



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

Fall 2005

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Jenna's Story: A Williamsport Bun, One Year Later

by *Cherryl Reinhardt*

The call to the meat truck was days, if not hours, away when the word went out over the Internet that rabbits needed to be saved from a meat farm that was closing its doors. Jenna and about 47 of her siblings and cousins would be slaughtered and shipped out for processing.

A House Rabbit Network volunteer drove to Pennsylvania and loaded 14 rabbits in carriers into her vehicle. It was a long, hot five-hour drive to Massachusetts with the air conditioner set to full blast all the way.

Jenna was one of the lucky buns saved that day. After initial examinations were made, she and the other thirteen buns were treated for a heavy coccidian infection. With good food, clean water and hay, a safe environment and lots of love, Jenna thrived.

Then, one day when she was only 8 months old her foster Mom noticed one of her eyes was cloudy. The next day an ophthalmologist saw Jenna. There was bad news.

Jenna had developed cataracts in both of her eyes and was rapidly going blind. "How could this be?" I thought.

The doctor explained that there is a genetic link to early onset glaucoma in some New Zealand Whites. Jenna was a Californian mix. Could she have NZ White DNA? Most likely the answer is yes. Jenna wasn't bred to be a purebred; she was bred for her meat.

Today, Jenna is only 16 months old and will be totally blind in just a few short months. Until that time, she receives drops of Xalatan in her eyes twice a day. The medicine helps keep the pressure in Jenna's eyes at a reasonable level and keeps pain at bay. It's costly, but her foster Mom is determined to keep her as comfortable as possible.

Surgery to correct the cataracts is not possible for two reasons, according to Jenna's doctor. Jenna has red eyes and cataract surgery does not work on red-eyed animals. The other issue is that cataract surgery causes



Jenna and Salt comforting each other as they cuddle and groom.

inflammation and rabbits react badly to eye inflammation.

Periodic eye pressure tests and the health of her eyes will determine whether or not her eyes will eventually have to be removed.

Jenna is being prepared for her impending disability. She is free-range, so different textured rugs under her feet tell her where she is in the house, where her food and water bowls are and where her litter box is located. The house cat now wears a jingle bell so she doesn't sneak up on Jenna and frighten her. Humans in the house wear different sounding bells or chimes so she knows who is

Techniques For Blind Rabbits

Each person and animal in the household should wear a different sounding bell or jingle noise for identification.

If a bun is "lost", bring her back to a familiar spot, like her feeding area.

Use different textured and sized area rugs to help the bun identify her location.

Don't move furniture around or set something unfamiliar to her on the floor, like a box or a bag.

Don't let strangers suddenly approach her. A frightened rabbit could bite or crash into something while trying to flee.

Get the rabbit used to a routine so it knows what to expect (i.e., it knows the vacuum cleaner is about to be switched on). Consistency and repetition are important.

approaching. Strangers are not allowed to approach her because she won't know who or what they are and she may react badly.

Jenna recently befriended a companion rabbit, a sick, elderly Sanctuary bun named Salt. I guess you could say he's her seeing-eye bunny. You can often find them

cuddling and napping together and it's so sweet to see them kissing each other's face and giving comfort to each other.

Jenna's foster Mom searched blind dog websites for ways to help Jenna move around her space. Most of the information for blind dogs can be applied to blind rabbits.

Jenna's adoption prospects are uncertain, but her foster Mom is dedicated to her and will keep her forever if necessary. Jenna will always have a home in the loving arms of the House Rabbit Network.



Max Cushner: The Power of Giving

By Sharon Cushner

Max Cushner is a 13-year-old middle school student who lives in Norton, MA. Max participated in a Mitzvah Project – a community service project – as part of his bar mitzvah preparation. The focus of his Mitzvah Project was the Humane Treatment and Kindness of Animals. Max wanted to do something that was of personal interest to him, and that would really make a difference and help animals in need.

Max has two house rabbits, Ruby and Carter, and is a member of the Sunny Rock 4-H Rabbit Club in Sharon, MA. He searched the Internet for organizations that support house rabbits and discovered House Rabbit Network and Sweet Binks Rabbit Rescue, Inc. Max contacted House Rabbit Network and visited Sweet Binks

to find out how he could help and what could be done to most helpful to the rabbits in the shelter.

