

# THUMP

NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS DECEMBER 2015

## Annual Rabbit Care Conference: A Daylong Adventure In Learning

The 21st annual Rabbit Care Conference drew a large crowd of rabbit owners, volunteers and veterinarians. Rabbit Rescue & Rehab/House Rabbit Society's daylong educational event took place Sunday, Nov. 22, at the Radisson Hotel in New Rochelle.



Dr. Micah Kohles and Mary Cotter.

The morning presentation by Dr. Micah Kohles was titled, "It's a Gut Thing: Rabbit Gastrointestinal Anatomy, Physiology and Nutrition." Dr. Kohles

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## Bunnies in This Home Live Very Long Lives



Funny Face and Plain Face.

### Jane O'Wyatt Interviews Lori Yamato

In November 2012, planning to be out of town in March 2013 (this trip had to be cancelled), Lori Yamato emailed me to inquire whether I would be interested and available to care for Lucy, Dido, Funny Face and Plain Face, her four elderly rabbits. Although Lori, her

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Thaddeus and Mocha Jane.

## Goodbye, Mocha Jane and Tadpole

By Erin McElhinney

Years ago, when I first began volunteering with rabbits, I would print out each issue of Thump and read it cover to cover (I still do!), starting with the Memorial pieces. Breezing past the sadness penned by people I had not yet come to know, I was looking for the early signs. "What did these people miss that I could check on every day so that my rabbits don't die?" I asked myself. I would stare at the picture of the doomed little bunny and try to imagine it so full of life as lovingly described by its heartbroken owner, and wonder what the bun really went

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**Understanding Your Rabbit's Diet and Digestive Process**  
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## Adventure in Learning

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discussed the high-fiber diet needed for a rabbit's health, and offered a detailed description of rabbits' unique digestive tract. Dr. Kohles, DVM, MPA, is director of veterinary science and outreach at Oxbow Animal Health in Murdock, Nebraska. He has an adjunct professor appointment at the University of Nebraska, is a veterinary associate at the Nebraska Animal Medical Center, and serves as president of the Association of Exotic Mammal Veterinarians. Dr. Kohles used a series of PowerPoint slides to illustrate his talk, including an animated video of the GI tract that was particularly useful and creative.

An afternoon Q&A session with veterinarians featured Dr. Kohles, Dr. Becky Campbell of Symphony Veterinary Center, Dr. Anthony Pilny of the Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine, Dr. Shachar Malka of the Humane Society of New York, and Dr. Lauren Thielen of the Veterinary Center for Birds and Exotics. Among the topics covered were drooling, arthritis, kidney stones, water intake, malocclusion, obesity, antibiotics, head tilt, cecotrophs, GI stasis, travel tips, dietary issues for rabbits who don't like greens, myxomatosis and care of older rabbits. Helping to moderate the session was Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group volunteer Mary Ann Maier. Mary Ann also helped with temperature-taking and nail-clipping demonstrations at the end of the afternoon.

There were 94 registrants for the conference, joined by the five veterinarians, and two on-site vendor representatives.

The three conference sponsors were Oxbow Animal Health, Small Pet Select and Supreme Pet Foods. Additional supporters were Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital, Dakota Veterinary Center, the Herbivore Clothing Co., Organic Hay Co. and Trader Joe's.

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Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Dr. Becky Campbell, Dr. Anthony Pilny and Dr. Shachar Malka, who joined Dr. Micah Kohles and Dr. Lauren Thielen in a Q&A session.



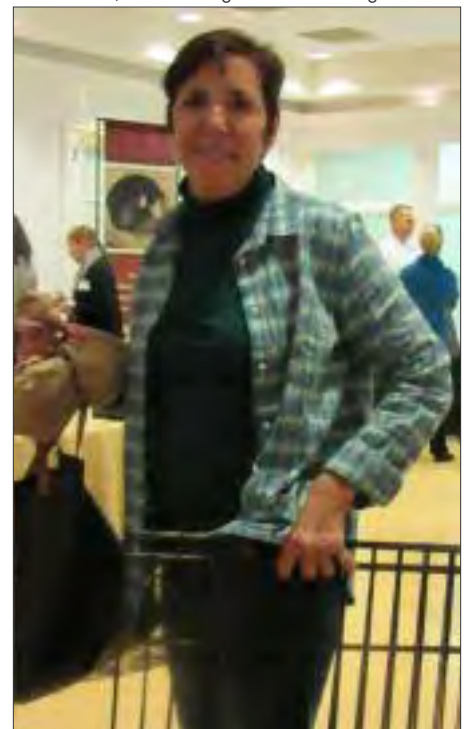
Marcie Frishberg and Jeanine Callace.



Austin Torres, Thea Harting and Elisha Wang.



Mary Ann Maier.



Nancy Schreiber.

## Adventure in Learning

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Some fun highlights of the day were a bunny boutique (goodies for bunnies), a silent auction, raffles and goody bags. An optional vegetarian/vegan lunch was available.

Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Bag at bunny boutique.



Susan Lillo.



Teija Kajander and Andrew Garrett.



Nadine Heidinger.



Adoptable bunny at the conference.



Sandra Lyngdorf.



Robert Kulka.

## Understanding Your Rabbit's Diet

The conference presentation by Dr. Micah Kohles, "It's a Gut Thing: Rabbit Gastrointestinal Anatomy, Physiology and Nutrition," provided vital information about the hind gut cecal fermentation and how fiber drives the GI tract.

### Transition From Production Animals to Pets

Dr. Kohles explained that rabbits initially were production animals, raised for meat or fur, and that many nutritional research articles are based on this production model. As rabbits have transitioned from cage to couch and from barn to bed, we have had to shift the way we feed them. A "nutritional revolution" over the past 25 to 40 years has put more of a focus on rabbit longevity, quality of life and proper nutrition. We focus on mental enrichment and formation of a bond between a rabbit and owner, and we are concerned about environmental enrichment.

Rabbit owners also increasingly see nutrition as a way to prevent the likelihood, or help deal with, physical ailments. Seven of the top clinical disease categories – gastrointestinal disease (related to fiber, hydration, stress), dental problems, obesity, urinary tract issues, respiratory diseases, dermatologic problems and neoplasia – are all directly or indirectly related to nutrition. In most cases, we cannot control the genetics of the animal, but as care providers and owners we can directly affect and control the animal's nutrition.

### Fiber Intake

Rabbits, Guinea pigs and chinchillas, Dr. Kohles said, are herbivores with a large cecum that is part of the hind gut. The hind gut is made up of the cecum and entire colon/large intestine. In the wild, rabbits are "concentrate selectors," with their intake driven by nutrient-dense, high-calorie foods with the best taste. This is a survival mechanism that allows them to ingest as many calories as



Dr. Micah Kohles.

possible, recognizing that predators and other environmental factors affect the amount and quality of nutrients they can ingest. Yet, in captivity, these external stressors do not typically occur, so these animals don't need to rely on selective feeding to survive.

Dr. Kohles said rabbits are designed to ingest and digest large amounts of plant materials, with a gastrointestinal system that combines a simple stomach with hindgut cecal fermentation. They have a unique GI physiology that allows them to digest large quantities of fibrous and low nutritional density materials. A key component of this process is their ability to produce two different types of stools through a process in the large intestine referred to as a colonic separation mechanism.

Rabbits' gut bacterial flora are instrumental in their ability to ferment complex plant carbohydrates. The indigestible dietary fiber stimulates gut motility and is key to proper GI function.

### How Food is Digested:

Starting with the oral cavity, Dr. Kohles talked of rabbits' rapid lateral chewing movements – up to 100-120 per minute – to break up and tear apart fiber. They swallow their mucous-covered cecotrophs whole.

The thin-walled stomach makes up about ~15% of the GI tract. It is a very acidic environment, yet still contains diverse microbial flora. However there is no breakdown of fiber in the stomach, whose role is focused on the digestion of fats, protein and simple carbohydrates. Rabbits cannot vomit and their stomach should never be empty of ingesta.

The small intestine is only about ~12% of the rabbit's GI tract. It is important in digestion and absorption, and it is the location for effective digestion of cecotrophs. Excessive ingestion of simple carbohydrates negatively affects the movement of food particles in the small intestine, which is a potential issue.

