



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 2013

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The Safe House: Tips for Rabbit Proofing

by Sadie MacMillan

Rabbit proofing is about protecting your bunny from the dangers around your home, and your home from the danger of your bunny. Unprepared rabbit owners are shocked to discover how destructive a force their rabbit can be, and how much trouble he'll get into if given half a chance. That is what makes rabbit proofing so important, a lesson sometimes one has to learn the hard way.

If possible, try to do your rabbit proofing ahead of time. Rabbit proofing consists of three basic moves: block it off, take it away, or cover it. Take a good look at the room or rooms in question. Identify the areas that would be tempting or hazardous to a bun. Don't look just at ground level: Bunnies can springboard from one piece of furniture to another and reach astonishing heights. They can also squeeze into tight spaces, almost as if they can magically go boneless. But squeezing into small places doesn't always mean being able to squeeze back out. They can get stuck behind appliances and in heating vents and other dangerous places.

So if you find there's an area you need to keep your bunny away from, your best bet is to block it off with a baby gate or animal exercise pen. Make sure the gate or pen is tall enough to do the job, though. Some buns can jump as high as 36 inches!

If there's something you can't

block off with a gate, or take out of the room altogether, you'll need to protect it. Some people manage to train their rabbits not to chew, and you may want to try it. You can give a squirt from a spray bottle of water, or clap your hands loudly and say, "no," in a stern voice, whenever your bunny starts to chew. To make sure the conditioning is effective, you'll need to be present and ready to apply it consistently whenever he's out and about, at least initially. In time, he should learn which things he shouldn't chew on.

A more passive way of discouraging chewing is to use a repellent on the surfaces you want to protect. It's designed to make those surfaces taste so bad that your rabbit will find them too unappetizing to chew on. You can find repellent sprays and gels at the pet store, usually in the dog or cat section, but some people have experimented with homemade repellents like lime or hot sauce. Many others recommend unscented Ivory dish or bar soap. (They specifically recommend Ivory because it seems to be safe for pets.) It's important to note, however, that for a large number of rabbit owners, repellents do not work. Some rabbit owners even joke that the repellents are more like seasoning than anything else.

And remember that not every rabbit takes easily to behavior modification, and even a well-trained bunny might behave differently if he's stressed. A move

to a new house, the loss of an animal friend, or the introduction of a new animal, could all trigger a relapse of destructive chewing. That is why there are some things you should take the time to bunny proof anyway, even if your bunny is well-behaved.

Cords

Bunnies are drawn to cords and cables; it's like a force of nature. But nibbling on cords puts your bunny at severe risk of burning or electrocution. So while it may be possible to train your bun not to chew, when it comes to cords you should not rely on training alone. Your best option is to encase the cords in a protective material. Fortunately you have many options, and most of them are inexpensive and easy to find.

There are products made specifically to organize and protect electrical cords. Spiral cable wrap, for instance, is made of polyethylene and looks like a curlicue phone cord. You can find it at places like Radio Shack and Staples. It's easy to work with and is effective against most buns. If you need something stronger there is split-loom tubing, which comes with a slit down its length to allow the cords in.

You can find several other options at a hardware store or home center like Lowe's and Home Depot. Flexible vinyl tubing, used in aquarium filter systems and evaporative cooling systems ("swamp coolers"), is one option; polyethylene tubing is another. With either kind of tubing you'll

use a utility knife to cut a slit along its length. Home centers will also carry PVC pipes and shower rod covers, which would also work.

Another option is to use channels or raceways, which are long pieces of heavy-duty plastic designed to cover cords and guide them along the baseboards, keeping them protected and out of sight. They require a little more effort and planning to install, but they have the advantage of blending in with the décor better than aquarium tubing usually does.

Baseboards and Walls

Bunnies will also very commonly chew baseboards and walls. You can try setting up one or more exercise pens along the room's perimeter, creating a buffer zone between the baseboards and the buns. Another option is to cover the baseboards with a "bumper" by tacking on pieces of untreated wood. This will simultaneously protect the baseboards and give your bunny something safe to chew on. If it's your drywall or wallpaper you're worried about, you can protect the walls with a clear panel of acrylic, polycarbonate, or plexiglass.

Flooring, Carpets, & Drapes

You may want to protect your floors as well. You can cover the floor with an area rug that you aren't too attached to, or you can use one or more carpet remnants, which are usually less expensive than a rug and can come in a wide range of sizes.

