



NYC METRO RABBIT NEWS OCTOBER 2019

Adoptapalooza Raises Awareness About Rabbits

Photo: Sylvie Jensen



David and Sylvie take Union Square!

By Sylvie Jensen

Adoptapalooza on Sept. 15 was a major hop-pening at Union Square. The ever-lovely Carmela and effervescent Star participated in the event.

Carmela enjoyed a quiet corner of a hidey house, venturing forth to nibble hay and win hearts at regular intervals

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Photo: Alex Mele



Puffin poses as Batman.

Everybun Is Excited for Halloween!

By Rabbit Rescue & Rehab

Our bunnies are excited to show off their Halloween costumes, and have an important message to share about being cautious with Halloween outfits.

Many costumes that are made and sold for small animals are designed to go around the animal's belly, under their chin, or around their neck. For a prey animal like a rabbit, this can be extremely frightening, since contact with these areas can mimic the sensation of being grabbed by a predatory animal. Having their movement restricted by a costume

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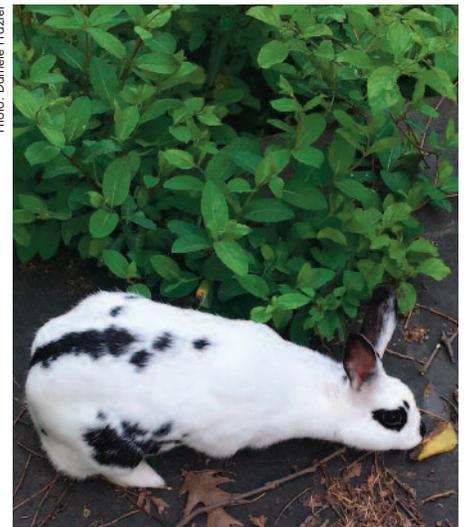
Marbles' Story

By Rabbit Rescue & Rehab

Earlier this year, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab was contacted about a rabbit found outside in Highland Park, Brooklyn. This poor bunny was in a difficult-to-access location and even from a distance, it was easy to see that she was extremely thin. She was lucky to have been spotted by her now-fosterer Daniele, who had to climb to reach the rabbit, carried her straight back home, and right away agreed

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Photo: Daniele Frazier



Marbles in Highland Park where she was first spotted by Daniele.

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again. This is one of Bruce's favorites. We keep a small set of tall thin plastic cups nearby to place around his play area when he free roams.

Grab and Go (Also called Grab and Toss by my son) — Bunnies love to redecorate their space. Providing light objects that they can easily pick up with their teeth can provide a daily chore. We like to mix up or rotate the objects we provide. He may have a paper-towel roll or other cardboard tube for a few days in his exercise pen with him. We'll see

him pick this up and toss it around or move it out of his way every day. Once we see it off to the side we know he needs a change. Then we'll provide him with a drink carrier. Those cardboard cup holder trays you get your coffee in are super fun for bunnies. Be careful that your rabbit is not ingesting any of the compressed cardboard cup holders. Bruce will lift and flip and scratch at his drink tray over and over again.

Stacking Cups — We have a set of plastic stacking cups that have a rim on each cup. They were originally toys for my children when they were toddlers. They are still available today in stores.

You can stack the cups and allow the bunny to nudge and knock them over. You can train rabbits to place smaller cups inside larger cups. Bruce loves when he gets to play with these cups. Sometimes my children even place small bits of treats under the cups and let the bunny find which cup the treat is hiding under. Bunnies have an amazing sense of smell!

Bun Island — This is one of my personal favorites. Our bunny will only walk on carpet. We primarily have wood floors. He has a carpeted area where he generally free roams daily. On snow days

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Photos: Christina Berner

Any small cups can be stacked over and over again for bunny to knock over.

Don't toss out those paper-towel rolls. Your bunny will be so happy to knock them over and toss them over his head.

A drink holder is one of the best toys a bunny could ask for. You'll see your bunny flip it, chew it and dig at it over and over again.

Chilling on the couch.

Entertainment Ideas

(Continued from page 6)

or weekends when we find we have extra time, my 10- and 14-year-old lay out additional rugs that we keep handy along with couch throws and any other beach towels or things they can find. Then they put out stacked cups, cardboard boxes or any other items they can find that our bun likes. They'll set up bowling or hide treats all around the newly laid-out area. This is great for Bruce! He gets a new area to explore and new objects to play with all day. Sometimes we'll even leave it out for two days. We're careful not to let the rugs and throws get too close to steps or anything that could be harmful to Bruce.