The hind gut is the cecum/colon. Within the large intestine (specifically the ascending colon) is a unique system (the colonic separation mechanism) that allows separation of cecotroph and fecal production, and which is unique to hind-gut fermenters. The cecotrophs produced in the cecum contain key nutrients (such as volatile fatty acids, key vitamins, etc.) that the rabbit reingests. Dr. Kohles pointed out that the cecum represents ~40%-50% of the overall GI tract and is the largest organ in the GI tract. This is where bacterial fermentation takes place, with the bacteria being "the workers" doing this important task. Dr. Kohles also stressed the key role played by the colonic separation mechanism that is controlled by the *fusus coli*. The *fusus coli* is located between the ascending

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## Your Rabbit's Diet

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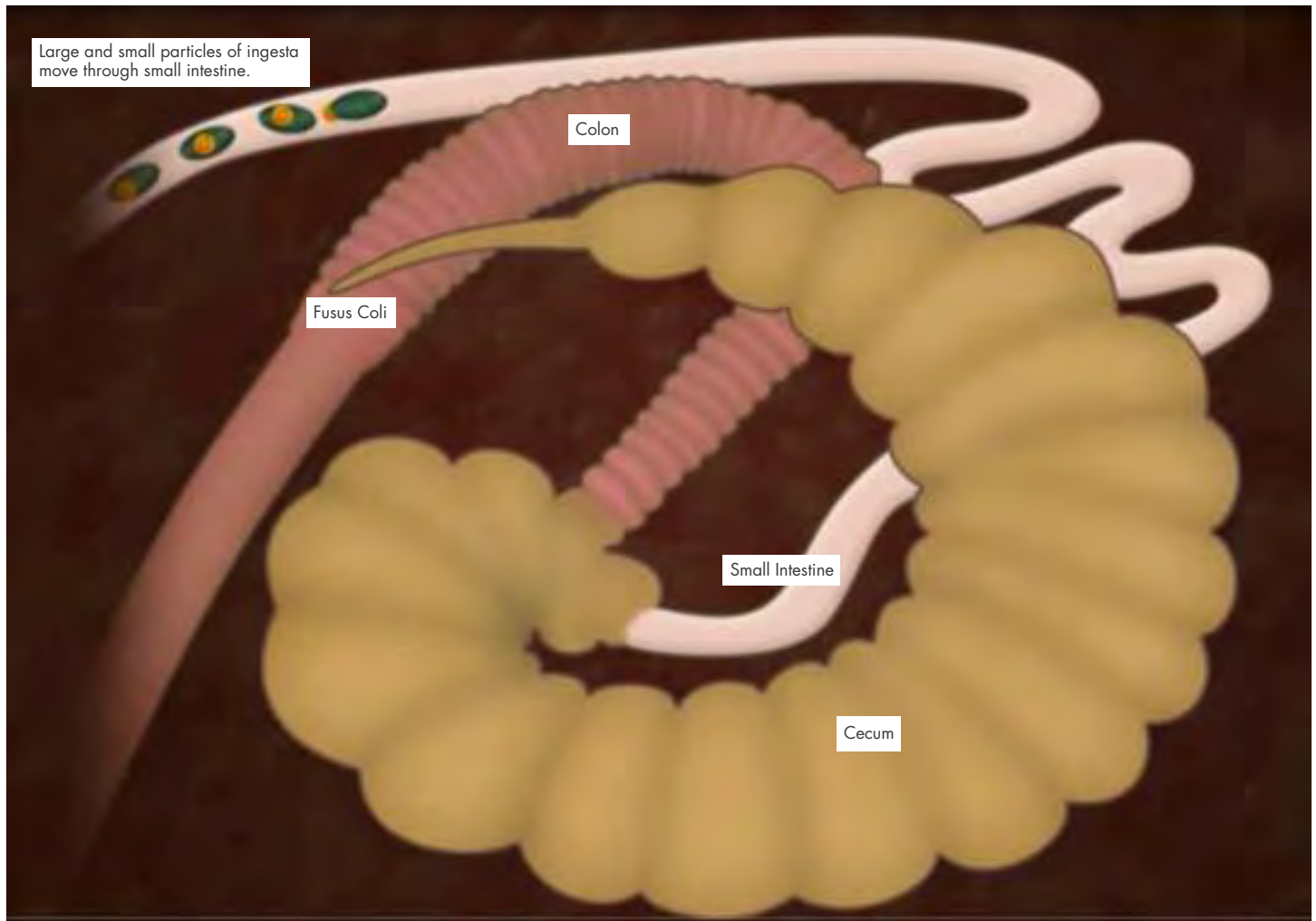
and descending colon and it controls rabbits' ability to produce two distinctly different types of stool.

In an animated video, Dr. Kohles showed how the colonic separation mechanism drives the important separation process. Large particles are separated out as indigestible fiber that is eliminated from the system as feces. The small particles, bacteria and mucus are separated and moved back up into the cecum for further fermentation. At a later stage the

*fusus coli* stimulates the entire contents of the cecum to empty rapidly in the form of shiny, small moist clusters of cecotrophs – containing volatile fatty acids, smaller fiber particles, gut flora bacteria, minerals and vitamins – which a rabbit reingests.

Diet is an important factor in making sure that the digestive process runs properly, Dr. Kohles repeatedly emphasized. Rabbits require a premium high-fiber diet that includes a diverse selection of

grass hays, a limited amount of high-fiber pellets, controlled amounts of fresh leafy greens and multiple sources of water. High-fiber uniform pellets provide micronutrients. Treats (small quantity) are useful for the human-animal bond, and a selection of leafy greens is also important. Dr. Kohles said, however, that each rabbit owner must make individual decisions about diet after considering his recommendations.



Rabbit gastrointestinal tract. © Dr. Micah Kohles/Oxbow Animal Health, 2015. Reproduced with permission.

## Goodbye (Continued from page 1)

through at the end. Even as a new volunteer, I knew enough to understand that some reading between the lines was needed. There are certain things that cannot be put into words, and a rabbit's death is one of them.

This summer, on June 8, I lost my beloved Thaddeus Joseph (aka Tadpole), and just a few months later, on Oct. 15, he was joined by his loving bun wife, Mocha Jane. They were both 12-13 years old.

I could go on and talk about how much the two of them lit up my life and bit up my arms (well, that was all Mocha – Thaddeus was way too sweet to bite!) but I have written about them numerous times in Thump over the years and I have told anyone who would listen how much I loved these two and how much these two loved each other. Their bodies were touching at all times; they would even hop over to me together for treats, bunny shoulder to bunny shoulder. They slept on top of each other in piles so that you could not tell where one body ended and another began. When Thaddeus passed away unexpectedly from lung cancer, Mocha Jane slept in the spot where he died for the next several nights. And for anyone skimming through this article as I used to, to find out what the signs were, what you should look for in your own rabbit, the signs were all there for me.

On the morning of June 8, I hopped into the puppy pen that Thaddeus and MJ were living in and I rubbed MJ's cheeks. I gave Thaddeus his Metacam and bopped him on the head. He barely moved. He'd barely moved in weeks. He had severe arthritis, and I had an X-ray to prove it. I thought his lethargy was a combination of my crappy A/C, the medicine for his pain and inflammation, and his arthritic condition. I bopped him on the head and went into my office. My dog walker called me around 2:30 when he peeked in at the buns and saw my sweet harlequin caterpillar, flat on

Photos: Erin McElhinney



Mocha Jane and Thaddeus.



Mocha Jane.

his side and stiff as a board. The necropsy revealed that he had lung cancer and that his lethargy was probably because breathing had become difficult due to the cancer. In my worst moments, I blame myself completely for not catching this, but I realize that I did everything I could and the only thing I'd change was the bop on his head. It should have been a hug and a kiss.

As devastated as I was to lose him, I was also worried about what it would do to my Mocha Jane, whose *E. cuniculi* was getting worse. She was practically paralyzed and could not use her haunches. I bought medical-grade faux sheepskin blankets and throws, and made sure she had nothing less soft than a fluffy cloud underneath her at all times. Despite my concerns that she might die without Thaddeus there to groom her and love her at all times, for a brief period she thrived. I thought we just might beat this thing, as she began hopping with her hind legs again. MJ was rather famous for getting to the brink of death with stasis and various ailments throughout the years (she also suffered from chronic Pasteurella), and then bouncing back twice as strong. This time it was not meant to be, however.

Mocha Jane still had some fight left in her – she had it in her until the moment she died – but her body was falling apart and all the medicine in the world couldn't heal her anymore. While I was robbed of the opportunity to say goodbye to Tadpole, my goodbye to Mocha Jane hung over us both like a gloomy cloud. I had a week to say goodbye to her before she was euthanized. It was worse than losing her suddenly. I tried to fill each moment with as much love and affection and kale and bananas as possible, and she continued to bite me in irritation if I held on to her too long or a little too tight. On the last night, I bathed her – praying for a miracle, a sign of some sort so that I could cancel her appointment and we could go back to normal – and I got one. She was too tired and weak to even bite me as I blow-dried her after her bath. This was not the Mocha Jane I knew and loved. Her fighting spirit was still in there – I could see from her angry eyes that she wanted to bite me – but she was simply too tired to follow through on it.

The grief still hits in waves and almost knocks me down sometimes. And it's a lonely grief, as most of us know. When I tried to tell various non-rabbit friends and family about Thaddeus' passing, I was met with reactions such as "which one was he again?" and pleas to "not replace him with another one." I told no one about Mocha Jane's passing for a couple of days. I was in a daze, and even though it was over a month ago, I still look to where her puppy pen was and expect to see her.

The other day I took a green apple home from work and thought that I would give it to MJ and Tads – green apples were their favorite – and I even got as far as getting the knife out to slice it before I remembered that they were both gone. I sliced it up and divided its pieces among my fosters and my remaining bonded trio. I gave them all a kiss for good measure, too, because no matter how many warning signs are there or aren't there, you can really never know.

