



House Rabbit Network

P.O. Box 2602

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Dedicated to educating the public and to fostering and adoption of companion rabbits. 781-431-1211 or www.rabbitnetwork.org

Rabbit Tracks

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Low-Level Laser Therapy for Bunnies

by Victoria A. Papscoe, DVM, CVA, Littleton Animal Hospital

Therapeutic lasers have been used in human medicine for years with great results. Only recently have they become more common in veterinary medicine.

What is laser therapy?

The word “LASER” is an acronym for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation. Lasers can project either infrared, visible, or ultraviolet frequencies of light. The type of laser is determined by the light’s wavelength (or frequency), power, and the rate of pulsation of the light beam. This article focuses on low-level laser therapy, also known as “cold” laser therapy, since the energy used is not as high as a “hot” surgical laser used for cutting.

How does it work?

Laser treatments help increase blood flow, speed wound healing, and decrease pain and inflammation. The light on a low-level laser penetrates into the tissues and stimulates mitochondria – the “powerhouses” of cells. This leads to a chemical change that causes the cell to make more ATP, or energy, needed for repair. An injured cell does not produce enough ATP at a quick enough rate; laser therapy improves this production leading to healthier cells and tissue. Depending on the setting and power of the laser, the penetration of light will vary so both superficial (i.e., skin) or deep (i.e., muscle, joints, abdominal organs) areas can be targeted.

What types of conditions can be treated?

Any condition involving pain, inflammation, or infection is appropriate for laser treatment. Incisions can be treated after surgeries such as spays and neuters. Chronic pain from arthritis is often very responsive to laser treatment.

More rabbit-specific conditions that can be treated with low-level laser therapy are urine scald, bladder sludge, sore hocks, cheek and tongue wounds from dental points, abscesses or to treat abdominal pain from gut stasis. It is best when used in conjunction with other treatments. For instance, a broken bone will likely not heal with laser treatment alone, but the laser can help with pain and inflammation and will speed healing after the fracture has



Rabbit being treated for sore hocks. Photo courtesy of Victoria A. Papscoe, DVM, CVA.

been surgically repaired or splinted. The laser can also be used to stimulate acupuncture points where needle placement is difficult or not tolerated.

What is involved with treating a pet?

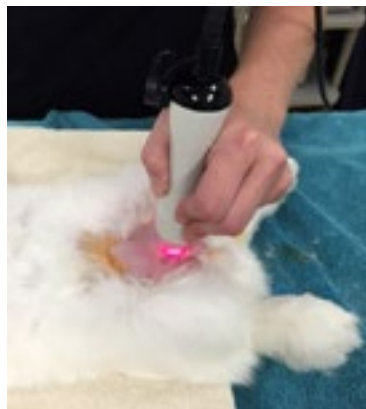
A handpiece is used to introduce laser energy to the desired area. The handpiece head can be changed to an appropriate size for the area treated. Treatment protocols are individualized to each

patient and condition. Some treatments can be as short as one minute while more complex treatments involving multiple areas or joints can take up to thirty minutes. A mild urine scald may only require one treatment while a very arthritic bunny may initially need treatments three times per week. Chronic conditions are often treated frequently at first, then treatments are gradually decreased to a maintenance protocol. Improvement could be noticed immediately after the first treatment or may require multiple treatments. Laser energy is cumulative so each subsequent treatment tends to increase its effectiveness. Nevertheless, some animals may not respond at all. Each pet is different.

Are there any side effects or contraindications?

There are generally no side effects with proper laser treatment. The area treated may become warm and the pet could get uncomfortable. In that case, the laser is just moved to another position. Most animals find the warmth soothing and relax. Since the laser beam is harmful to eyes, the pet’s eyes are covered with goggles or a towel. For that reason, it cannot be used in or around the eyes (however, there have been reports of rabbits having their sinus region carefully treated for chronic “snuffles” with good results). Low-level laser therapy should not be used to treat tumors or incisions post-tumor removal. Since the treatment leads to increased blood flow, this could have the undesired effect of actually speeding tumor growth.

If your vet has a therapeutic laser, feel free to ask if it would be helpful for your bunny’s condition!



Bunny being neutered. Photo courtesy of Victoria A. Papscoe, DVM, CVA.



