



House Rabbit Network

P.O. Box 2602

Woburn, MA 01888-1102



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

Rabbit Tracks

Fall 2014

Table of Contents

Having Fun With Your Bun...pg 2

Why We Do What We Do.....pg 3

Nutrition.....pg 5

HRN Calendars Available.....pg 7

HRN News.....pg 8

HRN Membership.....pg 10



Having Fun With Your Bun

by A. A.

Anyone who's had their furniture, electrical cords, carpets or baseboards ruined by a bunny knows that a bored rabbit can be a destructive rabbit. Without a proper outlet for their instinctual behaviors, such as chewing, digging, running, and tunneling, rabbits will claim human possessions as theirs. That's why it's important to provide your bunny with toys to keep them active in a positive way.

Unfortunately, people often cite destructive chewing as the reason for giving up their pet rabbit. The reality is that chewing is a necessary part of rabbit behavior. It promotes healthy teeth and provides mental stimulation. There are many kinds of chew sticks, such as seagrass twists and applewood sticks, as well as "flip and toss" carrots made of sisal rope and natural sponge rings, which bunnies use for both chewing and throwing. Those hard plastic Slinkies that never go down the stairs aren't much fun for people, but bunnies like to toss them.

Bunny toys can be pricey, especially when they're destroyed in a couple of days, so it's always a good idea to improvise. Rabbits who play "paper shredder," love to rip up newspapers, magazines, junk mail, and toilet paper tubes. Shoeboxes, or any bunny-sized

cardboard box, are also a great option. They'll often sit in the box and chew from the inside out, which makes cleanup as easy as dumping out the shredded bits

activity that sometimes gets overlooked is exercise. Lazy bunnies can become overweight, which puts them at higher risk of heart attacks. To encourage activity, you can easily make a bunny obstacle

course. Try buying some bunny tunnels or using long cardboard boxes or tubes, and laying them end to end across a room. Bunnies not only love to zoom through tunnels, but they also stretch out inside them and rest. Perches or platforms are also good to provide, as bunnies are a conundrum; they don't like being picked up, but they like being off the ground on their own terms. Surprisingly, a lot of bunnies love to play and sit on cat trees. Another option for a platform involves large storage bins with a towel or blanket on the lid for traction. This is especially convenient if you're already using storage bins for litter or hay. For the handy human companion, you can build both tunnels and perches out of inexpensive, untreated lumber. You can place these perches near the exit of the tunnel so that your bunny can do a running jump onto and off of the bin or tree, and as with tunnels, perches also serve a dual purpose by providing a rabbit resting area.



Bunson enjoys some tunnel fun. Photo courtesy of Sarah Titus.



Milo and Otis at play. Photo courtesy of Sarah Titus.

when bunny is done. You can also put some hay or chew sticks in the box to attract their attention. Be sure with any of these options that your bunny is mostly shredding and not eating a lot of paper.

A key component to bunny

continued on page 4

Why We Do What We Do: HRN Adoption Success Stories

by Sadie MacMillan

At the House Rabbit Network we are proud of all the more than 2,000 bunny adoptions that we've facilitated since we first began in 2000. Our volunteers and foster families work hard to make sure all of our rabbits go to safe and loving homes. Once the adoption is finalized, sometimes the new family goes its own way, and we wish them joy. But we are always delighted when our adopting families reach out to

us, as they very often do, to tell us how much the bunnies are enjoying their new lives. We treasure all of these stories, but sometimes we get a success story that we cannot help but want to share.

Adoption stories can't get any better than this. And we are grateful to our adopters for giving our buns wonderful homes. This is why we do what we do.