Max learned that donations of items necessary to run a shelter

rabbits from shelters and educating people of the importance of the commitment of caring for a pet rabbit were most important.

Max took advantage of February's "Adopt a Rescued Rabbit Month" to kick off his campaign to make a difference. Max sent letters to members of his temple, friends and family asking for donations and contributions in support of his Mitzvah Project and placed donation bins, pasted with pictures of adorable, adoptable bunnies, in his Synagogue and Jewish Community House. News releases were sent to local newspapers informing

them of "Adopt a Rescued Rabbit Month". Max was also featured in full-page stories, including pictures, in both local and regional newspapers.



Max with his two house rabbits, Ruby and Carter.

and contributions to help defray shelter expenses and veterinarian care were needed. Max also learned that promoting public awareness for the need to adopt

Max received phone calls, donations, and contributions from people in the community who wanted to help after reading the story in one of the papers. The North Attleboro Middle School invited Max to speak at Heritage Day, where people from the community are asked to speak about interesting hobbies, professions or interests to its students. Max asked Sweet Binks to join him in presenting information in public awareness of the shelter and proper care and handling of house rabbits.

Max also set up an "Adopt a Rescued Rabbit" booth at a C.H.I.P.S. event, a child identification program in his community, to collect donations and hand

out information about House Rabbit Network and Sweet Binks. He also distributed booklets on *The Importance of Proper Rabbit Care*. To bring the bunnies closer to the public's eye, Max made a poster board full of photos of rabbits waiting to be rescued.

In June, Max featured his Mitzvah Project on Spirit Day at his public school, the Foxboro Regional Charter School. Spirit Day is a student community awareness program that teaches and instills civic awareness and responsibility. Students were asked to make contributions; these donations were then divided between and sent to House Rabbit Network and Sweet Binks.

By the time Max was done, he had raised over \$3,000 in contributions and delivered a car full of donated items. In addition, people who had read the news stories in the papers had been inspired to adopt rabbits from the shelters.

Max continues his work as an advocate of rescued rabbits and should be very proud of the work he has done. I think we would all agree that Max reached his goal of doing something that really made a difference to help animals in need.



"We live in one world and each act of ours affects the whole."

A Morning in the Life of Lexi

by Kathy Dionne

Beep Beep Beep Beep. . . Ears point up in curiosity. What is that noise? Oh, it's just Mom's alarm going off. It must be time for a carrot. Yipee!! But wait, she's not budging out of bed. Maybe if I chomp on this piece of cardboard loud enough she'll get up. Chomp Chomp Chomp

. . . It's not working!
Hmm,
what else
can I do?
Maybe if I



do laps back and forth she'll get up. Zooom Zooom. . . Beep Beep Beep. . . That alarm is going off again?! Wait, I hear her moving this time. Her feet have hit the floor. Yipee!!! Carrot time!! Zooom Zooom. . . Shake Shake Shake. . . Boing Boing. . . In the distance I hear Mom's voice "Lexi, come get your caaarrot." I run into the kitchen at top speed, so fast that I hit my face with the carrot. Doink!! Shake Shake . . . Aahhh, carrot, finally. Chomp Chomp. . . So yummy!! My tummy is full now, time to hit the litterbox

while Mom goes in that small room where I always hear water running this time of day. . . All done here, time to clean myself. Can never be too clean. Lick Lick Lick . . . "Leeexi!!" Ears point up. I hear my name. Oh well, back to cleaning. Lick Lick. . . "Leeexi, I'm leaving. Leeexi!" Oh boy, time for kisses and pets on the nose. This feels so nice. Eyes closing, teeth grinding. My mom just loves me so much. It's so nice here. Faintly I hear "Bye, Lexi, love you, be a good girl." Aahhh. . . nap time. Eyes close, feet stretch out.



Emergency: Gastrointestinal Stasis

by Astrid Kruse, DVM

A healthy bunny is continually nibbling and producing a large number of big round poops. Any variation from this theme – decreased appetite, ignoring food, or a drop off in stool production- is a sign of a problem that needs to be addressed immediately.

If you or your dog misses a meal, it's no big deal. The carnivore and omnivore digestive systems are designed to eat meals of variable sizes at variable frequencies; a wolf can stay healthy eating one large meal every few days. But the herbivore system needs constant input in the form of fiber and constant output in the form of stool to run correctly.