Chew and Dig — Beachcomber straw hats sold at party stores are generally OK for bunnies, though not all hats are safe and it is best to check with your local rabbit-rescue group first. (Some straw products are treated with chemicals that can be highly toxic to a rabbit.) The loose straw ends are fun for them to chew off. Bruce doesn't ingest the straw. He just flings the bits he chews off. As I said, he's not a digger but I know several bunnies that love to dig. He will occasionally dig into the carpet but we don't encourage that at all. What you can do is provide your bun with a cardboard box full of newspaper. You can even rip the first page. The paper will scatter all around the bunny, making a super fun space to play in.

Logic Toys — These can be purchased and some are super fancy – or you can devise your own. Bruce has one that allows him to uncover an area and see if there may be a treat inside. An easy way to make one of these is with an egg carton. Cut the cups out that hold the eggs. Place 10 to 12 cups upside down in the bun's play area. Place one or two treats under one or two cups and watch your rabbit find the treats! Place the treats under different cups each time. Be sure not to overfeed your bun treats with this game. It can be super fun!

I hope some of these ideas help you provide your bunny with many fun experiences and allow yourself some wonderful bonding time!

Photos: Christina Berner



Bruce with his beachcomber hat.



This Traxie toy makes treat time more fun for bunnies. They love to sniff out the treat's location.



On Bun Island with stacked cups.

Mystery of the Purloined Fur

By Jennifer Stallone

I once had two of the best buns, Frankie and Stevie – both girls.

Stevie looked like a cross between a Himalayan and an Angora. She was beautiful and sweet.

Shortly before I had my girls spayed, Frankie began building beds of hay by grabbing bundles of it in her mouth. After doing research, I read that female bunnies sometimes go through “false pregnancies” and will even pull hair from the dewlap below their chin to build nests.

Since both Frankie and Stevie were already scheduled for their spays, I wasn't too concerned and let Frankie

Photo: Jennifer Stallone



Frankie.

continue to build up her mounds of hay. One morning, I went into the room where I had my girls, and walked into lofty floating tufts of Stevie's hair.

Worried, I instantly picked up Stevie, thinking there had been a fight (which was out of character because my girls were bonded). Stevie was fine, and hopped over near Frankie.

Next to Frankie was her hay mound, with Angora hair interlaced throughout the bundles. That's when I realized Frankie hadn't pulled out her own hair to make her “nest.” She had pulled out Stevie's fur. I guess if you're going to make a nest for your fake babies, you should make it with the highest quality of fur you can find.

Visit to a Rabbit Ranch for Rescued Bunnies

Photo: Aaron and Lori Maslow



Aaron atop the giant rabbit.

By Aaron and Lori Maslow

Nestled among the corn and soybean fields of rural Illinois is an attraction devoted to rabbits – both bunny rabbits and old Volkswagen rabbits. We spent three weeks on the road in August in the Midwest and on the day we left Springfield, Ill., we stopped off at Henry's Ra66it Ranch, in Staunton. Yes, that is a “66” in the middle of Rabbit because this attraction is on the old “Mother Road,” Route 66.

In planning our trip we were not aware of Henry's Ra66it Ranch. We found out about it when we stopped off at the Illinois Welcome Center on Interstate 74, having crossed over from Indiana. On the cover of the Illinois Route 66 Visitor Guide was a photo of a family posing with a giant sculptured rabbit. We read up on this attraction and decided we had to get there.

After spending several days in Springfield and seeing Abraham Lincoln-related

historic sites and museums, we drove 60 miles southeast into Illinois farm country and, on old Route 66, found the Rabbit Ranch. Richard Henry is a rabbit fanatic – both the motor vehicle kind and the pet kind. On the grounds of this attraction is a replica of an old-time gas station. Old VW rabbits sprinkle his property. Inside a small building is a visitor center containing a collection of Route 66 highway and trucking artifacts and souvenirs. While we are interested in the old Route 66, we came mainly to talk to him about his rabbits – the pet kind. Many rabbits have lived at Rich's ranch over the years. He is a gregarious person and related how he rescued rabbits and took care of them. Some came from shelters and others were rescues.

Inside the visitor center is a Flemish Giant named Gilbert. And boy, is he huge! Gilbert was the most docile house rabbit you could ever encounter. Rich

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Entertainment Ideas

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has three other rabbits in his adjacent house. We spoke for a long time with Rich inside his visitor center about how he cares for the rabbits, including having to drive them 40 miles to the vet in St. Louis, Mo. We told him about our rabbits Greg and Naomi, and about the two rabbits – Claire and Perry – that live with our daughter Rachel and son-in-law Jeff. Rich realized that we were really into rabbits ourselves so he invited us into his home to see the other three rabbits. He usually does not do this for tourists.