Benny's Story

by Sadie Macmillan

Every once in a while we encounter a story that reminds us how one little animal can deeply touch our lives. Benny's is just such a story. Benny, a little lop-eared bun, was found on a roadside in Lowell on a 98-degree day in late July. He was thin, runny-eyed, encrusted with feces, and suffering from an extreme case of malocclusion. His teeth were "growing out of his mouth like tusks," said the woman who first noticed him.

That woman happened to be an animal rescuer – Benny's first bit of good luck. In calling around for help in catching him, her search eventually led her to Janie M. Janie is a friend of HRN and no stranger to animal rescue: her family includes two rescue bunnies, one of them an HRN alumni.

As Janie tells it, when she got the call she "pretty much did a 'rescue first, think later,' and drove straight to the woman's house." There Janie found a rabbit who'd clearly been struggling to survive, with teeth grown so malformed and out of control that he could no longer eat or drink properly. She took him to the vet, thinking he could at least have his teeth trimmed.

Dr. Corcoran, an exotics veterinarian at VCA Wakefield, examined Benny. Janie recalls that despite all the rabbit had been through, he

cuddled with her throughout the vet visit, as if "little Ben knew he was being helped."

Under normal circumstances, the operation required to trim Benny's teeth would be considered too dangerous to perform on a bun in such poor condition. But the malocclusion was so severe it



Photo courtesy of Janie M.

prevented them from even syringe feeding him, so they had no choice but to go ahead with the procedure. Benny almost didn't make it. His heart rate dropped suddenly while he was under sedation, and only a shot of adrenaline brought him back. He then spent several hours on oxygen. He eventually stabilized, but even then, Janie says, he still had a long way to go. "Dr. Corcoran prescribed 'round-the-clock feedings, and sub-Q (subcutaneous fluids), and told me that he wasn't out of the woods – the next few days

would be touch-and-go."

Janie had to feed him every three to four hours, and even took him to work with her so she could keep up his feedings. "I was a nervous wreck," she recalls. At first he was apathetic during his syringe feedings, and it took him almost 24 hours to start pooping. But then he turned the corner, and only 48 hours after she'd first brought him home he was approaching her at feeding time and gnawing on the tip of the syringe. Within 74 hours, he had figured out how to jump onto the couch and ask to be petted. "He came out of his shell faster than expected," Janie says. "He had an incredible will to live, and his improvements showed hour to hour."

Benny has lived with Janie and her boyfriend for almost two months now, and he has turned into a sweet, loving bunny with a lot of personality. "He's a tremendous beggar. He'd eat us out of house and home if we let him."

The only thing he enjoys as much as food is affection. "He's a complete mush, and soaks up any and all attention. He'll sit with his little nose raised while you kiss his face all over, and loves pets and rubs and scratches of all kinds."

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Benny's Story con't

And despite all he's suffered, Benny loves and trusts people. "It blows my mind to think that someone dumped him," Janie says. "Somebody threw away one of the sweetest, most trusting and loving little rabbits I've ever encountered. He deserves so much better than that, and I will personally see to it that he never wants for anything for the rest of his little bunny days."

If you'd like to stay informed on Benny's antics and the fun lives of his bun siblings, check out Buns of Steel on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/lelapinblanc?fref=ts>.



Photo courtesy of Janie M.



Grooming Your Bun

by A.A.

After welcoming a bunny into your home, it doesn't take long to notice that bunnies shed a lot. Rabbits typically shed every three months, alternating between light and heavy. Although rabbits are meticulous groomers, they need a little help. During shedding, especially a heavy one, rabbits who aren't getting brushed regularly may ingest excessive amounts of fur as they groom themselves. The fur that can't pass through the system creates a blockage, leading to GI stasis. Weekly brushing is normally sufficient to prevent issues, but daily brushing is recommended during shedding.

There are different types of rabbit brushes available, some specific to breed. For the average rabbit, a soft bristle brush is a good choice, as it won't scrape a bunny's sensitive skin, but pin brushes, which

have metal bristles, will pull out more fur. You can buy grooming kits that include both brush types (as well as nail clippers) and use the pin brush as needed.



Photo courtesy of Yolanda Girouard.

Long-haired rabbits need extra grooming and some different tools. A slicker brush, which has fine metal teeth, is designed for such breeds and will effectively remove pieces of hay, litter, or anything else that may be hiding

in fur. There's also the Furminator de-shedding tool, which can be pricier than a regular brush, but which many rabbit owners find highly effective. Brush gently, especially when using anything with metal teeth. Loose fur will come out easily so there's no need to press hard and risk hurting the rabbit.