However, you should use a rug or carpet remnant only if your bunny does not chew it. The fibers can be very dangerous to your bunny

if he ingests them, so if you catch him chewing the rug you'll need an alternative material, like ceramic floor tiles or a plastic office chair mat (available at office stores). You can also buy seagrass mats, sold specifically for rabbits. Individually they won't cover as large an area as a rug, but they are inexpensive, disposable, and 100% chew-friendly.

Floor-length drapes can be fun for a bun to hide behind but they are also fun to nibble on, and curtain cords can entangle or choke a bun on the run. Tie them both up and out of reach.

Furniture

Furniture is an inviting bunny playground. The legs are good for nibbling, the upholstery is fun to dig at, and, best of all, upholstered furniture and box springs have soft undersides that bunnies just love to burrow into.

Protect the legs of your furniture with cardboard (you might want to use a few layers) or PVC tubing. You can protect the upholstery with old blankets and towels, but you may need to tie them down so the bunnies can't tug them out of place. And to keep them from making a nest out of the back of your couch, cover the surface with hardware cloth (wire mesh), which is available at hardware stores and home centers.

Houseplants

Houseplants that are within reach are like a naughty bunny buffet. But a nibbled-on houseplant isn't just annoying – it could be a real danger to your bunny's health. Several common houseplants are toxic to rabbits, like amaryllis,

daffodil, philodendron, chrysanthemum, lily-of-the-valley, peony, poinsettia, tulip bulbs, elephant ear, and narcissus. You can put your plants in hanging planters, but watch out for falling leaves. And if any of yours are among the plants that are toxic to bunnies; you should remove them from the room entirely. For a more complete list of houseplants that are toxic to bunnies you can go to:

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=18+1914&aid=1616>

For a downloadable PDF list that includes a picture of each plant, go to:

http://www.medirabbit.com/EN/GI_diseases/Food/Toxic_plants_en.pdf

The Kitchen

Kitchens present several unique bunny-proofing challenges. You will need to make sure your household chemicals are well-secured, either with a child-proof lock or out of reach in an upper cabinet. You also won't be able to put ant or roach traps or powders down if the bunny is going to be in the kitchen.

Your garbage can holds a world of delightful possibilities, and your bunny may very well try to knock it over. The larger and heavier the garbage can, the more difficult that will be for your bun, but you still might want to invest in one with a lid that latches.

You will need to make absolutely sure that your bunny can't get behind the appliances. Don't necessarily trust your judgment of what kind of space is too small for

a bunny to squeeze into. Block off any access points, taking care not to block air flow.

The Right Kind of Chewing

Chewing behavior is not bad behavior. Rabbits need to chew; it's important to their physical and emotional well-being. You should actively encourage your rabbit to chew by giving him plenty of chewable toys such as:

Disposable baskets of straw and untreated, unpainted wicker

Wooden pet toys

Cardboard (paper towel and toilet paper tubes, cardboard boxes,

cardboard packing, oatmeal containers)

Apple twigs

Providing toys won't necessarily stop all of your bunny's chewing behavior, but if you don't provide him with chewing material, he will find his own and you won't like the results.

Once you've completed your preparations, watch your bun carefully the first few times he comes out to play. Make sure the bunny proofing is doing its job, and see if he finds anything you overlooked. There may be a round

two of bunny proofing in your future. But be patient with your bun, no matter what he nibbles on. He's only doing what it is in his nature to do.

Which of these techniques have you tried? What has worked or not worked for you? Please visit our blog at <http://blog.rabbitnetwork.org/?p=2934> and share your bunny-proofing success stories – or horror stories! We want to hear how bunny proofing has gone for you.

Summer Bunny Hop & Volunteer Awards

House Rabbit Network volunteers and their families got together to let their hair down last month at the annual Bunny Hop on August 18. The potluck and cookout luncheon was graciously hosted by HRN president Suzanne Trayhan and her husband Gary. 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 ours are second-to-none. Thank you!



From left to right: Franny McKeever, Jenn Fernandez, Megan-Marie Henrici, Jenny Mullen.