## Very Long Lives

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husband, David, and her warren lived in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn (I live in Manhattan), I was won over immediately by Lori's devotion to her rabbits and her commitment to giving them the best possible care. Lori rarely left town because of her bunnies' advanced ages, so she was hardly a steady bunny-sitting client. Instead, Lori became an epistolary friend for over two years before I finally took the Q train to Brooklyn to meet her and her beloved rabbits: solitary, misanthropic Dido, 14, and Funny Face and Plain Face, a somnolent 13-year-old sister-and-brother pair. (Lucy, mother of Funny Face and Plain Face, had died in February 2013 at the age of 13). Dido and the Faces were all thriving (if the term can be used for geriatric bunnies) in Lori's peaceful, rabbit-focused apartment when I took care of them during the first weekend of May 2015.

Scheduled to take care of the three bunnies Oct. 16 and 17, I visited on Oct. 12 for an update. Plain Face, as in May, seemed sturdy, if sleepy, but Funny Face could no longer walk, so Lori demonstrated how she assisted her (see the interview below for a detailed description). Dido, who had just turned 15, was very frail but still responsive,

eating and drinking – with Lori's help. Dido tooth-purred when I scratched her forehead, and afterward I couldn't stop thinking of ways to care for her. On the morning of the 16th, however, I got an email from David: "I wanted to let you know before you got here that Dido passed away at about 2 a.m. It was very sad, but I was with her and she went relatively peacefully."

Lori, who at one time lived with 10 rabbits, now has just two long-lived bunnies in her care, Funny Face and Plain Face. In the following interview, Lori tells the story of the Faces and their family.

**Jane: Since rabbits are not known for longevity, I am very impressed that so many of your bunnies have lived to old age. How do you account for this?**

Lori: I think pure, lucky genetics cannot be overestimated. I've certainly had my share of rabbits who died far too young, and they had the exact same care and home environment that my geriatric bunnies have had. When I look back on their medical records, Lucy, Dido, Plain Face and Funny Face have had their share of the usual bunny problems (bouts of stasis, arthritis, cataracts, small abscesses, ear infections in lop-eared Lucy) – and some peculiar ones (an odontogenic tumor in Plain Face's cheek, mysterious

neurological episodes in Funny Face) – but so far, we've been fortunate not to have any of the intractable cancers or other disease processes that often strike in senior rabbits. In the case of Lucy and Dido, this is almost unbelievably fortunate – as babies, they were fed an "all-purpose" antibiotic at a pet store (for a lesion on Lucy's eyebrow and an eye infection in Lucy's partner Tristan). I suspect that this early (mis)treatment contributed heartily to Tristan's persistent stomach problems – he lived to 7½, but was on daily cisapride and very limited pellets and greens for most of his little life...and still had practically bi-monthly episodes of stasis – but Dido and Lucy somehow managed to emerge largely unscathed.

We've also had phenomenal vet care. Dr. Rebecca Campbell (as well as the rest of her team) has been great with the rabbits, of course, but she has gone above and beyond in her generous sharing of knowledge about these guys. I have no background in science or medicine to speak of, and yet she has consistently been willing to teach me more "advanced" bunny-care techniques and has trusted me to make judgments about medicating rabbits before taking them in to see her. Given that we live a considerable distance from Symphony Vet (about an hour by car service), I think being given the tools and confidence to act quickly has made a tremendous difference in their longevity. In general, she has been very understanding about how traumatic the car ride is for everyone (Lucy used to get so car sick!) and has bent over backwards to consult by phone and email.

The third factor is that my husband and I are academics and can be home a lot more (and at odder hours) than most people. That has made it possible to catch issues that crop up very early – and as we all know, catching things before they snowball makes a tremendous difference in health outcomes in our rabbits. Three of the rabbits that have made it into very old age have had real

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Photos: Jane O'Wyatt



Dido, May 2015.



Funny Face, top, and Plain Face, Nov. 2015.

## Very Long Lives

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mobility problems late in life, and I suspect that the fact that we could be home so much to stand them up, keep them relatively clean and dry, massage limbs, adjust feeding and medication schedules as needed, and generally relieve boredom has made a huge difference. Lucy began having mobility issues in late 2010 and was pretty much fully “down” by early 2011...and she lived until February 2013 (at approximately 12.5 years old), pretty happily, as best I can tell. But I don't think that would have been possible without the flexibility of our work schedules. (I'm a little ambivalent about this, by the way. I'm convinced that Dido, who died at age 15, only allowed herself to let go once her (over?)attentive mom had been forced to leave on a trip. I know she was content enough toward the end – aware of and interested in the world around her, always eager for affection and treats – and I'm grateful that she died on her own terms, but I also think she hung on as long as she did for me.)

On top of that, I'd say that my rabbits are some of the most obstinate creatures that have ever lived, which seems to have a clearly observable correlation with longevity!

**Jane: I agree with you about Dr. Campbell's excellence and your surviving bunnies' obstinacy. Yet I also believe that your unusually refined attunement to rabbits, accompanied by scrupulous compliance with Dr. Campbell's instructions over the years, is largely responsible for the fact that Funny Face and Plain Face, your bonded 14-year-old sibling pair, are still living. Can you tell Thump readers the Faces' story? Why did you name them Funny Face and Plain Face?**

Lori: The Faces were two babies from an accidental litter. Like many of us, I didn't know how to pick a vet early in my life with rabbits. The vet I was seeing at the time (not at Symphony) insisted

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*'My rabbits are some of the most obstinate creatures that have ever lived, which seems to have a clearly observable correlation with longevity!'*

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that Tristan was a female – he was so sure, in fact, that he called in a mass of veterinary students to show them “model” female anatomy. (I had done my own clumsy sexing of Tristan when I brought him home and thought I saw male genitalia – and had given him a male name accordingly – but I was certainly ready to believe a vet's opinion over my own tentative perusal of Tristan's undercarriage.) Fast forward three months, about a week before I figured the “three” girls were old enough to be spayed, and I came home to find a terrifying pile of fur and streaks of blood by the refrigerator. I quickly examined Lucy and was puzzled to find no obvious injuries. I started to sweep up the hair...and noticed that it was moving.

Despite tremendous help from Mary Cotter, whom I called in a panic, and information that I acquired the first time I attended the annual bunny conference, that first litter of six sweet babies died about a week later, sadly. But it turned out that Lucy had become pregnant again – and it must have happened the night she gave birth, since I had immediately separated Tristan from Dido and Lucy! Lucy had her second litter of three boys and three girls – originally named Dot, Mark, Moustache, Half-Moustache, Funny Face, and Plain Face – about a month later.

I fully intended to find homes for the babies, since I couldn't really imagine living with 10 rabbits (in addition to Dido, Lucy, Tristan and the babies, I also had Anna, who fought valiantly but died tragically young from *E. cuniculi*-related seizures), so I deliberately

designated them according to their facial markings, on the theory I wouldn't get as attached. (Plain Face and Funny Face aren't terribly accurate or descriptive, but they did distinguish them from their siblings.) One of them, Dot (renamed Tarzanello), was claimed immediately by a wonderful woman, and he lived to be at least 11 (he may even still be out there); Dr. Campbell helped find homes for the other three when they were about two and a half. (They died considerably younger, but had wonderful lives with their people.)



Funny Face and Plain Face with their siblings.



Tristan and Lucy, parents of Funny Face and Plain Face.

The last little pair stayed with me – and by the time it became clear that they were permanently mine, their originally makeshift names were thoroughly their own. Recently, I noticed that picking up meds for “Funny Face Yamato” at my local pharmacy was causing some consternation among the staff: Only

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## Very Long Lives

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after further consideration did I realize that the pharmacists must have thought that I had named my (human) child Funny Face.

**Jane: Did the fact that the six babies in the accidental litter had roughly descriptive working titles make it easier for you to give four of them up for adoption?**

Lori: I don't know if the "descriptive working titles" (I like your term!) helped all that much; description shades into term of endearment, into a name like any other so easily and quickly. I was fortunate enough to be the only child of indulgent parents with a soft spot for animals, so they helped me out with vet bills and incidental expenses, and I was able to take all the time we needed to be very, very picky about where the babies were placed. (I'm sure my horror stories about grossly inappropriate potential adopters are very much in line with those RRR/HRS deals with all time!)

**Jane: Where did your bunny Anna come from? Was she in residence before the arrival of Lucy, Dido and Tristan?**

Lori: Anna was my second rabbit, after a very sweet little dwarf bunny named Isolde who probably died from *E. cuniculi* complications before she was a year old. (Tristan reminded me of Isolde, and his name was a tribute to her – plus a pun on the fact that his eyes were drippy and it seemed like he was crying, sad, tristis.) Anna came to me from the Brooklyn Animal Resource Coalition, where she was the lone rabbit in the cat room. She had been found as a baby in an abandoned lot in Flushing, apparently, and had eluded her rescuers for months. The man in charge of the cat room had really tried to work with her whenever he found a spare moment, but she was still pretty feral when I met her. That, plus the fact that she had heterochromatic eyes (one brown, one a pale, milky blue), made her seem pretty unadoptable, I understand. But she was easily the

smartest rabbit I've ever encountered, and she decided that I was okay once it became clear to her that she could call most of the shots in our relationship. She was the bunny most responsible for teaching me how to be a responsible rabbit person.