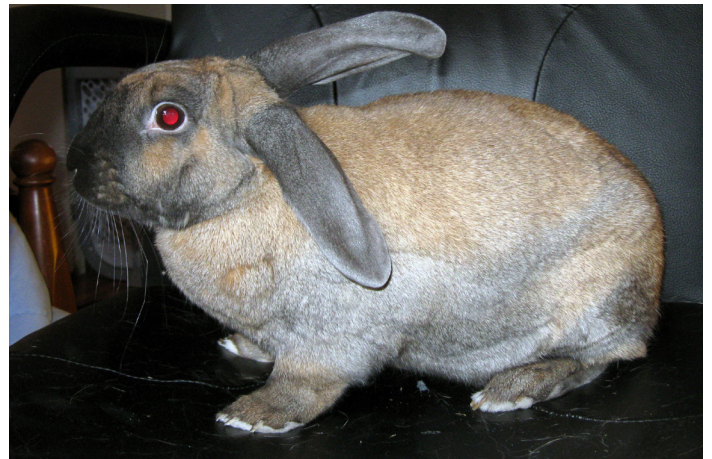
Electra

Seven years ago, W. Orsapolska and her family adopted HRN bun Electra. For one member of the family in particular, Electra became soulmate, bosom buddy, and inspiration. Orsapolska writes:

Electra became our autistic (Asperger's) son's therapy bunny (he picked her, and she picked him) and lived in his bedroom. She and he had a bond that none of the rest of us could match. He would cuddle her and tell her his troubles. She would jump up on his chair when he was doing homework at his desk and squeeze herself in behind him, between the back of the chair and his back, and keep him company. Or she would jump up on the desk itself when he was using his computer and nudge her head under his hand

when he was holding the mouse for pets. She was fiercely protective of her space in our son's bedroom and would growl when the rest of the family came in...

Electra was with my son all the way through most of middle school and high school. High school was very stressful for my son. [O]n Thursday 5/30/13, my son took his last final exam and completed high school. Friday night Electra passed away...It's as if Electra's role in my son's life was completed, and she was telling him,



Electra in a cozy spot. Photo courtesy of W. Orsapolska.

it's time to move on with your life without having to take care of me. Don't let me tie you down. Go chase your dreams.

My son will move on with his life, as will we all. But we will never forget Electra who taught our son so much about love and life and caring for living things.

continued on page 4

2014 Adoption Total

To date, 136 rabbits from HRN have gone on to happy homes with their forever families. We wish them well in their forever homes!

Why We Do What We Do continued

Audrey Bird

Sometimes a nice adoption story unfolds right under our noses. Audrey Bird (nicknamed Birdie) came to HRN as a rescue in the spring of 2013. As soon as she healed from spay surgery, she was adopted by HRN volunteer Megan-Marie Henrici. Megan-Marie writes:

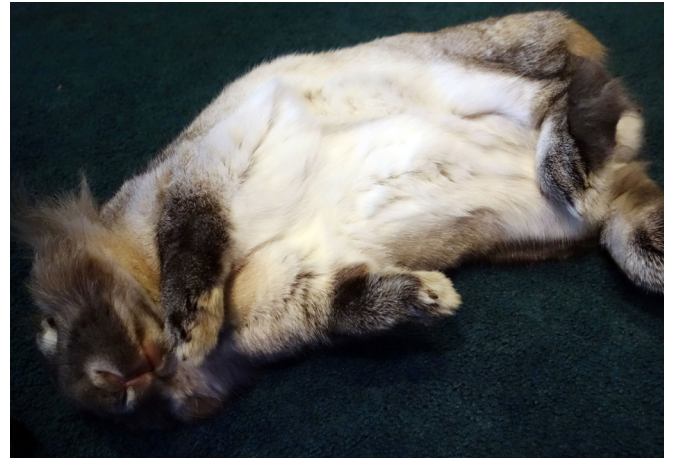
The first time we met she promptly bit me...When I went back to her foster home the next week, it was her turn for a cage cleaning and we spent hours playing together in a pen outside. She circled my legs and flopped against them. When another bun peed on my pants, Birdie sat for an hour and groomed it away. I had never been groomed before and that sealed the deal: I had to

bring her home.

Audrey Bird got not only a new home but a new bunny friend as well.

She bonded with our cookie dough dwarf... (Boogie) in one week – for the first few days I was almost certain he would find a way into her pen and

murder her, he was furious, but also has a limited attention span and a big soft heart so it was not long before they were snuggling together against the pen. Now they have free rein over the whole house...Boogie used to sit in a loaf all the time but now he binks in the



Birdie relaxing at home. Photo courtesy of Megan-Marie Henrici.

morning and kicks his feet out at night and he is obviously so happy with her...

