dried cranberries and grapes have always worked well in my house). If your bunny still turns up his nose, it's time to give the simethicone a try. If your bunny is small, syringe 1 cc into his mouth (2 cc if he's a large bunny). If he will allow you, massage his stomach very gently. Wait an hour and see if his appetite picks up. If not, repeat the dose and the massage, and wait another two hours to see if he seems to be feeling better. If the second dose doesn't trigger his appetite, then go ahead and call your vet.

The nice thing about simethicone is that it's a harmless inert agent—you can't accidentally overdose your bunny, and even if he's not suffering from gas, the simethicone won't hurt him. Most rabbits don't mind the taste, either.

Please keep in mind that a dose or two of simethicone should only be used when you spot the very first signs of decreased appetite, and even then, it should only be given in conjunction with careful monitoring of your bunny's behavior. True gastrointestinal stasis is a very serious condition that requires a veterinarian's care. If you believe your bunny hasn't been eating for more than 24 hours, don't bother with the home remedies—consult an expert right away, because your bunny's life could depend on it.



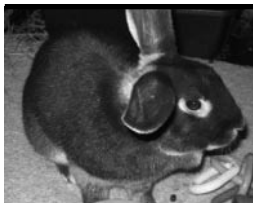
Rabbits Available for Adoption



Eliza and Sophie (spotted) are bonded sisters with lots of energy and big appetites!

NOT PICTURED

Jimmy is a chocolate-colored dwarf bunny boy who likes to give kisses!



Ziggy is an adult male who is curious about everything and everyone! He gets along well with cats and dogs, and is litterbox trained.



Jasper and Ihop are active brothers with very good litter habits. They love each other's company and need to be adopted together.

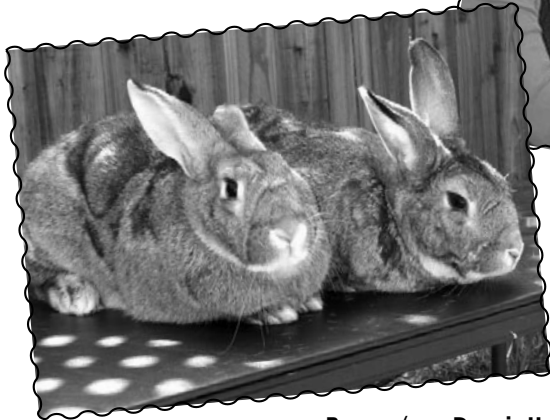


Hoppy Gilmore is an active and playful boy.



Buttercup is a shy adult female lop with lots of love to share. She loves to explore. She needs a quiet home with no dogs or cats.

Recent Adoptions



Romeo (now **Dennis Hopper**, at left) was adopted as a friend for Chestnut by Brandon Chee



Cinnabun was adopted (from the Sacramento City Shelter at the March SHRS adoption day) by the Cheng family as a companion for their bunny Patches.



Gibson (now **Nibblet**, in pic with Zoë) adopted by the Paley family



Tabitha was adopted by the Huffs as a companion for Beamer and Oreo



Do You Enjoy... All Ears in Sacramento?

Then pass it on! Help us spread the word about proper rabbit care, and about bunnies in need.

Once you've enjoyed this issue, please give it to a doctor's office, a school, a community center, or anywhere else that it can be picked up and read by others.

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

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Treasuring Your Older Bun *continued from page 1*

SHRS Receives \$3000 Grant

The National House Rabbit Society recently informed me that they received our application and have awarded us a grant of \$3000. That is a huge and generous amount for us. The HRS Chapter Grant program seeks to assist HRS chapters in their mission of rabbit rescue, public education and outreach. HRS Chapter Grants can be used to fund general operating expenses as well as specific projects and capital projects.

We will use the grant as stated: for foster care expenses such as spay/neuters; foster rabbits' daily care and healthcare; publications of educational literature and our quarterly newsletter; donations to area shelters of supplies such as cages, food, hay, and nail trimmers; distributing the *House Rabbit Handbook* and adoption packets; printing, office products, and phone hotline maintenance. The grant money will also be used to spay or neuter rabbits in the community that would go unaltered without our assistance.

Thank you National!

— Margaret-Rose Batterman

renal insufficiency. Clues can be drinking more water, urinating greater volumes more frequently, dehydration and anorexia, leading to eventual death. The hope is early detection so a treatable cause can be found or the process slowed through administration of additional subcutaneous fluid and nutritional support.

Blood tests can determine if the kidney failure is advanced or if there are other problems such as anemia or concurrent liver disease. A full blood panel should be done on any rabbit over five years old as part of a preventive health care program. Heart disease may appear to be sudden in onset, but cardiomyopathy probably has been a pre-existing problem. Acute onset of difficult breathing may be the only sign. A radiograph can show an enlarged heart or fluid in the chest. Symptoms can be treated but the prognosis is very grave. Respiratory disease usually is associated with pasteurella or other bacteria. If your rabbit has had chronic snuffles, abscesses, or tooth abscesses, he will become more susceptible the older he gets, as his immune system may not be as strong. Early detection and treatment by your vet is essential.