Even with regular grooming, matting can be an issue, especially for long-haired breeds. If you notice mats, don't attempt to cut them out with scissors. Instead, use a mat rake or mat splitter to comb them out. Severe mats need to be shaved

and although you can buy mini-shavers to use at home, only do so if you have experience. Otherwise, let a professional handle it. You can also have long fur trimmed to about one inch to make grooming more manageable.

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Grooming Your Bun con't

The best time to brush your rabbit is when he's calm and relaxed, such as lying down stretched out in a "superbun" pose. If your rabbit runs away and kicks its feet, don't give up. Sometimes, it may help to pet them on the head while brushing them. There are also grooming tools with soft nubs on them, such as the Love Glove or Zoom Groom that rabbits may find calming because it feels like they're just being petted. When the fur is very loose, it's easier to pull out the large clumps than to brush them out. As long as you do it gently, most rabbits won't mind too much.

The shedding process can typically take weeks but rabbits can also experience "coat blow" in which they lose most of their fur at once, leaving them either partially or totally bald. It may look strange but this is normal and nothing to worry about. The bald patches will first start to darken and then fur will grow back within one to two weeks. Regular brushing is all that needs to be done to care for their fur. Never give your bunny a bath because they can develop hypothermia. If you notice signs of fleas, mites, ticks, or anything else unusual about your bunny's fur or skin, call your vet.

Nail clipping is another important component of grooming. Even the most dig-happy house rabbit won't wear down his nails enough. Left unchecked, a rabbit's nails can grow so long that they curl inward and impede the ability to walk. You'll need small-animal nail clippers, which are usually available in most pet supply stores. Your rabbit will need to be in a position where you have easy access to his feet. Some will sit still for this and allow you to lift each paw and clip the nails. For others, you can put them on their backs in your lap with their feet facing you. Bunnies can also be wrapped in a towel so that you can access one foot at a time without the worry of the rabbit running away or kicking. Try to find a posi-

tion that works best for your rabbit.

Then, look closely at the nail and you should be able to see where the quick is, which is the point where blood is visible inside the nail. The quick can be harder to see in dark nails but shining a flashlight under them will make it more noticeable. Cut the nails before the quick, not on it or after it. In case of a grooming accident, apply cornstarch or a product called KwikStop to a cotton ball and hold it on the cut to stop the bleeding. Nails should be trimmed approximately every six to eight weeks. For those who don't feel comfortable clipping nails, many groomers will clip them for less than what you would pay at the vet's office and often without an appoint-

ment. Make sure to ask for someone who has experience with small animals. If you choose to go to your veterinarian, you can ask for a "tech appointment" where one of the veterinary technicians will trim nails for far less than you would pay for a vet appointment.

Perhaps the most unpleasant grooming task is cleaning the

anal scent glands. The brown, waxy substances in the glands can build up, not only causing an odor but possibly a blockage as well. Hold the rabbit so that you have access to the area and locate the two slits on either side. Dip a Q-tip in warm water or mineral oil, and swab away the buildup. Do this gently to avoid tearing the membranes in the glands. As with nail clipping, this can also be done at the vet's office or by an experienced groomer.

Grooming can seem like a hassle sometimes, but it's part of bonding with your rabbits and teaching them to trust you.



Photo courtesy of Yolanda Girouard.



Adoption Success Stories

Bruno

by Allison Lynch

The reason I adopted Bruno was to find a bondmate for my Dutch rabbit named Bunny. I had never bonded rabbits before, and I was nervous that the two wouldn't get along. I had a few dates with some "husbuns," and the first male that clicked with Bunny was Bruno.

Of course, Bunny was a little skeptical at first. She didn't want Bruno in her territory, and she was young, skittish, and still learning how to trust me as her owner. It only took a week or so for the two to bond, and they immediately fell in love. Bruno helped Bunny learn to trust her humans more because he was fearless and adventurous. Bruno wasn't afraid of anything! (Except for the vacuum.) Bunny would follow Bruno around my apartment and flop



Photo courtesy of Allison Lynch.

down next to him whenever he flopped. This little love story unfolded before my eyes and it made me so happy to see two little buns in love. Before meeting Bruno, Bunny was a little nippy and not as happy without a best friend.

Bruno may be the alpha male bun, but he is so sweet, loving, and curious. He amuses me everyday. He often hops on my bed and flops on my pillows, and he absolutely loves to chew on anything I leave on the floor. Luckily I've learned how to Bruno-proof my apartment. Bruno also loves getting

picked up and getting head scratches. He will grind his teeth while I hold him. He is a big lovable fur ball who has brought lots of love into my life.