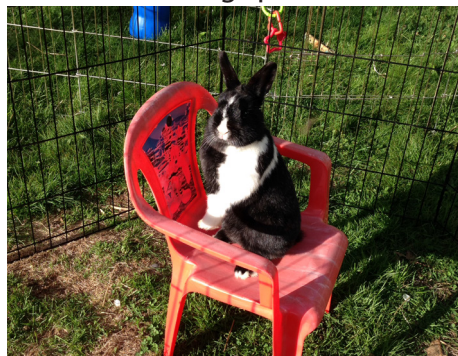
I am so grateful to HRN for rescuing Birdie and buns like her, and taking great care of her until she found us.

Having Fun With Your Bun continued

Since the pieces are modular, you can always change the layout if your bunny gets bored with the routine or move them outside in nice weather.

Digging is another form of rabbit exercise where it helps to direct their energy appropriately since bunnies can become drawn to a certain spot for their “project,” which can be bad for hardwood floors and carpets. Try putting a straw mat or untreated piece of wood down on their dig spot. Wood will last a little longer and will help wear down their nails. Another fun option is to clear a space and set up a cardboard box, clean litterbox, or cage with the bottom filled with sand or snow.

For outdoor play, you can set up an ex-pen and let them dig in the grass. A sheet hung over one side of the pen will provide extra shade and hiding spots. Children’s



A happy bun just sitting pretty. Photo courtesy of Sarah Titus.

chairs are a good height for bunny play and they can be fitted with a secured ramp made out of wood or cat-scratching posts. Also, outdoor chairs are usually made

of durable material, so you can let your bunny jump in them and dig without causing damage. When using a chair, just be careful not to put it close to the edge of the ex-pen since the bun might jump out of the ex-pen play area.

Much of what you need to build a bunny playground can be found at major retailers. You can buy cat trees, chairs, and all sorts of make-shift bunny toys for a low cost. And don’t forget to take advantage of sales.

Remember the importance of spending quality time with your bunny. Most rabbits are social and they’ll be more active if their human friends show interest in playing with them.



Nutrition

by Kathryn Smith

Many rabbit care websites tell us what percentages to look for in fiber, protein, and fat content of purchased food. We hear that carbohydrates are bad. Too much protein and fat is bad. Not enough fiber is bad. But how many of us understand the role of these nutritional elements? I certainly didn't before I started working on this article. Frances Harcourt-Brown's *Textbook of Rabbit Medicine** is an excellent resource for more detail about diet and nutrition. What follows is a summary of what I have learned while researching this article. As you will notice, there is no "one size fits all" formula for nutrition – and no food (or water) source is 100% risk free.

Fiber

Fiber is considered the most important component of a rabbit's diet. While hay should be the primary source of fiber, when choosing a commercial food it is also important to choose one with high crude fiber content (at least 16%). Although crude fiber percent

understates the amount of dietary fiber in most commercial food, it is the value that is required (by law) to be reported.

There are two main types of fiber:

- **Indigestible fiber** comes mainly from the long strands found in grass or grass-based hay. It keeps the GI tract moving, helps create

normal dental wear, stimulates the appetite, and encourages the eating of cecotrophs (partially digested foods that are passed from the bunny – they have a grape-like appearance – and then reingested). A diet too low in indigestible fiber can result in GI and dental problems. However, a diet too high in indigestible fiber can result in malnutrition.

- **Fermentable (digestible) fiber** comes from smaller particles of hay and commercial food and fresh produce. Digestible fiber provides nutrition, helps maintain the balance of cecal flora, and contributes to healthy, firm-consistency cecotrophs.



Clean, fresh grass makes a great bunny snack.

Harcourt-Brown suggests feeding fresh grass (if not chemically treated) because it contains both indigestible and fermentable fiber. In areas where you frequently see raccoons, skunks, and other wildlife, there is a greater risk of grass being contaminated with parasites. If you pick fresh grass for your rabbits, thorough rinsing

can help reduce – but not totally eliminate – that risk.

Protein

Protein is required for healthy bone, muscle, and fur growth. Cecotrophs, also known as cecal pellets, provide an important source of protein. However, protein is required for proper functioning of cecal bacteria, so finding the proper balance is important.