Inside the home in a pen were three of the cutest bunnies – a bonded trio. We first saw Hubert, a Lionhead. Someone had dumped him, and that is how he ended up with Rich. Henri was red, and Blackberry was black. Unfortunately, Henri has cataracts and is very ill.

When his rabbits die, Rich buries them in a rabbit cemetery he maintains alongside his home, performing a private service for each bunny. He erects monuments on their graves. You can tell that one of Rich's favorites was Montana. For seven years, she greeted tourists who stopped by in the visitor center. In 2008, before she passed, she ran for President.

After spending an hour and a half with Richard Henry and his pet rabbits, it was time to bid him adieu. If you ever find yourself in southern Illinois, and want to visit with an intense rabbit lover, we recommend Henry's Ra66it Ranch. Be sure to call Rich before you come. His website address is henrysroute66.com.

Aaron and Lori Maslow, an attorney and a retired teacher, respectively, reside in Brooklyn, along with Greg, a Harlequin, and Naomi, a Lionhead. Rachel and Jeff Brauner, their daughter and son-in-law, are human parents to Claire, a New Zealand White, and Perry, a Dwarf Hotot.

Photo: Aaron and Lori Maslow



Rich Henry's rabbit cemetery.

Check Petfinder for Updated Listings;
Some Rabbits Have Found Homes!

We Are Looking for Loving Homes:

These Rabbits Are Available at Manhattan Animal Care Center (NYC ACC)

By Kirsten Ott

Thor

Thor is a large New Zealand White. This guy is the most docile, gentle, mellow rabbit in the room right now. Unlike his namesake, he doesn't seem to have an aggressive fiber in his body, but he's godlike in his own special way. Thor is rather reserved, and likes to hang out in a quiet corner of his space while you pet him. He's very handsome, too, with nice chubby cheeks and a slightly sad face with soulful eyes. Because Thor is so easygoing, he would probably make a good partner for another rabbit.



Thor.



Oreo.

Oreo

Oreo is a small Silver Marten/dwarf mix who's as cute as a button. This little darling girl is very sweet and loves to be petted – she's especially fond of cheek rubs. While you pet her, she closes her eyes and goes into dreamland like a sleeping baby, using her floofy dewlap as a big pillow for her tiny head. Oreo has a classic Silver Marten coat – dark brown with grayish-white accents – and a cute little round face that's to die for.

Coco

Coco is a medium-sized Harlequin boy. This youngster is alert and very curious but quite wary around new people. If you take your time with him and approach him gently, he will let you pet him – but he definitely will need some socialization, and would probably do best in a home without small children. Coco has an absolutely stunning orange and charcoal coat. His slender face and oversized ears suggest that he probably still has a bit of growing to do.

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Coco.

ADOPTIONS

Rabbits at ACC

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Chanel

Chanel is a small- to medium-sized Harlequin. This gorgeous girl is still on the young side, and will probably grow a bit bigger. She's very alert and active, and is quite curious about people – she has a cute habit of sticking her nose into the air while you're petting her head. Once Chanel has had a taste of your affection, she'll approach again and again to request more. Her stunning coat is a painterly combination of orange and charcoal hues.



Chanel.

Forever Homes Found!



Lola.

Rabbits adopted since the last newsletter include: Cottontail, Daffodil, Bubba, Amos, Bonita, Ping and Pong, Maybelline, Lucky Charm, Rose, Nyx, Ashley, Abe and Einy, Hazey, Ernie, Fudge, Sophia, Finn, Lilo, Oreo, Acorn, Pikachu, Nugget, Mandy and Cruise, Woody, Winter, Scrabble, Sir, Adia, Lola and Panda.

Our Masthead Bunny Marco

Photo: Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group



This photo shows the heart-shaped marking on Marco's side that he had when he was rescued in July.

We Are Looking for Loving Homes: These Rabbits Are in Foster Care



Ashton.

Ashton

Ashton is a medium-sized dark chocolate Rex who is as soft as he is fabulous! Ashton is a super-friendly, young boy who loves attention. He is an easygoing, inquisitive extrovert. Ashton has recently been rescued and is enjoying living in a bunny-friendly home. He has been moderately active, but we have

much more to learn about him. If interested in potentially adopting Ashton, please email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

Romeo

Romeo is a medium-sized black and white Dutch bunny who was found in the woods in January 2015 and brought



Romeo.