Rabbits have a stomach, small intestines and large intestines (colon) much like humans. But in the place of our stunted little appendix, which sits at the junction of the small and large intestines, rabbits have a large cecum that runs three times the length of their body and which functions as a gigantic fermentation vat. Anyone who has ever tried to brew beer or bake bread knows that even small things can throw off the whole process. Similarly, the rabbit digestive system is exquisitely sensitive. Anything from an

unhealthy diet (often too much sugar in the form of treats, fruits, or carrots and not enough fiber) to stress, anesthesia, and individual susceptibility may cause the rabbit's entire digestive tract to stop moving.

Once the intestines pause, gridlock ensues and it can be very difficult to get contents moving again if the system has shut down for longer amounts of time. A bunny that hasn't eaten in several days has a significant chance of dying, but a bunny that missed just one meal before being treated will most likely be back to normal in a few days. Also, when the digestive contents aren't processed normally through the intestines, bacterial overgrowth of *Clostridium* can occur.

Clostridium bacteria produce a toxin that is quickly fatal in small amounts; rabbits are the lab model for septic shock because rabbits are so sensitive to these toxins. Often the only sign of *Clostridium* overgrowth is mucus in the stool.

Your vet will probably recommend radiographs (X-rays) of a bunny in stasis. The films show whether there is predominantly gas or food affecting the distended intestines and cecum and how severe the stasis is, which helps with choosing the appropriate

medications. Also, the films can show if there is an intestinal obstruction requiring surgery.

Your vet will treat the stasis with pain medications and drugs that help the intestines contract (Reglan or metoclopramide). Fluids are given under the skin to increase hydration – the extra fluid in the system helps to moisten the intestinal contents and can stimulate the intestines to move. Critical Care is a syringe feeding formula that is used to maintain nutrition and jump start the digestive tract by providing fiber input. Antibiotics may be given and if clostridial overgrowth is suspected, a drug that binds the toxin may be prescribed. Simethicone (Gas-X) can be helpful with gas distension. Aside from giving the medication, you can help your bunny at home by keeping him/her in the familiar environment to reduce stress. Also, giving belly massages (rub the abdomen clockwise) may help the intestines start to move – but if your bunny hates this, it's not worth stressing them over.

Any abrupt change in your bunny's digestive process warrants an emergency visit to your rabbit vet. Please don't wait long!



Thomas! Adoptable Bunny of the Month - October 2005

Thomas is a big, 10 pound boy who is part of the Williamsport meat farm rescue. He loves doing binkies in his exercise pen and acts shy but really loves to be petted. Thomas waits quietly and patiently in his cage for you to let him out to exercise. He sits up begging when it's feeding time. Every once in a while the devil makes him tip his litterbox on its side so he can play in the wood pellets. He's a wonderful bun who would love to have a home he can call his own.

When Bunny Dies...

by Suzanne Trayhan

While we all love our rabbits, we must accept that someday they will die. This can be a painful time, and while you are filled with emotions there are several issues you will face and decisions you need to make. It helps to understand the situation and prepare in advance.

If your rabbit had a mate, you should let the surviving rabbit spend some time with the deceased rabbit's body. In the right situation, you can let them spend a couple of hours together. You should give your bunny at least five minutes so that they can sniff their friend. They understand death and this will help the surviving rabbit realize what happened. They won't spend weeks looking for their mate and it will help them move on. One thing that you should be warned about, they will often start grooming their dead mate. That can be emotionally difficult to watch. If your rabbit is euthanized at the animal hospital, you can either bring the partner with you to the hospital, or bring your rabbit's body home.

Next you need to figure out what to do with your rabbit's body. There are several different options for you. You can bury your rabbit in your yard which will allow you to have a place you can easily visit. Some people put in a graveside marker and others plant a special garden. If it is winter time and the ground is frozen, you can place the body in the freezer until the ground thaws. Burial in your yard may be illegal

in some communities. Apartment dwellers without a yard or people who want a more permanent location may choose to bury their bunny in a pet cemetery instead. Many are peaceful with pretty gardens and you can get a tombstone to mark the grave. Another common choice is to take your rabbit to a veterinary hospital for cremation. They will return the ashes to you which you can either store in an urn or scatter outside. Be sure to ask for individual or private cremation or your pet's ashes may be mixed with others. The third option is to take the body to a veterinary hospital for disposal. Some people are fine with this option, but it can be impersonal and lacking in comfort. Both cremation and veterinary disposal cost money.