The recipients of this year's awards are:

Foster Home of the Year... **Lisa DeMasi**

Facebook Postings... **Jenn Fernandez**

Rookie of the Year... **Megan-Marie Henrici**

Email Support... **Aimee Swartz-Glancy**

Bun-Sitting Coordinator... **Jenny Mullen**

Hotline Volunteer of the Year... **Franny McKeever**

Shelter Support... **Sadie MacMillan**

Knowing When to Let Go

Mary Lempert

A few months ago, I had to make the first euthanasia decision of my own regarding my beloved rabbit, Willoughby. He was suffering from hind limb paralysis from a herniated disc, and the pain medications were not helping. In his last days he became incontinent and refused to eat or drink. This was a huge indicator of his condition – Willoughby never refused food. On his last day we sat together on the couch and he lay listlessly next to me, chattering his teeth in pain. The veterinary specialist could not offer us the promise of relief. I petted his nose and buried my face in his fur. It was clear he was suffering. Even though we felt that ending his pain was the kindest thing we could do, having Willoughby euthanized was still an extremely difficult decision.

I have been in the veterinary field for several years as a technician and now as a veterinary student at Purdue University. I've faced many euthanasia situations with caring owners and their ailing pets. And now I've seen the other side.

As animal caretakers, we are endlessly lucky to be able to provide our pets with a peaceful end through euthanasia but this also means that a huge responsibility falls on our shoulders – we must make the decision to end the life of another. Rarely is the situation black and

white, and even when it is, the decision is not easy. Euthanasia is deeply personal, but don't disregard the many supportive people around you.

Talk to Your Vet

The discussion about quality of life should begin with your veterinarian. Your veterinarian serves an integral role in translating your rabbit's physical exam, blood work, radiographs, etc., into understandable terms. Vets are trained in animal behavior, so they can also help



you understand what your rabbit's body language and vocalizations may be trying to communicate. A vet can tell if your rabbit is in pain, is unhappy, and whether the animal's health can be improved or managed by medicine or surgery. Lastly, your vet is not only a wealth of medical knowledge; he or she is also a source of counsel. Veterinarians are trained to advise you, guide you, and support you in your decisions.

Talk to Members of Your Support System

Sorting through emotions and thoughts about your rabbit's quality of life can be overwhelming. Talking to a trusted friend or family member can be therapeutic. Forcing

yourself to verbalize your thoughts can actually help you realize your feelings. Friends and family members want to be supportive, and since they may not be as emotionally involved, they can often provide sound, rational feedback.

Talk to Yourself

It can be surprisingly challenging, but it's integral to talk honestly with yourself about your rabbit's condition. It can often help to write down and sort through your thoughts with pen and paper.

Loving another and wanting to hold on forever should not trump consideration of an animal's deteriorating condition. If your rabbit is in unmanageable pain and there is no chance of improvement, you should consider euthanasia.

More often than not, it's hard to know at a glance if your rabbit's quality of life is good. It's easy to ignore the bad days and focus on the good ones, so I recommend using a calendar to keep track. When the bad days consistently outnumber the good ones, consider the possibility that your rabbit's quality of life may be declining.

A good day is one in which your rabbit seems happy and comfortable, and partakes in the typical joys of life. One strategy for objectively deciding if your pet is happy is making a list of five things she enjoys, for instance: feasting on veggies, cuddling with a bond-mate, chewing on apple sticks, napping on the couch, and

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Volunteer Spotlight: Megan-Marie Henrici

by the House Rabbit Network

The House Rabbit Network relies on its volunteers. Its mission includes not just the care of shelter and foster rabbits but also education and public outreach. HRN's volunteers are crucial to all of these.

Megan-Marie Henrici first reached out to HRN as a potential adopter in September 2012. She had recently lost a bunny but she knew she wanted another, so she spoke to one of HRN's volunteer adoption counselors. The counselor understood Megan-Marie's feelings but suggested that she wait a little while before adopting; she needed time to grieve for her friend before starting again. Megan-Marie knew that someone else in that position might have taken advantage of her vulnerability just to close the deal on another rabbit adoption. She was impressed that this person didn't.

Megan-Marie is now an adoption counselor herself. In fact she plays a large role in HRN's communication with the public, online as well as on the phone. HRN's Facebook page (on Facebook under the House Rabbit Network) has a large following from all over the world, and Megan-Marie is one of a few people who keep the page interesting by posting new items

every day, like rabbit fact sheets and photographs.