Tumors can appear at any age but are more associated with the elderly. The uterine carcinoma can be prevented by early spaying. And some rabbits can still survive if the tumor has not spread outside the uterus when detected. Yearly exams of your young pet and biannual exams of your older bun are recommended by this doctor. Abdominal palpation can reveal many organ diseases early (if your bun is not overweight!). Tumors of the muscle and connective tissue (sarcomas) can be surgically removed with the best success if detected early. Anesthesia in the elderly rabbit with isoflurane gas, i.v. fluid and pre-op blood work



How Long Does a Rabbit Live?

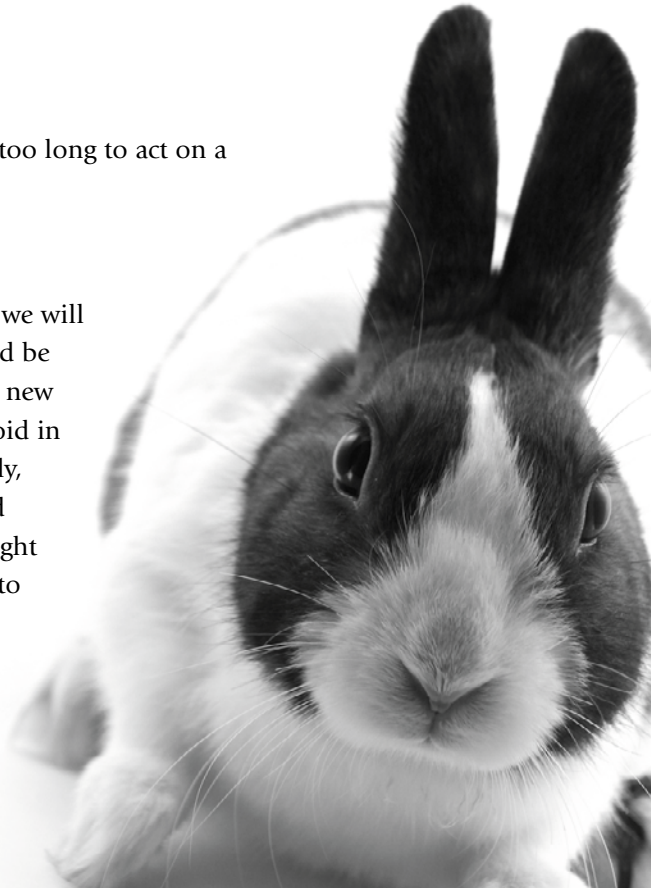
Here are a few facts about rabbit longevity and life spans:

- Spayed or neutered house rabbits generally live 8 to 12 years.
- According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the oldest rabbit in the world lived to the age of 18.
- Larger rabbits generally have shorter lifespans than dwarf rabbits.
- Purebred rabbits generally have shorter lifespans than mixed breeds.
- An unspayed female rabbit is at very high risk for cancer.
- Outdoor rabbits have (on average) a much shorter lifespan because of the many risks and hazards associated with living outdoors.

can be safe, and surgery curative. Waiting too long to act on a tumor can mean the loss of a limb or life.

Our Hopes for the Future

As we begin to see more older rabbits, we will learn new techniques and medications and be able to help them more. We may discover new diseases that can be treated (as hyperthyroid in cats was discovered in the 1970s-previously, the symptoms had been attributed to “old age”). General slowing down, gradual weight loss, and changes in grooming habits are to be expected. You may have to do a lot more for your bun. Old age itself is not a disease but, as I stated at the beginning, a great blessing. Think of all the old pets and people that have been part of your life or are in your life now. What a treasure.



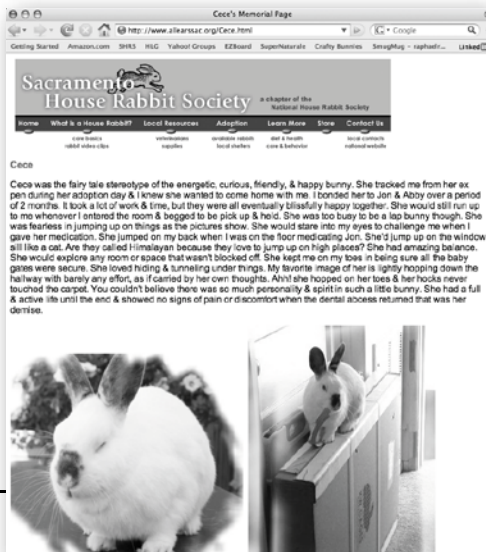
Paying Tribute to Your Special Bunny

Saying goodbye to a beloved animal companion is never easy, but sometimes sharing your story of love with others can help to ease the grieving process. The SHRS website recently added an area where our newsletter readers can post their stories about rabbit companions who brought joy and enrichment into their lives. You can read these special memorial tributes (and add your own) at www.allearsac.org/Memorials.html.