If you are unsure what happened to your rabbit, you may want to get an autopsy. It can help you learn from, and sometimes find peace with the situation. This is a very personal decision and there is no right answer whether to get one done or not. When making this decision you also need to understand that some autopsies are inconclusive and do not provide any answers. You should discuss the situation with your veterinarian. There are different types of autopsies. A gross autopsy is just a look around the body while a full autopsy includes sending tissues samples off to a lab, which can be expensive. Your veterinarian can explain the different options help guide you with what to expect. You should take the body to the hospital as

soon as possible, however if your bunny dies while the hospital is closed, place the body in the refrigerator until you can get to the veterinary hospital. It is important that you don't freeze the body as this will damage the tissues.

Next, deal with your grief. Have a good cry. Consider creating a memorial to your rabbit. Find a nice picture and write a tribute to your friend. You can light a candle. Many people find peace reading the Rainbow Bridge. It is a touching story about pets waiting for their owners to cross into heaven. The story can be found on our web site in the memorials section. Talk with some supportive friends. There are also pet loss groups on line that you might find helpful. Remember there people out there who understand what you are going through.

At some point you may want to consider getting a new friend for your surviving rabbit. While most rabbits prefer to have a new friend, this isn't true with all of them. You also need to take into account your rabbit's personality, age and health. They also need time to grieve, and you will notice a change in their personality. Most rabbits are ready to find a new friend within a month.

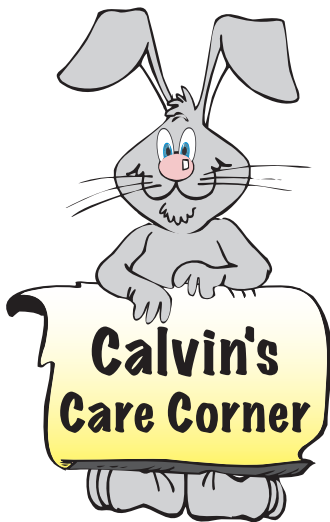


If you need help with your grief from the loss of a pet, please contact

www.petloss.com

Link to the Rainbow Bridge -

<http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/rainbow.shtml>



House rabbits are a curious bunch, and the holidays can present them with a lot of new temptations, challenges, and hazards.

With a little forethought and preparation, the holidays can be safe and fun for everybun.

Be they real or artificial, holiday decorations can pose problems or temptations for your house rabbit. Where ever you place them, consider whether or not your rabbit can get to them. If a decoration dries or sheds, make sure to pick up any pieces so that the rabbit does not ingest them. Candles should never be left burning unattended, especially with rabbits that like to jump up on things.

Christmas trees present a host of temptations and hazards. The tree itself has needles that the rabbit should not eat. Lights and wires present a burn or shock hazard and should be located where the rabbit can



Cranberries, strings of popcorn and ornaments should be kept well out the way of curious rabbits.

not access them, or covered to protect them. Ornaments, tinsel, and strings of popcorn or cranberries may present an irresistible temptation to a curious rabbit, and can cause digestive and intestinal problems. Protect the tree by blocking your rabbit's access to it. A simple barrier can be made of storage cubes held together with tie wraps, and can be easily folded up and stored away when not needed.

Plants and decorative items made from plant material associated with the holidays should all be kept away from your house rabbit. Poinsettias, wreaths, potpourri, holly, mistletoe, and berries should not be eaten by your house rabbit and must be kept out of reach.

Gift wrapped packages may look like giant chew toys for your house rabbit. The inks and dyes in paper and ribbons can be dangerous, as can the ribbons, bows, and elastic cords. Keep them out of reach, or surround them with a barrier.

Holiday parties and visiting guests can create unintended hazards.

Even though your friends and family really love your house rabbits, they may not know what behaviors or treats might be dangerous. Party guests or overnight visitors might forget that your rabbits are free range, and may not notice them underfoot. The extra noise

associated with a party may frighten your rabbit. Party goers who are drinking alcohol may forget the rules and share inappropriate



Gift wrapped packages can also be dangerous to your house rabbit.

treats with your rabbit or try to pick them up. For these reasons, it is probably safer to close them in their room or pen when larger numbers of guests are in your home.