HRN also receives a constant flood of contact through its public email address, info@rabbitnetwork.org, and from its telephone hotline. Megan-Marie partners with another volunteer to check HRN's email inbox several times a day and make sure that each email receives a timely response. She is also one of a handful of volunteers who field incoming calls to the hotline. Once a week on her assigned day, Megan-Marie checks the hotline voicemail for messages and returns each call.

People call and email HRN for many reasons. A lot of people have questions about their bunnies' health or behavior. Some call for advice about a bonding situation. Some, unfortunately, contact HRN because they have rabbits they can no longer care for. Megan-Marie explains that those kinds of calls are often challenging. "I feel so bad; I just want to take all these poor buns home."

But many of the calls and emails are about adoption, and those she really enjoys. Anybody interested in adopting an HRN rabbit first calls



Megan-Marie and the Princess in the garden. Photo courtesy of Megan-Marie.

the hotline and speaks with Megan-Marie or one of the other adoption counselors. The counselors speak with the person to find out how much he or she already knows about rabbit care, and to get a sense of the person's lifestyle and home.

Even better are the follow-up emails and calls that she receives from the people she's helped. Hearing back from people who have adopted HRN buns, and seeing pictures of those buns in their new homes, is especially gratifying.

"The feeling you get when you do a successful adoption and get a bun into an awesome forever home is so good," Megan-Marie says. "And imagine how good it feels for the bun. And then we get a new bun for someone to adopt, and it's just this big cycle of wonderful."

If you're interested in helping HRN but you can't foster, or you can't easily travel to our shelter or events, volunteering for the

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Volunteer Spotlight continued



Sharing vegan soup. Photo courtesy of Megan-Marie.

hotline is an excellent option. Megan-Marie says that her work on the hotline has actually helped with her social anxiety, and she would recommend it to anyone, even if talking to people is outside your comfort zone. Because, as she explains it, you're not talking to people about just anything – you're talking to them about bunnies. And if you're passionate about bunnies

you might inspire someone else to be passionate about them, too.

Megan-Marie received the 2013 HRN volunteer award for Rookie of the Year. HRN is grateful to all of its volunteers for their contributions.

If you're interested in learning more about the HRN hotline or any of our other volunteer opportunities, please drop us a line at info@rabbitnetwork.org. We'd love to hear from you!

Knowing continued

running through her tunnel. If your rabbit no longer regularly participates in three or more of her favorite activities, she isn't comfortable enough to relax, eat, and enjoy life.

Talk to Your Rabbit

Don't underestimate the importance of talking with your rabbit. Even though she can't speak in human languages, your rabbit can communicate a surprising amount of information. Sit with her, look in her eyes, talk with her, and listen patiently.

Certain behaviors can key you in to your rabbit's well-being. As a prey species, rabbits hide signs of illness particularly well. Signs of pain and discomfort are usually subtle, but can be indicated by any of the following: loudly grinding the teeth; sitting in a hunched position; squinting the eyes; avoiding social interaction; refusing food, water, or treats; listlessness; depression; weakness; loss of coordination; sudden aggression; changes in litter box habits; unusual vocalization; and the inability to

walk or hop.

The conversation I had with Willoughby led me to realize and accept that he no longer wanted to be alive. His eyes were glazed over in pain and he didn't acknowledge me or purr when I pet his head. That I was able to ease his suffering was my ultimate gift to my bunny. I hope that any decisions regarding euthanasia, difficult though they are, will give you the peace of knowing that you acted out of love and in the best interest of your rabbit.

Rabbits Adopted Since July 2013

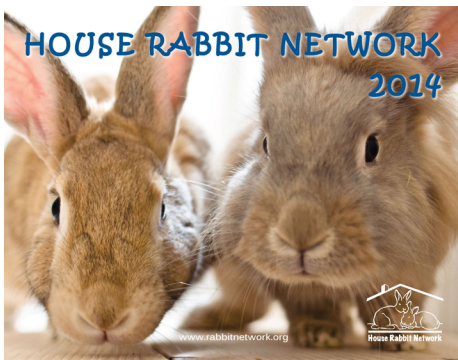
White Paw 7/20
Snickers 7/24
Clay 7/27
Twilight 7/28
Logan 7/27
Shandi 8/3
Olive 8/4

Virgil 8/5
Tek 8/11
Honey 8/13
Ace 8/23
Buster 8/26
Choco 8/31
Emma 8/31

Buttons 9/1
Marla 9/5
Hudson 9/7
Two-Step 9/7
Cooper 9/8
Teddy & Tahlia 9/16
Maple 9/18

HRN News

Upcoming HRN Events



HRN Calendars Now Available!