At the time, I was single and working long hours, so I was starting to think about finding Anna a companion when I met Dido, Lucy and Tristan. (I had fully intended to adopt from a shelter again...but was in a susceptible state when I saw how miserable those three pet-store bunnies were. On each of the three successive days I visited them while trying to talk myself out of buying them, they also had the funniest habit of lining up in an extremely orderly row at the very front of their tiny cage, sitting very still, and staring at me for as long as I stood there. Lucy was a big, black lop; Tristan was a tiny Hotot dwarf, and Dido was a very traditional – though stunningly lovely! – rabbit. I knew I was rewarding the pet store for bad behavior, but these three rabbits were pretty irresistible.)

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*'Anna was was easily the smartest rabbit I've ever encountered. She was the bunny most responsible for teaching me how to be a responsible rabbit person.'*

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After a period of quarantine for the new bunnies, they were a pretty happy quartet for months – until the babies were born, actually, and Lucy started attacking Dido. After everyone was spayed/neutered, I (stupidly) corralled eight bunnies (everyone but Dido, who lived in my bedroom) together in half of my living room – the period we now call the Pax Leporum. It held for a surprisingly long time – until it exploded spectacularly one morning, leading to the balkanization of



Photo: Lori Yamato  
Dido, 2003.

an already quite small apartment. It was amply clear that this was not a good situation, so I was forced to be practical about needing to find homes for Lucy's litter.

**Jane: Had Funny Face and Plain Face paired up during the time their other siblings were still living with you? Or were the babies bonded en masse before the big explosion?**

Lori: They lounged around in various combinations when they were all in one place. I think I probably thought that the groupings of the babies I made (Plain Face and Funny Face, Moustache and Half-Moustache, Mark on her own; Dot had long since been with his new family) were the product of rigorous observation of who hung out with whom most frequently. But I suspect it was as much a product of parallel names and markings as anything else. Luckily the two pairs really did work out.

**Jane: You once said that when Plain Face and Funny Face were young, they were "escape artists," and you also said that they were not particularly friendly to humans. How else would you characterize their personalities and behavior? Have you seen any age-related changes in their personalities?**

Lori: They've certainly become more and more tolerant of me as the years have gone by. (It has always been a little strange to me that they've been fairly aloof toward humans – I've been at their sides all of their lives and I may even

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## Very Long Lives

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have “restarted” Plain Face as a newborn! He was the biggest baby of the litter and was terrifyingly still when he was born. I picked him up, figured I had nothing to lose, and tried blowing the tiniest breath into his nose and mouth, which – amazingly – worked.) Funny Face is my thoughtful, skeptical rabbit. I think you’d agree, Jane, that there is still clearly a lot of bunny brain activity behind those eyes. Although she has never been terribly affectionate toward me (and can be very stubborn), I feel as if I understand Funny Face’s bunny logic. Plain Face is the sweeter and gentler of the two (he’d never dream of pretending a retaliatory nip while taking treats from my fingers was an accident; she regularly does). But as you so beautifully put it: it seems that we don’t quite speak the same dialect. It’s clearly relevant that he doesn’t have the same level of incentive to make himself intelligible to me since he has no need for me to intervene in his daily bunny tasks. I guess I’d say that they’ve always been fairly cool-tempered, never big cuddlers – even with each other, never mind me. I think they’re tremendously charming and get more interesting and complex by the day, but they’re not necessarily easy to know.

### Jane: When did the Faces develop cataracts?

Lori: Plain Face started developing cataracts at about eight or nine, maybe even a little earlier. They matured quite quickly, and about a year ago, the left one fragmented. You can still see the sediment in the bottom of the eye, which shifts with his position. It doesn’t seem to bother him at all. Funny Face remained fully sighted the longest of my rabbits – her eyes started failing noticeably only about a couple of years ago. And her cataracts have never been as opaque as his; I suspect she still has some sight. She certainly acts like it.

Photo: Lori Yamato



Plain Face asleep next to his water bowl.

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*‘I’ve seen [Plain Face] fall asleep with his head on the edge of the water bowl; I’ve seen him fall asleep on all fours and tumble onto his side without waking up.’*

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### Jane: When did arthritis become a problem for Funny Face?

Lori: Funny Face was noticeably splayed in her front legs by the time she was 11 or so. Her back legs started declining about a year and a half ago. They declined slowly for a long time, and then suddenly quickly. Last winter she was still venturing out of the pen on her own; by the spring she could only hop across the living room with my hand under her chest and my forearm steadying her right hip; by May she was largely unable to get up on her own.

### Jane: Are the Faces both hard of hearing?

Lori: Selectively! We think so, but it’s hard to know whether they’re simply too unimpressed to respond.

### Jane: When did Plain Face and Funny Face begin to sleep most of the time?

Lori: Plain Face has always let Funny Face do the lioness’ share of guarding. He has been pretty sleepy for at least five years. She, I think, has only been sleeping more out of boredom, since she hasn’t been able to hop around on her own. And she’s a far lighter sleeper than he is.

We have a (disorganized) photo series going, featuring strange places/positions Plain Face falls asleep. I’ve seen him fall asleep with his head on the edge of the water bowl; I’ve seen him fall asleep on all fours and tumble onto his side without waking up.

Jane: In your most recent Faces care instructions you wrote: “Plain Face is doing really well... Funny Face no longer walks, but she does stand up to eat and drink – with assistance. Her front and back feet tend to slide out from under her, so I play Bunny Twister with all my limbs to help keep her upright. Once upright, she’s actually pretty good and seems to enjoy being upright... She also needs to be stood up to urinate. Her pee schedule is a bit... capricious, so it may or may not work.” When I was taking care of your bunnies, I noticed that Funny Face, standing up with help in order to eat, drink and pee, does put weight on her feet – I saw her walk into the pellet bowl – so she is getting a mild form of exercise. And peeing in a standing position, outside the litter box, decreases the likelihood of urine scald so often seen in rabbits with mobility problems. How did you arrive at this method of standing Funny Face up to pee?

Lori: Pure necessity – and maybe a little aerial silks/Pilates training! I keep thinking that there’s probably a more effective and efficient (and certainly more elegant) way to prop her up, but I’ve now gotten in the habit of bracing her back legs with my heels and giving her front feet traction on top of my toes, while she leans her left hip lightly on my left calf, and I support her chest with my right hand. This still leaves my left hand free to apply topical skin treatments, syringe medication into her mouth, or massage her. You’re right, though. She does put weight into her limbs, and she really enjoys being upright.

Once she’s done with whatever bunny business she was attending to, she’ll just stand there and purr while I support her

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## Very Long Lives

(Continued from page 10)

and rub her back. She can even sit back on her hind feet and do a modified face and ear wash, provided her back feet are properly aligned and I'm supporting her butt. (Like so many special-needs bunnies, too, she's a real paralympian when she wants to be.) She used to like assisted walking (though she never liked using a sling – even the very beautiful one Abigail Aldridge made for Lucy), but she's too unsteady now to manage more than a lurching step or two. Again, we're lucky that we can be home so much. We can do extended standing sessions at least four or five times a day on most days.

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*'I am perhaps hubristic enough to imagine that I know my rabbits and can divine the presence and strength of a will to live, but I also know that I only see what they want during the windows of time that I'm physically there, touching the bunny, looking into her eyes, observing the way she responds to me. Even with a lot of work flexibility, I can't be around all of the time.'*

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**Jane:** It has been said that the primary justification for advanced comfort/palliative care, as opposed to euthanasia, is a rabbit's continuing ability to give and receive love. (Sounds simple, doesn't it?) Also, the bunny's acceptance of care. Your thoughts?

Lori: I think that palliative care, even extensive palliative care, is the way to go as long as the bunny is still responsive and affectionate. But the "continuing ability

Photo: Jane O'Wyant



Funny Face and Plain Face, May 2015.

to give and receive love" is simultaneously a simple and an incredibly elusive target. I've been thinking about this for years, but haven't quite gotten the formulation right: I think my small misgivings have to do with my inability to get my mind around the whole shape of a bunny's existence. I am perhaps hubristic enough to imagine that I know my rabbits and can divine the presence and strength of a will to live, but I also know that I only see what they want during the windows of time that I'm physically there, touching the bunny, looking into her eyes, observing the way she responds to me. Even with a lot of work flexibility, I can't be around all of the time.

Dido and Lucy (I'm thinking of my single bunnies now – I'm less, or at least differently, concerned about Funny Face since she has a partner bunny) were certainly cheerful partners in their care

and demonstratively happy to spend time with me, but my biggest anxiety with my old, single rabbits was whether the bunny was comfortable enough during the hours spent alone (and, let's face it, bereft of goodly portion of sensory input to mitigate boredom and stave off discomfort). It was always a struggle to imagine – and yet not to catastrophize through overthinking it – what that time alone meant.

Here's what I think I know and don't know: Lucy was such an ornery little warrior that she welcomed a fight to the end; I'm not so sure about Dido. I'm left with the mild uneasiness that she stuck around as long as she did for my sake rather than her own (to the extent that one can make a real distinction). I don't regret my choices in either case, any more than I regret the decision to have

(Continued on page 12)

## Very Long Lives

(Continued from page 11)

Anna euthanized when a series of seizures left only a frightened, barely aware shell of my brave girl. For what it's worth, I think all we can do is try to be as unselfish as we can and to try to give each bunny the best opportunity possible to die on her own terms.