The holidays bring with them many special treats, but these should not be shared with your rabbit. Rabbits should not have candies, cookies or breads, as much as they might want them. Maintain your rabbit's normal food schedule and portions during the holiday season, you don't need everyone in the house on a post holiday diet!

All buns are different, and all homes and holiday traditions are different. Spend some time making your holiday home safe for your rabbit so that everyone has fun and safe holiday.

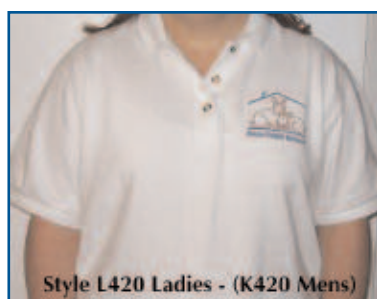


New! HRN Logo Shirts

As part of the roll out for our new logo, we are offering new HRN shirts! As always, you can pay by check or through [PayPal](#). If you'd prefer to pay via check or money order, the mail-order form can be found here: <http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/shop/shirtorder.shtml>.

Standard Polo Style Shirt - L420

This Port Authority Pique Knit Short Sleeve Sport Shirt has HRN's embroidered logo. The logo is in HRN brown and blue.



Available in Men's and Women's sizes. Show your HRN pride! Sizes S-XL are \$25 plus \$3 shipping. Larger sizes are slightly more.

Women's Y Style - L448

This Port Authority Pima Cotton Y-Placket Short Sleeve Sport Shirt

is a great buy for ladies! The Y-neck adds a slightly feminine touch on this soft, pima cotton shirt. The logo is in HRN brown and blue.



Special Orders

HRN shirts may be ordered in other colors. These special orders CANNOT be returned as they are not

from stock. You can easily special order and specify your color when paying by check and mailing in the order form. For paypal information please email us at info@rabbitnetwork.org! The logo is in either HRN brown and blue, or all black or all white, depending on the color ordered.

HRN News

2006 HRN calendar

The 2006 HRN calendars are now available! Each month features an HRN rabbit available for adoption. All photos are courtesy of **Photos by "T"** - www.hopsii.com and they are on glossy paper.

They are available at www.lulu.com for \$18.95 or from House Rabbit Network.

Bunny Massage Day

Pamper your rabbit on Nov 6th at Especially For Pets in Medway, MA with a rabbit massage. Lynne Flanagan, a certified small animal masseuse, has generously offered to do a benefit for HRN between the hours of 12:00-3:00. The massage

is \$10 for 10 minutes and Lynne is generously donating all the money to HRN. Be sure to stop by our education table for free literature and lots of bunny talk.

Christmas in July

Huge thanks to **Kathy King** for arranging Christmas in July and to everyone who generously donated supplies for the rabbits! Everyone had a great time. We received exercise pens, pellets, a microscope, a sherpa bag, toys, hay, syringes, Kaytee pellets, piddle pads, and gift certificates to Market Basket, Pet Edge, Critter Connection, and Pets Supplies Plus, and even more!

2005 HRN Annual Awards

Fundraiser of the Year: Jessica Pearlman – For all her great work

with the Yankee Candle Fundraisers and looking into raffles and other items for us.

Rookie of the Year: Lorna Ingraham

– For eagerly becoming a foster home, doing education events, and hosting a fundraiser yard sale.

Educator of the Year: Kathy King

– For assisting with several ed events, running the Make Mine Chocolate Campaign, the Starbucks Photo display, posting articles on Craigslist and more.

Foster Home Support (a.k.a. The Pooper Scooper Award): Ellie Hulse

– For spending so much time cleaning bunny cages at foster homes and doing a great job at it.

Volunteer of the Year: Christine Bennett

– For all her work on the

newsletters, bun sitting, logo redesign, and hosting a fundraiser yard sale.

Volunteers Meeting

The next volunteers meeting is Sun., Oct 30th at 2pm in Wilmington. We would love to have you attend! For directions please email us at info@rabbitnetwork.org or call 781-431-1211

Pampered Chef & Yankee Candle Fundraisers

Our Yankee Candle and Pampered Chef fundraisers raised a total of \$1,500 which will go a long way to help the rabbits. Thank you to all who participated in these annual fundraisers.