Our 2014 calendar is available and it makes a great gift for the rabbit lover in your life...or for yourself!

They are only \$10 each (plus shipping), and all proceeds go toward the care of our shelter and foster buns. You can order online with Paypal at our website, 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
P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102

Shipping rates are as follows:

- 1 calendar...\$3.00
- 2 calendars...\$4.00
- 3 calendars...\$5.00
- 4 calendars...\$6.00

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.

Education Events

The House Rabbit Network holds education events regularly around eastern Massachusetts. We love having the opportunity to help people learn a little something about rabbits as companion animals! We don't do on-site adoptions at these events, but we do bring a listing of our current adoptables. HRN will have an education booth at the following events:

Saturday, October 26th

11am – 6pm

at the Boston Vegetarian Food Festival
Reggie Lewis Athletic Center, 1350 Tremont St, Boston MA

Sunday, October 27th

10am – 4pm

at the Boston Vegetarian Food Festival
Reggie Lewis Athletic Center, 1350 Tremont St, Boston MA

Stop by and say hello! Or if you love talking about rabbits and you're interested in helping out at one of these events, drop us a line at info@rabbitnetwork.org. We'd love to hear from you!

Volunteer Meeting

There will be a meeting of HRN volunteers on Saturday, October 19th at 10am at the shelter. If you're interested in attending and/or becoming a volunteer, drop us a line at info@rabbitnetwork.org. We'd love to have you on the team!

Annual Flatbread Benefit A Success!

HRN's annual Flatbread benefit took place on September 24 this year and was a great success, bringing in a total of \$2,167!

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. The House Rabbit Network was honored to be the chosen charity for September 24. More than 300 HRN members, volunteers, and friends came to visit the restaurant throughout the evening to enjoy the food and bid on auction prizes. We had dozens of excellent prizes up for grabs this year, donated to us by both businesses and individuals.

This is the seventh year in a row that Flatbread has included HRN in its charitable contributions. 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:

Green Mountain Coffee	Busy Bunny	Courtney Hughes
Celebrities for Charities	Especially For Pets	Pet International
Essex River Cruises	Shamrock Nation	Tess Moseley
Middleton Golf Course	Alantra Spa	Grateful Beans
Laser Craze	Franny McKeever	Open Space
Water Wizz	Keurig	Acupuncture
Harrow's Chicken Pies	VCA Wakefield Animal	McGrath Animal
Red Sox	Hospital	Hospital
Mohegan Sun	Lady and Lou Jewelry	Carol Youngclaus
Medieval Manor	Improv Asylum	Kitties and Critters
Sky Zone	Tavern in the Square	In-Home Pet Sitting
Oxbow	York's Wild Kingdom	Brown Dog Pet
AMC Theaters	Stephanie Pereira	Photography
A Spa To Remember	True Bistro	Jillian's
Jeff Dunham	Dan Almgren	Leith Petwerks
Cheesecake Factory	Tina Forbes	Friends of HRN
Not Your Average Joe's	Chuck Forbes	
Lesa Hall	Stacy Schmidt	

HRN Receives Symantec Grant



House Rabbit Network president Suzanne Trayhan has secured a generous donation from her employer, the Waltham-based digital security company Symantec, through its Dollars for Doers initiative.

Dollars for Doers is intended to encourage Symantec employees to participate in volunteer work. Symantec will give \$15 for every hour of volunteer work an employee

contributes to qualifying nonprofit organizations. Dollars for Doers also includes a Board Service Grant program, wherein Symantec will donate \$1,000 if an employee serves on a nonprofit organization's board of directors for a year. In recognition of Suzanne's work for HRN, both on its board of directors and in every other capacity, Symantec has donated over \$1,000.

Many companies offer incentive programs to encourage volunteer work, and many, like Symantec, will also match employees' charitable financial donations. If you are an HRN volunteer or donor, why not check with your employer's human resources department to see if they offer something similar? The bunnies may be able to benefit twice over from your generosity!

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:

info@rabbitnetwork.org

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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.

Memberships run from April 1 to March 31 (donations received January–March will be credited for the following year). To join, fill out this page and mail it with your check payable 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.....\$ _____

Total.....\$ _____

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TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____