Wally and Daisy.



Carmela.

home by a Good Samaritan. He is bursting with personality and will totally charm the person who adopts him. Romeo has been neutered and is currently in foster care. For more information and/or to arrange a meeting with Romeo, please contact nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

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Rabbits in Foster Care

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Wally and Daisy

Wally and Daisy are a beautiful, medium-sized bonded pair of golden lops. Sadly, their previous family has given them up because they no longer consider them a priority. They are very well behaved bunnies who love each other's company and have spent most of their lives together. They love to chill and relax – lounging around like big fuzzballs. Wally is a social bunny who will approach you for cheek rubs, while Daisy appreciates gentle affection once she feels comfortable. For fun, they will shred cardboard and paper-towel rolls. This sweet couple is patiently seeking their forever home. They are sure to bring warmth, smiles and bundles of joy to their new owner's family. Wally and Daisy have been spayed and neutered and are living in foster care. For more information about Daisy and Wally please email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

Carmela

Carmela is a young medium-sized Rex rabbit. Her beautiful coat is mostly white with tan and black spots. She is a sweet rabbit who loves to have her soft nose petted. She also likes to explore her house, but her favorite thing is to relax with a nice soft blanket. Carmela is shy and would likely do best in an adult-only home. She would also likely make a good partner for another rabbit. She has been spayed and is in foster care. For more information and/or to arrange a meeting with Carmela, please email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

Angelina

Angelina is a strikingly beautiful medium-sized Hotot who has been waiting for a forever home for over two years now. She was cruelly abandoned outside in a cardboard box but despite her prior mistreatment, she loves nothing more than to be petted by gentle humans.



Angelina.

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! She does spectacular jumps and binkies! She is spayed and litter-box trained, and is living in foster care. If interested in adopting Angelina, please email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

Pineapple and Sugarplum

Pineapple and Sugarplum are a beautiful pair of large Lionhead sisters who were born in the shelter as part of a litter of five babies, before we took the whole young family into our rescue. Their mother, two sisters and brother have all been adopted and now it's their turn. Pineapple is black and white, while Sugarplum is all black – and both have amazing manes of hair! These girls are shy at first but have tons of energy and

are a joy to watch as they exercise – running and binkying with reckless abandon! They have been spayed and are living in foster care. If you are interested in adopting Pineapple and Sugarplum, please email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.



Pineapple and Sugarplum.

GETTING A GRIP

Does Your Flooring Pass the Binky Test?

By Jane O'Wyatt

Before I took care of a feisty young lop named Winnie, I hadn't given floor surfaces in house rabbits' homes much thought. My first clients happened to be House Rabbit Society members, and in spacious pens around the city I'd seen sisal carpeting, low-or-no-pile rugs, corrugated cardboard and woven jute or straw squares.

But Winnie's environment was different. She lived in a small closed cage, and her out-of-cage play area was a room whose flooring was smooth white tiles, unrelieved by rugs—though there was a fringed Cardozo School of Law beach towel spread on the slick floor. When out of her cage, on the floor, she preferred the towel, but her chief use of it was as a launching pad to jump up to a 13-foot binky/race course made up of two couches placed end-to-end. There she hopped, ran, shuddered and executed balletic leaps.

(Of course, Winnie hated returning to her cage, where she stretched out on a purple plastic floor – not great, but better than the metal-grid flooring found in some cages.)

While the couches' essential appeal to Winnie probably was the traction they provided, a rabbit named Pacino reinforced another aspect of Winnie's routine: springiness underfoot is also desirable. Pacino, a little bunny whose environment included a binky-friendly rug, used a couch for special workouts: short sprints, high jumps and aerial turns. Pacino showed me that a surface is more fun if it absorbs the shock of vigorous landings. A springy surface adds bounce, comfort and safety. Yet I finally got the importance of the mattress effect only after a friend emailed me a link to a YouTube video featuring Billy Bunny, the Baryshnikov of house rabbits.:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciQxcccQNTRo>.

Although he shows himself to be an eloquent exponent of cushioned wall-to-wall carpeting, Billy Bunny's most

impressive dance moves – his bravura leaps and record-breaking Bunny 500s – are performed on a king-size bed.