In Memoriam

*To give and receive are,
ultimately, the same.*

~ Beth Mende Conny

Tessa

Queen Tessa, our little "T-Rex",



was a feisty bunny but we loved her just the same. The first thing our 5 year old son Tim would do when someone came to visit was drag them in to see his bunny. Tessa did not love to be handled and let us know it, so we learned to love her from a distance! Although, if you had a raisin in your hand she was your bestest friend! And when our Papa started taking care of her on a daily basis, Tessa and Papa grew a mutual bond that has left a huge hole in our family since she passed away. We even had to rearrange the room where we kept her because

we couldn't stand looking in there and seeing the empty space. Tessa, we hope you are loving "bunny heaven" and can run and jump and eat all the raisins and kale and parsley you want! You left an indelible mark on our hearts, and when you left us so suddenly we were shaken even beyond our own belief. As a sad 5-year old Tim says, "There will never be another pet like Tessa". Rest easy, girlie. We'll miss ya.

*Gail, Greg, Timothy,
Nana and Papa Comeau*

Angel Myrrh

Thank you for all the joy you brought to my life in our short time together. Be at peace, sweet angel.

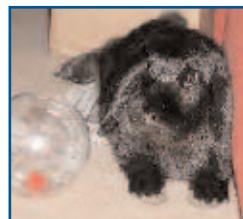


I know you and King Murray are watching over me. Just as you were the light of my life here on earth, I now feel your presence as pure light, shining down on me and reminding me of all the positive energy that abounds in the Universe. Please help me to share that energy, in your memory.

Kathy

Molly

Oh dearest little Mollusk, what an amazing spirit you were. A wonderful mixture of feisty attitude tempered with such incredible sweetness, you could drive us crazy and melt our hearts all in the blink of an eye. You were as opinionated as the day is



long which merely added to your impish charm. How often you astonished us with your dedication to the pursuit of mischief. No baby gate or barrier was too high for the Amazing Flying Mollusk! So determined were you to taste the forbidden fruit that lie beyond the gate, at times you defied gravity. It was awesome to watch you in action. When you weren't persuading your man Herbie to share in your troublemaking antics, you were quiet and loving, satisfied with a gentle nose rub and a kiss or two. Herbie is lost without you, his lady love. Inseparable since you first met, he's finding it difficult adjusting to life without you, as are we. Please watch over him while his heart heals and know that we all will forever miss you. Our Little Bean, we are heartbroken having lost you yet comforted knowing that you are now without pain, your spirit free to fly once more and your soul at peace. Thank you for enriching our lives with such joy and love. May your spirit continue to soar until we meet again.

*Love and kisses from your Mom,
Dad, and Herbie*

Pooper

In Loving Memory of my best friend and faithful companion, Pooper.



You gave me the best time of my life. Thank you for the 16 months we had together, life will never be the same without you. I miss your antics, and your begging for raisins. I know I will see you again, & we will be together forever.

Love, Dave

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

House Rabbit Network is now in its 5th year—and we continue to grow.

Through our network of dedicated volunteers and members, we are 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 towards rescue and rehabilitation, community outreach and education, and veterinary expenses.

Make 2005 a year of change—for you and for house rabbits alike!

Contact HRN at info@rabbitnetwork.org or (781) 431-1211.



House Rabbit Network Membership and Ordering Form

Your membership donation is tax deductible and will be used for medical costs (spays/neuters, vet 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.

Memberships run from April 1 to March 31 (donations received in Jan.–March will be credited for the following year). To join, fill out this page and mail it with your check (payable to the House Rabbit Network) to:

**House Rabbit Network
P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102**

Choose your membership level:

- Dwarf \$ 15.00
- Mini Lop \$ 25.00
- New Zealand \$ 50.00
- Flemish Giant \$ 100.00
- Mix (other) \$ _____

Choose your newsletter delivery preference:

- PDF format via email
(significant savings for HRN)
- Hard copy via U.S. Mail

Please send me _____ copies of *Rabbit Health in the 21st Century*

2nd Edition
at \$20.00 each \$ _____

Membership: \$ _____

Other Contribution: \$ _____

Name _____

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Total: \$ _____