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*'Rabbits are so small, stoic and subtle (and even more difficult to read in their old age, with their cloudy eyes and more sedentary habits) that it's difficult to articulate to most people how courageously rabbits endure discomfort, or with what fortitude of spirit and bunny humor they suffer the indignities of aging, or – generally – how much they continue to learn about and respond to the world around them.'*

---

I want to be clear that every minute spent cuddling with my hospice bunnies and hearing them purr has been precious to me; I'm deeply grateful and profoundly changed for having had the experience of caring for my two very elderly girls towards and in extremis. But I'll admit that every day, especially with Dido, required a more and more complicated and equivocal reckoning. I'll also be honest that what kept tipping the balance in favor of keeping Dido at home was a purely practical consideration (rather than anything remotely philosophical): the stress and pain the long final car ride to the vet would have entailed for her, despite all of the preparations that Dr.

Campbell helped me make in the event that such a trip became necessary. I can't say for certain that the calculus would have been the same if we lived closer to Symphony.

**Jane: I can't thank you enough for taking time to answer my questions so thoughtfully, eloquently and amusingly! Is there anything else that you would like to say?**

Lori: I'm sure I could dredge up numerous stories about the Faces or talk about how having such a long time with them has taught me to be more patient and calmer in the face of minor calamities. But would it be appropriate to thank some people who have been especially supportive of the aging Yamato bunny population that I haven't mentioned elsewhere in the course of this conversation? To my surprise, I've discovered that it's tremendously meaningful to me to have people who are "witnesses" to these bunnies in their old age. Rabbits are so small, stoic and subtle (and even more difficult to read in their old age, with their cloudy eyes and more sedentary habits) that it's difficult to articulate to most people how courageously rabbits endure discomfort, or with what fortitude of spirit and bunny humor they suffer the indignities of aging, or – generally – how much they continue to learn about and respond to the world around them. A few people have been unfailingly generous in diving into the often very, very messy (and not infrequently smelly) business of helping out with my creatures. Marcie Frishberg has been a font of practical advice and was so gentle with Funny Face while giving her the first two of her butt baths. She also took the time to teach us how to give a butt bath on our own and – more importantly – to reassure me that I probably wouldn't accidentally break Funny Face's back while dangling her mostly one-handed over a basin of water.

Abigail Aldridge has kept me sane on multiple occasions by checking up on the little elders during rough patches:

Photo: Lori Yamato



Dido on her approximate 15th birthday.

coming down to Symphony Vet to wish Plain Face a good surgery for his tumor removal at age 11, devising a beautiful and ergonomic sling to help Lucy maintain some muscle tone while preserving my back and knees, visiting Dido often near the end of her life, and providing a great home for the funny little rabbit I found in Prospect Park but couldn't keep (even David has his limits for bunny-amusement-park living!). And thank you, Jane, for helping so much and in so many ways of late. Funny Face in particular has a much better quality of life because you brought your arsenal of bunny tools and worked through tenacious masses of matted fur. You also listened to endless stories – in this interview and in person – about the "little people with the long ears" (as my mother charmingly calls them) that would be impossibly tedious to most people.



## Rabbit Volunteer of the Month: Erin

This month's Manhattan volunteer of the month is about eight years overdue for this recognition. Erin has spent a countless number of hours volunteering with the rabbits in our care, sometimes spending more than six hours in a single shift. She distributes greens, cleans and socializes the rabbits, and makes sure everyone is cared for to the T.

Erin McElhinney was honored as Manhattan Volunteer of the Month by Animal Care Centers of NYC.

Photo: Erin McElhinney



Norma Chen Rhee volunteered at the shelter on Thanksgiving.

## Crime-Fighting Rabbit Librarian Featured in Children's Musical

Photo by Stuart MacKenzie



'Superbunny's Pirate Vacation' with Calum Fleming, Erik Shuler, Peter Hargarten, Karlene Grinberg.

"Superbunny's Pirate Vacation," performed recently in Brooklyn, is the third original children's musical based on book three of Amber L. Spradlin's multi-award-winning Superbunny book series for young readers. In both the book and the musical, the hero's sidekick, Veronica, works as a librarian at the New York Public Library by day and helps Thumperino Superbunny investigate crime and facilitate his superhero training by night.

Together, these two rabbits do research and study to prepare Superbunny for any pitfalls that may befall a superhero rabbit

who fights crime. In the song-filled musical tale, Veronica and Thumperino rap about their love of the Dewey Decimal System as the two comb the library for information about Thumperino's coming vacation to the Caribbean island of St. Kitts.

Veronica is a character fashioned after a real Rabbit Rescue & Rehab bunny whose adoptive family have registered her as a therapy rabbit and take her along on local book-reading tours. Veronica is a special-needs rabbit but one would never guess it upon first meeting her.

That's what makes her a hero.

"Superbunny's Pirate Vacation," with book and lyrics by Michael MacKenzie Wills (creator/writer/director of the MAC Award-winning "Operation Opera") and music by Alastair William King ("Outlaws: The Ballad of Billy the Kid") was staged this fall at the Actors Fund Arts Center in Brooklyn. It was produced by theater company Rabbit Hole Theatricks and was offered free to children and families.

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## NYC Metro Rabbit Grad To Star in PETA Campaign

By Jennifer A. Carlson

In October, my retired 4-H show rabbit Cloud Carlson started his career as an animal activist and model when he was featured with New Zealand singer Kimbra

in an anti-angora ad for PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals).

Kimbra's two-part campaign will feature still photos of her holding Cloud, along with a video discussing her love

of animals, and why everyone should boycott the angora industry (and choose cruelty-free!) PETA expects to release the campaign early next year.

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## Star in PETA Campaign

(Continued from page 14)

I adopted Cloud in January 2015. Here was his profile on Petfinder: “Cloud is a big beautiful 4½-year-old white and brown French Angora male. He’s been living in an outdoor garage inside a wire-floored cage his entire life and has received very little attention. He also has an old, healed fracture in his left leg. He gets around fine, but must have carpeted floors. Cloud was a young girl’s 4-H show rabbit, and the girl is now a teen who has moved on to other interests. Cloud is incredibly sweet and affectionate. He enjoys being petted and really likes being with people. He needs a loving forever home where he will get the love, time and attention he so craves. Cloud will need to be brushed every day; he doesn’t enjoy it all that much, so it’s best done while petting his head with your other hand.”

For more information about the angora-fur industry, please go to House Rabbit Society’s website, which includes an article by Margo DeMello and Leighton Woodhouse. (link: <http://rabbit.org/angora-fur/>). The article describes the conditions under which rabbits are raised for their angora fur: “Ninety percent of all angora products available in the U.S. are made in China,

Photo: Jen Carlson



Just hours before his PETA photo shoot, “Cloudy” practices his poses.

where 50 million long-haired angora rabbits produce the fur for this large and profitable industry. Rabbits in China are raised in factory-like conditions, and subjected to the kind of cruelty we tend to associate with the pelting of minks and foxes.”

The HRS article continues: “Unfortunately, because rabbits usually are so silent, it is easy for most people to fail to recognize their suffering. For this reason, people

of conscience must be their voice, especially during the holiday season, when store shelves are stocked with the products of their pain.”

Cloud Carlson is proud to help raise public awareness about this industry. It is an honor that my 8.5 pound sweetheart (and fellow vegan) could join PETA in its anti-angora effort.

## It’s a Season for Giving

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab/NYC Metro Rabbit this month launched its first YouCaring campaign. The fundraising effort was announced on “Giving Tuesday,” Dec. 1, to benefit sick, neglected and special-needs rabbits with high veterinary bills. Even the smallest contributions will make a difference for these rabbits, and all donations are tax-deductible. Please share this link with your friends and encourage them to consider our rabbits in their giving this season:

<https://www.youcaring.com/rabbit-rescue-and-rehab-478792>.

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab/NYC Metro Rabbit is an all-volunteer organization; your donations go directly to helping rabbits. Our bunnies thank you!

## We Are Looking for Loving Homes

Written and compiled by Kirsten Ott

### Martina

Martina is a brown and white Dutch full of spunk and determination. This girl is on the young side, and she has the energy of youth – she’s very active and eager for play. And she’s feisty – she’ll make sure you know what she wants! She’ll need lots of opportunities for exercise in her forever home. Martina has darker brown fur around her face, giving it a somewhat marbled look. She also has a funny splotch of brown on her white Dutch bib.



Martina.

### Wilde

Wilde is a large, very handsome New Zealand White. This guy is on the young side, and may get even bigger. Wilde is very curious and eager for exploration and play. He’s not shy, but he’d rather be out and about than snuggling at this point in his young life. Wilde has a pristine coat, an aristocratic profile, and beautiful, intelligent eyes.



Wilde.

### Fantasia

Fantasia is a small- to medium-sized brown Jersey Wooly or Lionhead female. This girl is rather shy but very sweet. She’ll let you pet her, but preferably in a secluded spot where she feels safe. She would probably do best in a quiet home with no small children or dogs. Fantasia looks like a super cute version of an Ewok (just in time for Star Wars!).