Bonnie

by Stacey Paiva

Bonnie (formerly known as Olive) was an HRN shelter favorite. She was a big, white bunny with stunning eyelashes. She was also an enormous flirt, batting those eyelashes at people and begging for affection, which she got in spades. It was almost impossible to resist her.

So in August 2013 when HRN shelter volunteer Sadie McMillan was looking for a wife for her bunny Harley, Bonnie was at the top of the list. She was the first one he met, and he made it clear that he liked her.



Photo courtesy of Sadie MacMillan.

As Bonnie settled into her new home and went on more dates with Harley, he wasn't sure what to make of Bonnie's, how shall we say this, rather large size. She is more than twice his weight. He really seemed to like her, but he was also a little scared of her. When she got too pushy, he would bite her on the butt. Luckily, she wasn't offended by that action and learned to back off.

People involved in animal rescue often say that a pet's personality can change a little once the animal reaches a forever home.

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Adoption Success Stories con't

Bonnie

In reality, Bonnie did a 180. She loved being pet at the shelter, but now only tolerates petting if she's in the mood. She does, however, shamelessly beg for grooming from her husband.

Sadie says, "I think the thing she's best known for among friends and family is her piratical tendencies. She goes to extreme lengths to steal food, and will engage in feats



Photo courtesy of Sadie MacMillan.

of balance and climbing that don't tend to come naturally to rabbits."

This cute bunny couple are so well bonded now, that Bonnie has been encouraging innocent Harley to engage in her kind of criminal behavior. Guess the food has to be locked up in the MacMillan household to protect it from this Bonnie and Clyde.

HRN News

Fundraising Efforts Continue

Janelle Carmichael and Terese Quirk have been leading the charge on fundraising at yard sales. On August 2, HRN participated in a yard sale at Domino Veterinary Hospital in Concord, MA. Thanks to Janelle, Terese, Jennifer Hatfield, and Jean Player for running and helping with the yard sale. They raised \$203 for the buns. And thanks to everyone who donated the items that were sold.

Also thanks to Jenny Mullen for running a booth for us at Belmont Pet Shop raising \$170 for HRN. There were so many people who gave donations and

bought our charms. It was a huge success.

HRN held its first-ever Facebook auction in July, and it raised \$1,900. There were some wonderful donated items auctioned, including gift certificates to fabulous, local retailers; jewelry; artwork; and even a week's stay at an oceanfront condo. Thank you to everyone who donated items, especially Janelle Carmichael for getting a bunch of donations, and to our Facebook team – Jenn Fernandes, Megan-Marie Henrici, and Aimee Swartz-Glancy – for running the auction.

Get an HRN Rescue Charm



Show your love for rabbits by wearing this adorable piece on a necklace, bracelet, or keychain. And they make great presents for the bunny lovers in your life. (Don't forget, the holidays are right around the corner.) They're made in the USA and cost only \$5 plus shipping. You can order by visiting www.rabbitnetwork.org/newshop.shtml#charms and paying via Paypal, or printing out the order form there, filling it out, and sending a check or money order (made out to the House Rabbit Network) to:

House Rabbit Network
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info@rabbitnetwork.org

Annual Flatbread Benefit a Success!

HRN's annual Flatbread benefit took place on September 29 this year and was a great success, bringing in a total of \$2,400! This is the ninth year in a row that Flatbread has included HRN in its charitable contributions. Tuesday nights at Flatbread are Benefit Nights, when the restaurant makes a donation of \$3.50 for every large flatbread and \$1.75 for every small flatbread ordered that night. More than 250 HRN members, volunteers, and friends came to visit the restaurant throughout the evening to enjoy the food and bid on auction prizes. We had an array of wonderful prizes up for grabs this year, donated to us by both businesses and individuals. Check out their website for more information about this generous local business: www.flatbreadcompany.com

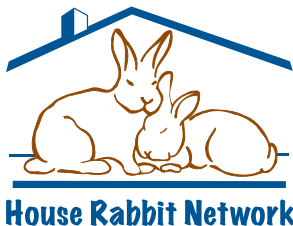
Our warmest thanks to Flatbread, our supporters, and the following donors:

Carol Youngclaus
Essex River Cruises
Friends of HRN
Functional Bodywork
Keurig
Lesa Hall
Lindt & Sprungli
Mohegan Sun