Unfortunately, few guardians make available to their rabbits king-size beds, couches, wall-to-wall carpeting, sizable area rugs or even large towels. Nutmeg, a sweet little Rex whose hocks had patches of exposed, calloused skin, lived in a bathroom tiled in white marble. When I suggested a natural-fiber rug for comfort and traction, her guardian replied, "Nutmeg's eaten every kind of floor covering I ever tried. What is worse, living on a marble floor or dying of G.I. stasis? She's had stasis episodes – scared me to death!" I backed off, feeling sorry for the bunny and resigned to getting nowhere with her family. However, the next time I took care of Nutmeg, I found her lounging on a slightly nibbled cotton bed sheet on the bathroom floor.

Pearl and Izumi were young siblings, nominally free-range, whose home base was a folded bath towel on a hardwood kitchen floor. Izumi managed basic locomotion, but Pearl, who'd apparently been born with a splayed front leg, had trouble getting around and tended to stay on the towel like a castaway on a desert island. At my suggestion, their family acquired a biggish indoor-outdoor carpet remnant. On this rug, which they didn't chew, Pearl displayed surprising agility and Izumi did binkies.

A 12-year-old lop named Frou Frou no longer used a litter box – his family put down wee-wee pads but Frou Frou peed and pooped everywhere – and there wasn't a single rug in his home, a downtown loft. Watching Frou Frou shuffle across the loft's shiny wood floor, I could see that his legs were splayed out. Lacking traction, he couldn't get his legs under him. His belly and abdomen were too close to the floor, and the dense fur on the underside of his body was damp and matted with urine. What to do? With Frou Frou's guardian's blessing, I called a

House Rabbit Society friend who advised rug pathways so that Frou Frou could go where he wanted without further damage to his joints. Bed Bath & Beyond was having a sale, and, voilà, Frou Frou stepped eagerly onto the first of 10 bathroom rugs laid out for him. He looked relieved as he paused to sniff the rug. Then he followed the soft, yielding path to his favorite retreat.

One rabbit-rescue volunteer has worked with her husband to create a comfortable environment for their three bonded pairs and frequent fosters. The apartment features edible, comfortable, traction-providing surfaces: sisal carpeting, natural-fiber woven mats, cotton runners, soft bathroom rugs and bamboo rugs. Bella and Jerry, whose territory is the bedroom, chase each other on the king-size bed, while the other rabbits enjoy hopping up on the living-room couch. Snowball and Luna, amusingly active in their Leith Petwerks condo penthouse, love it so much they sometimes stay in it even when the door is open. Faced with a range of textured surfaces, Joshua frequently opts for the bathroom floor because he craves the coolness of marble. In contrast, Joshua's elderly partner, Storm, seems to prefer to sunbathe on a bamboo rug. A foster bunny recovering from sore hocks rests in a cage lined with plush fake sheepskin. And so on.

The importance of knowing what house rabbits require and enjoy underfoot, and our responsibility to provide it, can't be overemphasized. Light-boned prey animals, they were designed to sprint and leap, to flee and dance – which they can do in our homes, given the proper conditions.

—Jane O'Wyatt, a volunteer at Manhattan AC&C who is also a rabbit- and cat-sitter, can be reached at jowyatt@nyc.rr.com.

Special thanks to Mary Cotter and Kerstin Aumann for their help with this article.

MY 'DIFFICULT' BUN

Maya, the Punk-Rock Princess with Attitude

By Katelyn Belyus

Maya is hungry.

I know because she peeked out of her box, held her black floppy ears slightly aloft, scanned the empty plate and retreated. Moments later, she comes out all the way and saunters over to her plate and pellet dish, both still empty.

"I know!" I say as I hurriedly try to grab the plate. I reach into the cage, and she grunts.

"I don't like eating this late," she whines. When I return with the plate, brimming with wet greens, she stands up, puts both hands on the plate, and drags it to the floor. I use the word "hands" because I often think Maya is more human than rabbit.

I imagine Maya surfing, snarling lead rock vocals, or golfing in funny pants. In my mind, she's always doing fun "people" things, because she's got a feisty spirit, and if she were able to do those fun things, she absolutely would.

She'd be an angry gypsy punk-rock princess if she were human, some sort of cross between Patti Smith and Whitney Houston and Sharon Stone.

I first went to AC&C— where I volunteer— to adopt a big, playful lop. I wanted a bun who would binky and do tricks at parties— like juggling plates or pulling himself out of a hat. But the shelter was



Maya

crowded, and there were four black lops. Their personalities varied, as did their physical conditions. Maya wasn't the worst in her aggression, but she was defensive and angry.

She was terrified when I brought her home. I know this because she peed the moment she entered my room. (Maya knows how to use a litter box; her cage is immaculate. She doesn't drop pellets outside the box; she pees in it too, though sometimes she'll wet the bed just to spite me, as if to say, "I do what I want.")