Fantasia.

### Emmie

Emmie is a gorgeous small- to medium-sized black and white Dutch mix. This girl is truly stunning. Her pristine coat is a mix of jet black and bright white, she has lovely brown eyes, and her face shows vestiges of Dutch blood – a wisp of a line on her forehead and a cute white smudge on the left side of her nose and mouth. Emmie is a real sweetie, too; she loves affection and has a clingy side to her.



Emmie.

### Asuna

Asuna is a small grayish-brown female bunny. This sweet girl has a vulnerable

quality. However, she will let you pet her, and likes to have her head and neck rubbed. Once she decides you’re okay,



Asuna.



Unix.



Pika.

she’ll gladly approach you for more affection, suggesting she will probably get very attached to a nice new family. Asuna’s coat has some pretty golden highlights, and she has beautiful large dark eyes.

### Unix

Unix is a medium-sized brown and white Dutch with a gentle, sensitive nature. He loves to be petted, and given his sweetness, is likely to get attached quickly. Unix is very handsome, with a sturdy body and nice round cheeks. His pretty eyes match the chocolate-y brown of his coat, and his right front leg is cutely half brown and half white.

### Pika

Pika is a beautiful medium-sized female. This gorgeous girl would do best in an

*(Continued on page 17)*



## Looking for Loving Homes

(Continued from page 16)

experienced bunny home. Pika's coat is multiple shades of brown, and the light rings around her eyes and her light underbelly suggest she may have some Silver Marten blood.

### Coco

Coco is a very large hunk of a male bunny. This dark brown guy is very beefy – if he were a person, he might be an NFL linebacker. Having Coco in your home will be like have a living teddy bear. He's very cozy and mellow, and loves to be petted on his nice thick head, smushing down contentedly.

### Faith

Faith is a medium-sized white bunny with dark eyes. This girl is clearly on the young side. She has disproportionately large ears, suggesting she may yet have a bit of growing to do. Faith is a gentle girl and a real love. She's very friendly and adores affection – and her coat is soft and feathery, so you'll enjoy petting her. Faith's coat has tinges of gray on her face and pink ears, suggesting she has a bit of Himalayan blood.

### Chloe

Chloe is a medium-sized black and white half-Dutch, half-helicopter lop who was found in Brooklyn. In addition to being gorgeous, this girl is curious – in a nice, mellow way. Her prior foster home had a big dog that she got along with, so she would probably make a good partner for another rabbit or a good fit in a home with another type of animal (depending on the individual animal, of course). Chloe loves her greens, and was recently examined by a rabbit-savvy vet who found her to be in good health.

### Andaz

Andaz is a medium-sized male rabbit with perfect black and white Dutch markings. He's so handsome that he was filmed and photographed for Vogue.com



Coco.



Faith.



Chloe.



Andaz.

– yep, he's a supermodel rabbit! He is a few years old, full of curiosity and needs a home where he will get a lot of exercise and affection. Andaz loves to be



Angelina.



Duke and Dutchess.

petted on the top of his head and is a wonderful companion for adults.

### Angelina

Angelina is a strikingly beautiful medium-sized Hotot who has been waiting for a forever home for over two years now. She was abandoned outside in a cardboard box but despite her prior mistreatment, she loves nothing more than to be petted by gentle humans. When you start petting her she presses her head down, starts tooth purring and closes her eyes in complete contentment. Angelina needs a peaceful and rabbit-experienced home with no young children where she can feel completely safe. She is a typical young, healthy rabbit with lots of energy for running, binkying and shredding cardboard

### Duke and Dutchess

Duke and Dutchess are a spunky bonded pair of young rabbits looking for their forever home! Duke is a brown male Lionhead and Dutchess is a brown and white female Dutch. Both are very energetic, need lots of exercise time and a big carpet to run and binky on. Dutchess will come right up to greet you. She

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## Looking for Loving Homes

(Continued from page 17)



Nona.

adores petting, and raises her nose into the air cutely as you stroke her head and ears. And no wimpy petting for this girl – she likes a strong, firm hand! Duke is also a very sweet bunny. Their favorite fresh greens are romaine lettuce, cilantro, parsley and kale.

### Nona

Nona is a medium-sized brown bunny with a very sweet personality. She arrived at the shelter with a case of malocclusion, so she had her incisors removed. Therefore, she needs to have her greens chopped up into bite-sized pieces. Nona is a little fussy about being taken out of her cage sometimes, but once she's out she's very easy to handle. She also is very tolerant of combing and grooming, which is a good thing because she needs a little help once in a while. She would probably do well with a bunny partner who could help to groom her, and she was perfectly tolerant of other bunnies living in her foster home, so a bond would probably work well.

### Batik

Batik is a small- to medium-sized male New Zealand White mix. This little guy is one of a litter of eight who came to



Batik.



Chequer.

the shelter with their mom in August 2015. He grew up in the shelter, and is now ready for his forever home. Batik would do best in a quiet home with no small children or dogs. Batik is still young, and may grow a bit more, but his mom is fairly small so he probably won't get a whole lot bigger. He has wonderfully soft fur!

### Chequer

Chequer is a small- to medium-sized female New Zealand White mix. This little girl is one of a litter of eight who came to the shelter with their mom in August 2015. She grew up in the shelter, and is now ready for her forever home. Chequer is very pretty and has very soft fur. She's still young, so she may grow a bit more, but she probably won't get a whole lot bigger.



Apple.



Simona.

### Apple

Apple is a medium-to-large male Dutch mix and a very special bunny. This young guy is very bright and curious, but also super sweet. His long, lean face and body give him an athletic look and a kind of regal stature – you might think of him as a young prince. At the same time, his slightly off-kilter looks – an irregular Dutch triangle and bib, and mismatched legs (one white, the other black with a white foot) – give him a cute, comical look. Apple likes to be petted, especially when he can enjoy it in a secluded corner of his choosing. After you've introduced yourself to him, he'll continue to follow you with great interest, a very intelligent expression in his eyes.

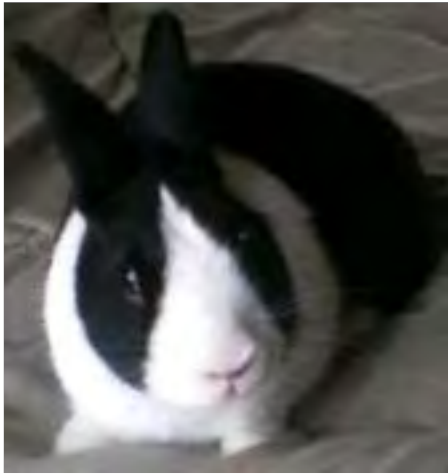
### Simona

Simona is a medium-sized agouti and white Dutch bunny and a real lovegirl! This sweetie is very well-socialized and eager for companionship. She loves head and cheek rubs and will literally shove

(Continued on page 19)

## Looking for Loving Homes

(Continued from page 18)



Romeo.



Stiletto.

her little head into your hand! Simona's eyes seemed to be accented with eyeliner. She has a cute little dewlap and an oversized Dutch bib that travels extra far down her back. This wonderfully friendly girl is likely to get very attached to her new people, and will demand lots of attention.

### Romeo

Romeo is a medium-sized black and white Dutch bunny who was found in the woods in January 2015 and brought home by a Good Samaritan. He is bursting with personality and will totally charm the person who adopts him. Romeo is currently in foster care.

### Stiletto

Stiletto is a large white Lionhead/Himalayan female. This girl's looks will awe you – she has some classic Himmy markings such as ruby eyes and pale gray fur on her nose, ears, and feet, yet she sports a



Roxy.



Digby.

tremendous Lionhead mane. Stiletto enjoys affection. Your fingers will get lost in that fabulous mane!

### Roxy

Roxy is a medium-sized Hotot mix female. This pretty girl is curious about people, and will examine you thoughtfully when you approach her. Roxy is mostly white with fun black markings, including mottled black and white ears, black eye "makeup," and some black markings on her body. She also has two black dots on either side of her nose – a "mustache" of sorts. Roxy would do best in a quiet home without small children or dogs.

### Digby

Digby is a medium-sized gray/light brown Lionhead. This gorgeous guy's coat looks like it was painted with pastels, and he has a bit of shiny gold fur around the nape of his neck. Digby is very smart and outgoing – he tries super hard to get your attention, using all the strategies and antics at his disposal. Once he has you, he'll sit still for a very long petting session.



Dopey.



Sleepy.

### Dopey

Dopey is a small- to medium-sized male black and white Dutch mix. This guy is super friendly and will do everything he can think of to get your attention, including climbing on his cage bars and sticking as much of his face through the bars as possible. When he finally gets you to come and pet him, it seems as though he can't really believe it – he sort of freezes in place. Dopey's name doesn't suit him at all – he's really smart and has wonderful energy. He has the earmarks of Dutch heritage – vestiges of a Dutch triangle on his face and a bib that doesn't make it all the way around his shoulders.

### Sleepy

Sleepy is a medium-sized dark agouti-brown boy. This guy's name describes the opposite of his actual personality.

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## ADOPT US!