North Shore Music Theater
Red Sox
Sky Zone
StoryLand
VCA Wakefield Animal Hospital
White Rabbit Beauty
Winston Flowers



Spread the Word About HRN



WickedLocal.com does a Pet of the Week photo/article in many towns. By submitting your HRN rescue bun(s) as Pet of the Week you could get word out about HRN and rabbit rescue. Just mention in your submission that your rabbit is an HRN alumni. Here's

a sample showing HRN buns Pansy and Rexy:
<http://boxford.wickedlocal.com/article/20150911/NEWS/150919859>

If you live in a town covered by Wicked Local, just submit information in their format: name(s), breed(s), family/background, favorite food and snacks, and fun facts. Then email your photo and information to tri-town@wickedlocal.com.

2015 Adoption Total

158 rabbits from HRN have gone on to happy homes with their forever families.
We wish them well.

Grant from the Massachusetts Animal Coalition

HRN is proud to announce that we received a \$3,000 grant from the Massachusetts Animal Coalition (MAC) to help spay and neuter our rescued rabbits. MAC is a statewide, non-profit organization comprised of animal professionals and individual volunteers dedicated to working together to decrease the number of homeless, neglected, displaced, and abused animals in Massachusetts. MAC's "I'm Animal Friendly" License Plate program helps fund spay and neuter programs across the state. Overpopulation is a problem with rabbits and this grant helps us

have funds to fix all of our rabbits. These charitable plates are available through Massachusetts RMV and are tax deductible. More information is at www.petplate.org. Please consider getting these plates and supporting animal rescue. Thank you so much to Ashley Hampson and Diana Fairbrother for putting the grant together for us.



Annual Bunny Hop and Volunteer Awards

HRN volunteers and their families got together at the annual Bunny Hop on August 16. The pot luck and cookout luncheon was graciously hosted by Deb McGillivray. It was a nice chance to eat, socialize, and of course talk about rabbits!

The Bunny Hop is also traditionally when the organization presents its volunteer awards. We would like to acknowledge the hard work and support of ALL of our volunteers. HRN is an entirely volunteer-based organization, and our volunteers are outstanding. Thank you!

The recipients of this year's awards are:

Rabbit Wrangler Award - Antonia Longo
Fundraiser Volunteer of the Year - Janelle Carmichael
Email Support - Janie Matocha
Foster Support - Deb McGillivray
Shelter Scheduling - Leah D'Errico
Shelter Support - Amanda Bosh
Shelter Support - Theresa Leung
Shelter Pictures - Sara Christensen
Hotline Volunteer of the Year - Nancy Kovaleff

HRN Calendars Available Now!

Our 2016 calendar is available and it makes a great gift for the rabbit lover in your life...or for yourself! And don't forget that the holidays are right around the corner. Calendars are only \$11 each (plus shipping), and all proceeds go toward the care of our shelter and foster buns. You can order online with Paypal at www.rabbitnetwork.org. Or, if you'd like to pay by check or money order, you can make your payment out to the House Rabbit Network and mail it to us at:

House Rabbit Network
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Shipping rates are as follows:

1 calendar....\$4.00
2 calendars...\$5.00
3 calendars...\$6.00
4 calendars...\$7.00

If you would like to order 5 or more calendars, please send us an email at info@rabbitnetwork.org, and we will let you know what the shipping rate will be.

Join HRN ... or ... Please Renew Your Membership

Through our network of dedicated volunteers and members, HRN is making amazing strides to improve the welfare of house rabbits everywhere. Your support can only further our goals, so become a member and get involved.

Visit our website to find out how to help: www.rabbitnetwork.org

If you are not already a member, please join HRN!

Your membership dollars will go toward rescue and rehabilitation, community outreach and education, and veterinary expenses.

Help make a difference in a rabbit's life. They're counting on you!



Contact House Rabbit Network:
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House Rabbit Network Membership and Ordering Form

Your membership donation is tax deductible and will be used for medical costs (spays/neuters, veterinary bills) and education expenses. All members will receive a copy of our newsletter, *Rabbit Tracks*, when it is published. Currently, we are publishing three issues per year. You can join online at <http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/join.shtml> or just fill out this page and mail it with your check payable to:

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Choose your membership level:

- Dwarf\$ 15.00
- Mini Lop\$ 25.00
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- Flemish Giant.....\$ 100.00
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