What can I say? I am charmed by her.

Maya is clever and funny, yet moody. She'll binky and kick out her feet, yet

more than once she has bitten someone's arm or leg and held onto it with her teeth. One month into the foster, I told my friend Philip, "I can't keep her. Her attitude stinks!"

"An independent bunny who attacks her cage and wants to be free? Sounds perfect for you," he replied.

He was right. She's a diva, my own miniature Cher. Because, as much as she lunges and bites and growls, she also loves my kisses. She lets me wash her eyes. We sing lullaby versions of '80s metal songs. We have a special bond, one where she does what she wants, and I let her, because I remember what crappy shape she was in when she was surrendered.

Our progress has been a challenge, but it's yielded amazing results. Sure, she has anger issues. At times, she reminds me of Lindsay Lohan on a bender, but at least Maya's honest about it. She's dealing. She even earned the nickname "Shark" because of her tendency to lurk beneath the futon and attack people's ankles.

But when you come right down to it, Maya Papaya is fantastically entertaining. "Difficult, but not unmanageable," I think to myself, and I know that both our lives are better because of each other.

—Katelyn Belyus, a rabbit volunteer in Manhattan, lives in Jersey City. Feel free to contact her at kbelyus@yahoo.com to share bunny stories and swap recipes.

Oct. 16, 2009. Marge convalesces after enucleation surgery. Her injured left eye was removed at Catnip & Carrots Veterinary Hospital.



Binky Free, Sweet Milo

By Paula Rosenberg

I'm heartbroken that I had to say goodbye to my beloved Milo on Aug. 14. I had adopted him over five years ago and, other than a bout of bladder sludge this spring that I was able to catch early enough so that it could be resolved without surgery, he had always been in perfect health. He was his normal happy self the day before he passed, but I woke up early that morning to find him trying to hide in a corner, which was unusual for him. I realize now that he may have sensed what was happening and was trying to find some privacy. His little heart gave out with no warning, but I was so grateful to be there so I could hold him. He died in my arms with his bunwife, Victoria, by his side.

Milo was my first bunny. I had always wanted one and had done a lot of research on rabbit care and waited for the right time in my life to adopt one. I met with many rabbits who were up for adoption, but when he stared at me with those bright ruby eyes and then his white ears perked up, I knew we were meant for each other.

He was such a curious, mellow and friendly bunny. He loved people and would follow guests around my apartment and wait by the door after a party was over to see if they were coming back. We had tried speed dating to find him a buddy, without success until 2017 when I met Victoria, a little gray girl around his age who had one of her rear legs amputated when she was a baby. My Yenta instincts kicked in and I knew they would be the perfect match. They were. Milo helped Victoria come out of her shell. She's been transformed from a shy bunny who was very fearful of people to the little diva I always knew she was. She now follows me to make sure her

Photo: Jane O'Wyatt



Milo, left and Victoria, right.

food is served correctly and signals me when she wants a session of pets and head rubs.

Victoria is doing well, although she misses Milo. I'll be looking to get her another buddy later this fall, but for now, she and I are taking some time to comfort each other and remember our favorite little REW. Enjoy playing on the other side of the rainbow bridge, Milo.

Photo: Paula Rosenberg



Milo loved caresses.

Farewell, Dear Butter

A fearsome thing: reflections and recollections following the death of a bunny

By Amelia Wilson

“How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.” I have been thinking of this Winnie-the-Pooh quote a lot the past couple of days as I struggle to comprehend and navigate the loss of our beloved Butter, who passed away abruptly on Monday, Sept. 23, after a blockage developed in her small intestine.

I oscillate wildly between disbelief and grief, in large part because she wasn't supposed to die. I always believed her personality, grit and jubilation were too great for annihilation. The world would not let her sink from its surface.

Butter's backstory is murky. She was found outside a Bronx bodega one fall night roughly six years ago. She was perhaps 3 months old, with large ears she hadn't grown into yet. She was cream-colored with a harlequin face that was half gray, half beige. Perhaps on account of her otherwise “plain appearance” (she was actually exquisitely beautiful, as was commonly remarked upon by all who looked closely at her) or perhaps because her cage was in the back of the Manhattan shelter's bunny room, Butter remained unnoticed without inquiry or interest. In fact, the night Nadine brought her home around the winter holidays, Butter had been at the shelter the longest of any rabbit. Her hopes for adoption were dimming as she grew increasingly stressed by the smells and sounds around her.