### Looking for Loving Homes

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Sleepy is a very excited, energetic “Type A” boy who absolutely loves his playtime. He gets the other rabbits in the shelter pretty riled up when he’s out in the playpen – so he must be a born leader! Sleepy is a strong bunny with a muscular build. He’s very self-assured and seems to have an agenda at all times. However, he does like to be petted too, so he’s not always in high-energy mode.

#### Snoopy

Snoopy is a small- to medium-sized black and white Dutch female. This poor girl came in to the shelter as a stray, and she seems pretty traumatized by her recent experience. Snoopy will need a quiet, patient, bunny-savvy home where she can gradually calm down and learn to accept affection. She has a distinctive white smudge on one of her black ears and huge, luminous brown eyes.

#### Bambi

Bambi is a large brown Lionhead female. This girl is a real beauty, with a marvelous broad nose, impressive “mane,” and a cute white cottontail. Bambi is a real snuggler too. She’ll literally come right up to you and smush herself against your body, asking for affection. This girl was unfortunately not properly fed or exercised in her prior home. She’s quite overweight, so she’ll need to get on a proper bunny regimen in her new forever home.

#### Brad

Brad is a medium-sized brownish-black Lionhead. This guy is very sweet and well-mannered, but he’s kind of an introvert, too. He seems a little timid or shy, but he will let you pet him, and he likes to have his head stroked. His coat is incredibly soft! Brad would probably benefit from a bunny partner – somebun who would make him feel more secure.

#### Fielvel

Fielvel is a medium-sized male Lionhead mix. This guy is absolutely stunning –



Snoopy.

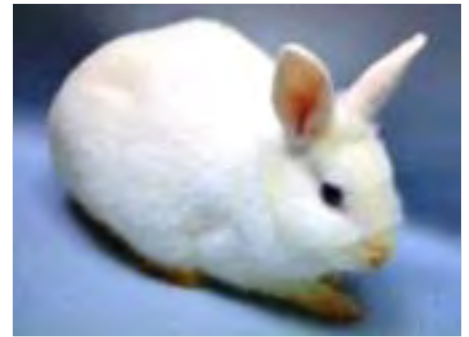


Bambi.



Brad.

he’s all white, with fluffy cheeks and Lionhead tufts around his ears. But the most amazing thing about this guy is his eyes – they are an unusual, gorgeous deep blue. Fielvel likes to hang back and observe you with those bewitching eyes.



Fielvel.

He needs socializing, so he’d do best in an experienced bunny home.

#### Carl

Carl is a very large, very handsome New Zealand White. This guy is truly magical looking, with a pristine coat, big pink ears, beautiful pale red eyes, nicely curved jowls, and sweet chubby cheeks. Carl is a very shy guy and needs a lot of socializing, so he’d do best in a bunny-savvy home and would probably also benefit from a somewhat more confident partner bunny.

#### Angel Hare

Angel Hare is a brown and white Dutch female. This girl is quite large, but should only be medium-sized. Clearly she was improperly fed and/or inadequately exercised in her prior home. Angel Hare’s name suits her because she is truly a perfect angel! She adores being petted, especially while she’s lounging in her litter box, and if you stop she’ll look at you imploringly – it’ll melt your heart. Let’s get this girl a home where she can get in shape and feel loved!

#### Freya

Freya is a medium-sized brown Rex mix and a total love. This girl loves attention so much that she’ll practically crawl on you to get it! She smushes right down when you start to pet her. Freya will probably be a real lap bunny in her new home. Her coat has a Rex-like feel, and her brown fur is darker around her ears and her “muzzle.” She would make a good choice for a first-time bunny owner.

#### Biscotti

Biscotti is a large, very handsome mixed-breed boy. It’s kind of hard to ascertain

*(Continued on page 21)*

## Looking for Loving Homes

(Continued from page 20)



Carl.



Angel Hare.



Freya.



Biscotti.

this guy's heritage – it looks like he's got some Lionhead, Himmy, and even Hotot blood. He's white with some pale



Wyatt.



Levi.



Charlie.

brown markings and a wonderful dark beauty mark just above the right side of his elegant long nose. And he has some Lionhead fur tufts between his ears, making it look like he has a mini crewcut! Biscotti is quite wary of people. If you join him in his hidey spot, though, he will let you pet him, and he likes neck and cheek rubs. Biscotti would do best in a quiet bunny-savvy home.

### Wyatt

Wyatt is a small Hotot mix with a sensitive temperament. This little guy is a bit nervous and hesitant, but he's curious about people. Once he trusts you he'll



Babsy.

start to enjoy your attention pretty quickly. Wyatt is white with some grayish-brown markings, including interesting mottled eye rings and a cute beauty spot on the right side of his nose. He has nice big brown eyes with dark lashes.

### Levi

Levi is a large white lop with tan markings: tan ears, reddish-tan eye rings around his eyes, and red eyelashes! This guy's coat is bright white, very fluffy, and super soft – which is great, because he's very sweet and he lets you pet him right away. Levi is a mellow guy. Though his ears are mostly down, one of them has some rogue helicopter tendencies.

### Charlie

Charlie is a large lop with some Harlequin blood. This guy's coat is very unusual and very beautiful – it's a mix and Harlequin charcoal and tan with some areas of white. Charlie is a really fun bunny – he's active, playful and friendly, and he's not afraid of anything. You'll love to watch him race around on his big fluffy lop feet.

### Babsy

Babsy is an extra-large white bunny with gray markings and a very generous dewlap. This magnificent-looking lady will hang back and stare at you with her giant, long-lashed eyes. Babsy will let you pet her, though – when you do so, she'll pull her head in and rest it on her big, downy dewlap pillow. She loves to have her head stroked. Babsy is very large but also somewhat overweight – nothing a proper diet and regular

(Continued on page 22)

## Looking for Loving Homes

*(Continued from page 21)*



Hopscotch.



Tabitha.

exercise can't address. She would do best in a quiet home without small children.

### Hopscotch

Hopscotch is a tiny, young brownish-gray boy. This adorable little bunny probably still has some growing to do. He's very active, and will let you pet him a bit – then will run off like a tiny deer. He would probably do best in an experienced bunny home.

### Tabitha

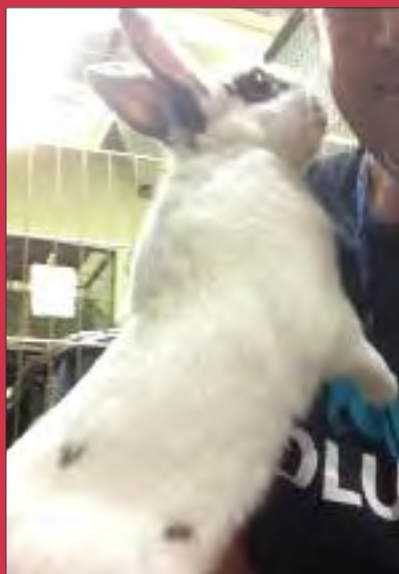
Tabitha is dark agouti and white Dutch mix with a lovely personality. This girl is clearly overweight. She'll need to work off that extra weight with a proper diet and plenty of exercise. Tabitha loves affection and will quickly lapse into a bunny trance as you pet her. She's mainly a Dutch girl, but she's got a bib on steroids – it looks more like a shirt!

## Forever Homes Found!

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Honey, Blimpie, Gladstone, Share Bear, Cutie, Sara and Suzette, Nadia, Winter, Marlo, Blotch and Croquis, Max, Lisann, Sam, Flavia, Dinky, Lex, Hershey, Poe, Keira, Martin, Lucy, Dot, Rosita, Cecile, Serendipity, Patty, Thumper, Howie, George, Autumn, Chip and Herbert.



Chip.



## Make a Difference!

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab needs dedicated volunteers to help care for our wonderful rabbits while they are waiting to find their forever homes. If you would like to volunteer, email us at [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

## Letters From Adopters

### Frieda

*Frieda was adopted in early October by rabbit volunteer Teija Emilia, who sent us this letter. Frieda is having a great time in her new home.*

Frieda wanted to let you know that she is busy exploring and binkying around her new home and has made friends with our cat. My boy rabbits, Sneaky and Hops, are in love with her and spend their exercise time hopping next to her cage.

Frieda and our cat Sahara enjoy flopping together during Frieda's exercise time, and we are bonding her with the boys. So far she has been very polite with them. She also enjoys hiding in the cat tree.

Teija



Sahara and Frieda.

### Lily and Henry

*Mandy adopted Lily in September as a partner for Henry. Lily had been called Raven at the shelter, where she gave birth to a litter that didn't survive. Henry, adopted in the summer of 2014, had been part of a large group of rabbits brought to the shelter when their owner was evicted. Mandy wrote this letter in late October to volunteer Thea Harting, who handled the rabbits' introduction and later provided advice to Mandy during the bonding process.*

Hi Thea,

I wanted to thank you so much for all your advice over the past two months. You were an invaluable resource.

The buns are finally bonded!!! They groom each other and snuggle together all the time. It's so adorable. No nips or anything; just two really happy buns.

Lily isn't crazy about hanging out in the living room with us but she's really affectionate with all of us, Henry especially. And Henry is very clearly wild about her.