We encourage you to tell your rabbit’s story in your own way. We want to hear about what he or she meant to you and how your bunny made a difference in your world. Rabbits sometimes have short lives and these dedications are a comforting way to help keep special memories alive. The stories also help potential rabbit adopters to understand the depth of attachment humans can form with rabbits; by illustrating the joy of living with rabbits, the stories help other needy bunnies find loving homes with good families.

Please note that the memorial page is not limited to HRS members or to rabbits who were adopted through our foster program. It is open to anyone who has a story they would like to share about their experience living with house rabbits. You can write dedications for as many rabbits as you would like. Photos are also welcome (please send as an email attachment in jpg or tiff format). Please send your story to webmanager@allearsac.org. Submissions should be about 500 words or less and should include your full name and contact information (phone number and email address, which will not be published on the site). Submissions may be edited for length.

— Brandon Chee



“Run for the Buns” 2007 Recap



Above: the chocolate fountain was a big hit



Left: Animal Communicator Margo Argo shows her bunny spirit



Above: Johnna, Linda and Rose of Healthy Habits welcomed people to the event

Right: Fosterer Aaron holds fosteree Tabitha

Far right: One of the wonderful silent auction goodies



The SHRS would like to send a huge “thank you” to all our members who participated in and volunteered for our second annual “Run for the Buns” fundraiser on March 30. What a great event we had! We raised more than \$4,000 this year, which will go towards educating new bunny adopters, veterinary bills for our fabulous foster rabbits, and generally improving the lives of house rabbits throughout the Sacramento Valley.

Though SHRS sponsors several smaller fundraising events, Run for the Buns is by far our largest and most spectacular social event of the year. Held at Healthy Habits Yoga and Fitness Studio in midtown Sacramento, the evening featured both a “fun run” (which attracted more than 30 participants this year) and a “chocolate spa party” with fun vendors, a silent auction and delicious and decadent snacks for participants to savor as they mingled and relaxed. Even the folks who didn’t feel like participating in the fun run were invited to take advantage of the complimentary spa treatments (including massages and foot, face, and hand care). Because this is first and foremost an event for animal lovers, we were proud to have animal communicator Mary Argo on hand to offer pet readings to our patrons. Mary had a steady stream of people waiting to talk to her about their pets! And of course, our adorable SHRS foster rabbits were also on hand to greet folks and remind them of why events like this are so important.

For the second year running, Healthy Habits owner Rose Zahnn and her staff outdid themselves as hosts, not only with their warm smiles and friendly

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.

July 14

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Folsom PetCo
855 E. Bidwell Street

August 11

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Arden PetCo
1878 Arden Way

September 8

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

October 13

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Folsom PetCo
855 E. Bidwell Street

welcomes, but also with their heartwarming decorations (little lights, candles, fresh flowers, and lots of bunny trinkets). We owe many thanks to Rose and her staff for lending a magical, relaxing air to our very special evening.

We also owe many thanks to our friends who donated the wonderful silent auction items, including the ever-popular massage gift certificates, spa treatments, restaurant vouchers and theater tickets. This year, our most spectacular and unusual auction items included a three-day stay in a condominium in Sayulita, Mexico; Sacramento Kings and Monarchs signed jerseys; and airline upgrades. There was even an executive membership to a reputable professional dating service. Congratulations to the winners of these great items!

It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces from last year. Notably, some of the fun run participants even saved the bunny ears we gave out at last year's event, and wore them again this year. We hope all of our friends will return next year to make it a "three-peat" event. Just wait and see what we come up with in 2008! It only gets better every year.

— Margaret-Rose Batterman

Silent Auction Donor List

A huge thanks to everyone who donated!

Acorn Veterinary Clinic	Ludy's BBQ & Catering
Mary Argo	Joan Marie
Michelle Atkinson	Jim McDaniel
B Street Theater	Morgan's Central Valley Bistro
Bach's Remedy	Opa!Opa!
Margaret-Rose Batterman	Orchard Supply Hardware
Cha Cha's Doggy Daycare	Petco, Fair Oaks
Rebecca Connor	Ms Phaedria, Silpada Jewelry
Crest Theater	Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op
Mychelle Crown	Sacramento Opera
Cris De Cuyper and the Lavender Fanatic crew	Sharon Sampsel
Esthetics by Jeanette	See's Candy
Flower Concepts	Skin Sanctuary
Gifted Penguin	Britt Steele
Healthy Habits	Styleyes
Jill Johnson	Jean Walker
Latitudes Restaurant	Yolo County Sheriff's Department
Learning Exchange	



Sacramento House Rabbit Society
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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! *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 \$20. 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, \$20
- Please sign me up for both for \$35
- I have enclosed an additional donation of \$_____
- I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

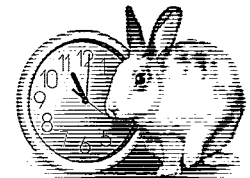
email address: _____

*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