She had started to retreat from humans, and was recalcitrant and melancholy when allowed out for brief exercise.

We were only meant to foster her. But I was instantly undone the moment she hopped out of her carrier into what would become her room and twirled to look directly at me with intelligent, expressive eyes. She quickly took ownership over her new home – and us! – during the subsequent weeks. She bloomed and thrived. She taught us her complex language of thumps, twinkle-tails, zoomies, binkies, feints-and-slips, and games of chase. She became deeply bonded to Nadine and me, leaning and eventually curling her body up against us daily. Upon hearing our voices she would start kissing whatever was in front of her – the rug, her cooling tiles, the wall, her toys. She became bold and hilariously naughty; she was able to exploit our inattention to sneak up the stairs to the “forbidden zone,” solve riddles that served as barriers to her escape, manipulate objects to create new opportunities for adventure. She rolled on her back like a puppy, smooshed down like a pancake, and winked like a luck dragon.

One recent night I was reviewing photos of her in chronological order. It was arresting and amusing to see how she had modified, arranged, and styled her room over the years to her liking. It was equally entertaining to see the evolution of how much we worshiped her – paying tribute in willow balls, bamboo sticks, cardboard castles, miniature beds, tunnels, tubes, dried edible flowers, even portraits.... There was no end to our adoration because there was no bottom to hers.

I feel a despair in me since death took her. But the thought of her exuberance eases it. She was the asteroid that changed my relationship to bunnies forever, my thunder-bun, my love everlasting.

Farewell dear Butter. Even now that we're apart, you'll always be with me.

Photo: Amelia Wilson



This gorgeous close-up of Butter's gray cheek was taken in 2016.

Lessons Learned

By Robert Kulka

Each of us has experienced some major event that changes the course of our life. These events may be joyous ones, like getting married or having a child. Some can have an impact that we could not anticipate, as when we lose a loved one. And there are those times and special relationships that may be bittersweet in the joy they bring and the pain you feel at the loss.

In 2012 I was volunteering each Sunday at the 86th Street Petco. I vaguely remember a beautiful, large rabbit with ice blue eyes arriving at the store. She had weaned her five babies after they all had been abandoned several weeks earlier. I don't remember exactly when she arrived, but I do remember she was very easy to work with and delightful to sit with as she watched you with those knowing eyes. She was a magnificent rabbit of seven-plus pounds with bright white and black/brown markings. Her name

was Lara. The name was perfect for the regal girl she was, borrowing from the romantic story of Doctor Zhivago.

It must have been early summer of 2012 when she was adopted. Unfortunately, that adoption was not to last and she was returned to 86th Street in August. I say unfortunate because at the time it was sad to see such a beautiful girl being shuttled back and forth. I had no idea what was to come next.

Labor Day weekend of 2012 I lost my boy Skip, who had been with me for 10 years. The heartbreak and the silence of not having my partner with me was devastating. After a month of grieving I decided that maybe I would adopt again, and that maybe Lara had come back at just the right time. She was also exhibiting a little bit of trouble with her front right leg, and under doctor's orders she was to be given Metacam while resting in a quiet, no-stress environment. I brought her home with me to give her a week of quiet healing. There was a woman who was waiting to adopt her at the end of the week. I remember being very sad at thinking I would not be able to adopt her myself but understood that if

someone wanted to adopt her, I could adopt someone else and we would then have two rabbits adopted into forever homes. The woman never followed up and the path was clear for me to officially adopt Lara.

It was mid-October and we cautiously grew a bit closer and closer. Within a few days, Hurricane Sandy hit New York. That evening the howling winds blew down a large old tree with a crack that sounded as if a bomb had gone off and all the power went out. I was a little anxious and grabbed a blanket to make a tent for Lara and me to huddle under together. She looked at me with those big blue eyes as if to say, don't be such a baby. She brought me great comfort.

Several months later, her right front leg was getting worse and after many tests, she had to have the leg removed. I remember telling her what would happen and promising I would be there close by to keep her safe. I stood outside the operating room and watched as my beautiful girl had her leg removed. I held her in my arms as she came to after surgery. When she opened her big blue

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Photos: Robert Kulka



Lara.



Lara with her babies.

GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Lessons *(Continued from page 18)*

eyes, she looked at me as if to say, don't be such a baby; this isn't so bad. She recovered so rapidly that once again I felt comforted by her strength and resilience.