We have had them free-range in the bedroom for about four days now, and



Lily (fka Raven) and Henry.

it has been awesome. Last night I was sitting on the ground with them and they came up to me and nudged me for head rubs and then Henry ran around the room like a madman and kicked up his feet like they do when they're happy.

The only regret I have is not getting him a companion sooner. I have never

seen him this happy. Bonding the buns was difficult and stressful at times but unbelievably rewarding. Thank you so much for making this all possible!

Mandy Beadle

*(Continued on page 24)*

## Mario

*Mario was adopted in September by Katie Scarr, who sent us this update in October. Mario was one of the many Dutch rabbits fostered by Cathy Zelonis.*

Mario has been an amazing addition to my life and has now brought the cuteness level in my apartment right through the roof! He became pretty comfortable within the first few days, running around making his own obstacles throughout the room. Mario's foster mom Cathy gave him the nickname, "The personality kid," which he is definitely living up to. My mornings now consist of waking up by getting bonked in the head by my cat Patti because she's hungry, and Mario madly running around the room, usually with a binky or two, and I couldn't ask for better little companions.

Mario quickly came to know what shaking a treat bag meant and now whenever I grab the treats, he immediately runs out from wherever he is in the room, and launches himself onto me for a treat. He pretty much has free roam of my apartment whenever I'm home and awake, and he has been quite the explorer. I keep bundles of fresh lavender in vases around the house and he's been sniffing them out, jumping up on the couch and grabbing the lavender out of the vase to eat!

I have been kept quite entertained by him and Patti together. Since they have been getting along very well, I prepare their dinner at the same time and they run circles around me until I put the bowls down and they eat next to each other. My favorite things about having Mario now in my life are his cute little nudges that he gives me whenever I'm near, and his adorable little mouth that I just love to watch chew. :)

Katie Scarr

Photo: Katie Scarr



Mario eating with Patti.



Mario lounging.

(Continued on page 25)



## Chunk

*Chunk, formerly known as Leo, was adopted by Kayla Ratikan, who sent us this nice update.*

Leo the bunny is now known as Chunk, or Monkey. I changed his name, because I had previously had a rabbit named Leo.

Chunk has been with me for about four days now and he is really enjoying his new home. He is getting more and more familiar with his new space. He is a curious little bunny and loves head rubs, and climbing all over the couch.

He is getting used to having me around and comes to the gate of his pen to greet me when I come over (probably just because he wants his food, but let's say it's because he wants to see me.)

We are really getting used to our morning and evening hang-outs, and he has been joining me on the couch in the evenings to watch the nightly news! Pretty soon, he will be king of the couch!

I look forward to all the new memories I will make with this little cutie!

Kayla

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*Update: I have had Chunk for a month now, and he has a curious, bossy, playful, snuggly, loving personality. He is adored by guests who come to my home and an absolute joy to be with. He loves to join me on the couch for snuggles and explore every inch of the apartment. His favorite dinner is a crisp, lush bok choy, and he loves to toss his toys around. This little monkey is such a wonderful addition to my family and I am so glad to be able to spoil and love him the way he deserves. He's too cute! He also has his very own Instagram for those who would like to follow the adventures of @Chunk\_bunny.*

Photos: Kayla Ratikan



Chunk at mealtime.



Chunk at rest.



Patty.



Jimmy.



Ryan.



Veronica.



Marshmallow.



Honey, top, and Jasper during speed date.



Hughes.



Sleepy.



Pimm.



Suzette and Sara.



Nino.

## Rabbit-Savvy Veterinarians

Here's our recommended vet list for the New York metropolitan area. **Please note that many clinics have multiple veterinarians, and our recommendations are for specific veterinarians in those clinics.** If you can't get an appointment with a recommended vet at one clinic, don't assume (no matter what you are told by the clinic) that other vets in the same clinic can help your rabbit. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the vets on this list, please contact Mary Cotter at (914) 337-6146. When you make an appointment with any of these vets, please tell them you were referred by us.

### Manhattan:

**Becky Campbell, DVM**

**Deborah Levison, DVM**

Symphony Veterinary Center  
170 West 96th Street, New York, NY 10025  
(212) 866-8000

**Katherine Quesenberry, DVM**

The Animal Medical Center  
510 East 62nd St., New York, NY 10065  
(212) 838-7053, (212) 329-8622

**Alexandra Wilson, DVM**

**Anthony Pilny, DVM**

**Cynthia J. Brown, DVM**

The Center for Avian and Exotic Medicine  
568 Columbus Ave., New York, NY 10024  
(212) 501-8750

**Shachar Malka, DVM**

Humane Society of New York  
306 East 59th St., New York, NY 10022  
(212) 752-4842

### Westchester County:

**Gil Stanzione, DVM**

Dakota Veterinary Center

381 Dobbs Ferry Road, White Plains, NY 10607  
(914) 421-0020

**Laurie Hess, DVM**

Veterinary Center for Birds and Exotics  
709 Bedford Road, Bedford Hills, NY 10507  
(914) 864-1414

### Long Island:

**Jennifer Saver, DVM**

**Laura George, DVM**

**Kristen Miller, DVM**

Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital  
2056 Jericho Turnpike, New Hyde Park,  
NY 11040 • (516) 877-7080

**Heidi Hofer, DVM**

Island Exotic Vet Care  
591 East Jericho Turnpike  
Huntington Station, NY 11746  
(631) 424-0300

**Jeff Rose, DVM**

Jefferson Animal Hospital  
606 Patchogue Rd. (Route 112)  
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776  
(631) 473-0415

## Licensed HRS Educators

### NYC/Westchester:

**M.C. Basile, Esq.**, President, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, BunnyTorts@gmail.com

**Mary Cotter**, Founder, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, Chapter Manager, NYC House Rabbit Society, Adviser to Thump, mec@cloud9.net, (914) 337-6146, rabbitcare.org

**Gabrielle LaManna**, New Fairfield, CT, gabbysbunnies@yahoo.com, (203) 746-7548

**Mary Harnett**, mmharnett@optonline.net, (914) 948-7976

**Marcie Frishberg**, mfrish57bun@yahoo.com, (718) 724-4105

**Cindy Stutts**, bygolyoly@yahoo.com, (646) 319-4766

**Kerstin Aumann**

**Monica Shepherd, DVM**

### Long Island:

**Nancy Schreiber**, President, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group,

nschreibmd@aol.com, (516) 510-3637,  
LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

**Mary Ann Maier**, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group Volunteer,

altitude8@yahoo.com,  
LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

**Donna Sheridan**, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group Volunteer, hpocus217@yahoo.com,  
LongIslandRabbitRescue.org

**Jennifer Saver, DVM**

**Laura George, DVM**

## THUMP December 2015

Newsletter of RRR/NYC HRS

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Editor: Susan Lillo

Creative Director: Jane O'Wyatt

Masthead Logo Designer: Mary Ann Maier

Rabbit Rescue & Rehab is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation in New York State. Our purpose is to rescue, rehabilitate and find permanent homes for abandoned, abused and neglected rabbits, and to educate the public on rabbit care through publications, phone consultations, home visits and presentations. This newsletter is published by RRR/NYC HRS, which is solely responsible for its content. We retain the right to edit all submissions, which become the property of the NYC Chapter and cannot be returned.

All donations go directly to caring for our foster rabbits and are tax-deductible. Please help us help them. Mailing address for contributions: Rabbit Rescue & Rehab/NYC Metro Rabbit, 333 Mamaroneck Ave, PMB 363, White Plains NY 10605. To contribute to Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, please go to [www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org).

## Adoptable Rabbits 🐰

There are lots of adoptable rabbits available in Manhattan, Long Island and Westchester.

To adopt a rabbit in **New York City**, contact [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com). On **Long Island**, contact Nancy Schreiber at [nschreibmd@aol.com](mailto:nschreibmd@aol.com) or at 516-510-3637 ([www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org)), and in **Westchester** contact Mary Cotter at [mec@cloud9.net](mailto:mec@cloud9.net) or 914-337-6146 ([www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org)).

The rabbit volunteers' email address in New York City is [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com).

Adoptable NYC Metro rabbits are at Petco's Lexington Avenue (86th-87th) and Union Square locations; rabbit volunteers are present at both stores on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to answer questions. There are four rabbits living at each of those stores.

In addition, NYC Metro rabbits are at the Petland Discounts store on West 72nd Street.

You can also visit Animal Care & Control of NYC (AC&C) at 326 East 110th St.,

between First and Second avenues. Rabbits for adoption can be found by going to:

<http://www.nycacc.org/> and doing an adoption search. Volunteers are there every weekday evening and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, but it is best to arrange an appointment first.

Bunny speed dates can be arranged by appointment only on weekend afternoons at Union Square. Please contact [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com) to make arrangements.

Many of our rabbits are living in foster homes and you can meet them as well. You also can arrange to foster a rabbit until he or she finds a permanent home. Contact [nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com](mailto:nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com)

For basic information about rabbits as pets, go to [www.rabbitcare.org](http://www.rabbitcare.org), [www.longislandrabbitrescue.org](http://www.longislandrabbitrescue.org) and the House Rabbit Society main site, [www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org).