It was to be like that for the years we were together. Developing routines together, getting to know each other's quirky characteristics. There was a period of time that I had to block the bed so she would not be tempted to jump up and proudly pee in the middle of it as if to say this belongs to us. It was then that we developed a morning ritual of her sitting next to me on the bed and, while I petted her, I read to her and then wrote in my journal. This went on for a couple of years and once again no matter what the day was like, there she was next to me and comforting me. It remains one of the happier memories of our time together.

Lara was always there for me. She was there when my mother died, and there when I lost my job. She was there when my physical disabilities got progressively worse. It seemed she was always there for me, watching me, consoling me and

making me smile. It was the two of us meeting the challenges of day-to-day life, knowing we were always there for each other. I always knew she was actually the stronger of the two of us and she was so easygoing and happy to be with me.

It was sudden and unexpected when she recently seemed to get a bit slower, was being more affectionate, and she was having trouble with her rear legs and balance at times. I had her checked and rechecked over a series of weeks, trying to isolate the problem. Finally, on Aug. 16 we traced the problem to her kidneys. Blood work showed that there was a severe problem, although a sonogram seemed to show that there might not be extensive damage. With that information, we immediately started a treatment regimen that required that she have an IV around the clock. She stayed at the vet's that Friday, and all through the weekend I was able to visit with her and comfort her. I was lonely without her at home and very worried. She once again was the easy patient. Unfortunately, Lara was not responding to the intensive treatment that she was receiving. That

Monday I had to make the decision to let her go. Her discomfort and the continuing degradation of her condition made it clear that this was to be the last of the hurdles we would face. So at noon on Monday as I held her, my beautiful girl fell off into a deep sleep and crossed over the rainbow bridge.

Did I understand just how momentous an event it was when she entered my life? I don't think I realized just how important she would be. She was there showing me how to cope with whatever life throws your way and getting back up on three feet and fighting another day. She was my inspiration and my comfort. She was my very special girl. My memories of being with her for seven years will always remain deeply etched in my heart. There is nothing I can do to relieve myself of the grief I feel over losing her. I try to remember how lucky I was to have her show up in my life. And I still feel her amazing blue eyes watching me and all the while saying, "Hey, you can get through this – I taught you well." Yes, you did, my princess. Yes, you did.

CELEBRITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Fudge.



Colby.

(Continued on page 20)

CELEBRITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Ruthie.



Angelina.



Daisy.



Kiki.



Puffin.



Nona.



Peach.



Bunbun jumps during bonding with Bubba (hidden at rear).

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:

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

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
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

Shachar Malka, DVM
Long Island Bird & Exotics
Veterinary Clinic
333 Great Neck Road
Great Neck, NY 11021
(516) 482-1101

Licensed HRS Educators

NYC/Westchester:

M.C. Basile, Chapter Manager, NYC House Rabbit Society, bunnytorts@gmail.com

Mary Cotter, Founder, Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, Adviser to Thump, mec@cloud9.net, (914) 337-6146

Jeanine Callace, Rofoyo.pippin@verizon.net
Alex Mcle, alexlmcie@gmail.com

Marcie Frishberg

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

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

Monica Shepherd, DVM

Long Island:

Nancy Schreiber, President, Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, nschreibmd@gmail.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 OCTOBER 2019

Newsletter of RRR/NYC HRS
www.rabbitcare.org

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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 by sending contributions to: Rabbit Rescue & Rehab/NYC Metro Rabbit, 333 Mamaroneck Ave, #363, White Plains, NY 10605 or <http://rabbitcare.org/donations.htm>.

To contribute to Long Island Rabbit Rescue Group, please go to www.longislandrabbitrescue.org.

Adoptable Rabbits

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

To adopt a rabbit in **New York City** or **Westchester**, contact nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com. On **Long Island**, contact Nancy Schreiber at nschreibmd@gmail.com or at 516-510-3637 (www.longislandrabbitrescue.org).

If interested in volunteering or fostering for Rabbit Rescue & Rehab, please email nyc.metro.rabbits@gmail.com.

Adoptable Rabbit Rescue & Rehab rabbits are at Petco's Union Square location. Rabbit volunteers are present at these stores on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to answer questions.

You can also visit Manhattan Animal Care Center at 326 East 110th St., between First and Second avenues, and the Brooklyn Animal Care Center at 2336 Linden Boulevard.

Rabbits for adoption in Manhattan and Brooklyn can be found by going to:

<http://www.nycacc.org/> and doing an adoption search (for ACC inquiries about adoption/bunny dates, email adopt@nycacc.org). 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 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

For basic information about rabbits as pets, go to www.rabbitcare.org, www.longislandrabbitrescue.org and the House Rabbit Society main site, www.rabbit.org.