Too much protein can strain the kidneys. It can cause overproduction of cecal pellets, reduce your rabbit's interest in ingesting cecotrophs, and/or upset the balance of bacteria in the cecum. Excess protein can also increase ammonia production and excretion. If

you notice urine having a stronger ammonia smell, check the protein content of your commercial food.

Insufficient protein can result in poor tissue regeneration after an injury. Your rabbit's body may also "steal" protein from muscle to grow fur. If your rabbit's coat begins to look unhealthy, check the protein content in the commercial food you are giving (or, if not feeding

food pellets, consider adding a small amount to his diet).

Commercial foods should contain 14%-16% protein for most healthy adult short-haired rabbits. Angoras and other long-haired or thick-coated breeds may require higher levels of protein.

continued on page 6

Nutrition continued

Growing rabbits require more protein than adults because bone, muscle, and other tissue are still developing. Sick rabbits may need higher levels of protein to support their immune system.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are an important energy source and should not be eliminated completely from your rabbit's diet. Carbohydrates include natural sugars (found in fruit) and starches (found in seeds, grains, and commercial food). As with other nutrients, the key is finding the correct balance for the individual rabbit at his present stage of life.

A diet too high in carbohydrates can lead to weight gain (if converted to fat) and/or a bacterial imbalance in the GI tract. However, a diet too low in carbohydrates may cause your rabbit to move less to conserve energy. Sick rabbits also may require more energy to support full recovery.

Younger rabbits require more carbohydrates. However, since a young rabbit's GI system is more precariously balanced, fruit and grain should be strictly limited. Commercial food is usually recommended for growing rabbits. According to Harcourt-Brown, recent studies show that adult rabbits digest starch more efficiently than young rabbits, explaining why some rabbits seem to tolerate the occasional starchy treat.

Fats

Like carbohydrates, the amount of

fat in your rabbit's diet should be limited but not eliminated. Look for commercial food that contains 2%-3% fat. If your rabbit does not eat commercial food, other sources of fats include grains, nuts, and vegetable oils.

Vitamins

Vitamins help regulate metabolism, release energy from food, assist tissue development, and act as antioxidants. Most commercial food producers do their best to provide the proper balance of vitamins and minerals for domestic rabbits. There is no one brand or formulation that is the best choice for all rabbits, and in a multi-rabbit household, you may need to buy more than one type of commercial food.

Vitamin A is important for vision, bone development, and combating infection. Too much Vitamin A can cause neurological and skin damage.

B-complex vitamins are found in cecotrophs and play a key role in many metabolic processes. B-vitamin injections are occasionally prescribed to help boost the appetite of an anorexic rabbit.

Vitamin C is required to maintain and repair connective tissue. Harcourt-Brown states that there is evidence that a rabbit's Vitamin C requirements increase during periods of high stress.

Vitamin D plays an important role in metabolism of calcium and phosphorus. Vitamin D is rare in food. Hay that is slowly **sun-dried** (as opposed to hay that is rapidly cured) contains vitamin D, as do dry autumn leaves (which rabbits allowed to play outdoors seem

to prefer over other vegetation), and in commercial (pelletted or extruded) foods. In *Textbook of Rabbit Medicine*, Harcourt-Brown hypothesizes that "Vitamin D deficiency may be a contributory factor in the development of dental disease." Since direct exposure to sunlight plays a key role in proper synthesis of Vitamin D, this may help explain why so many house rabbits seem to have dental issues. Since excess Vitamin D can cause calcium deposits in tissues such as joints and kidneys, Vitamin D supplements should be used with extreme caution (and only under veterinary supervision).

Vitamin E is a natural antioxidant, helping to prevent widespread tissue damage. Young grass is an excellent source of Vitamin E.

Vitamin K, found in cecotrophs, helps blood clot properly.

Other important nutritional considerations involve calcium, the calcium-phosphorous ratio, and magnesium. For more information on those elements, please look to the books cited for this article.

Rabbits have a unique and delicate digestive system, so it is important to make sure that what they eat is affecting them in a positive way. They are members of our families and loving companions and we want them to live long, healthy lives.

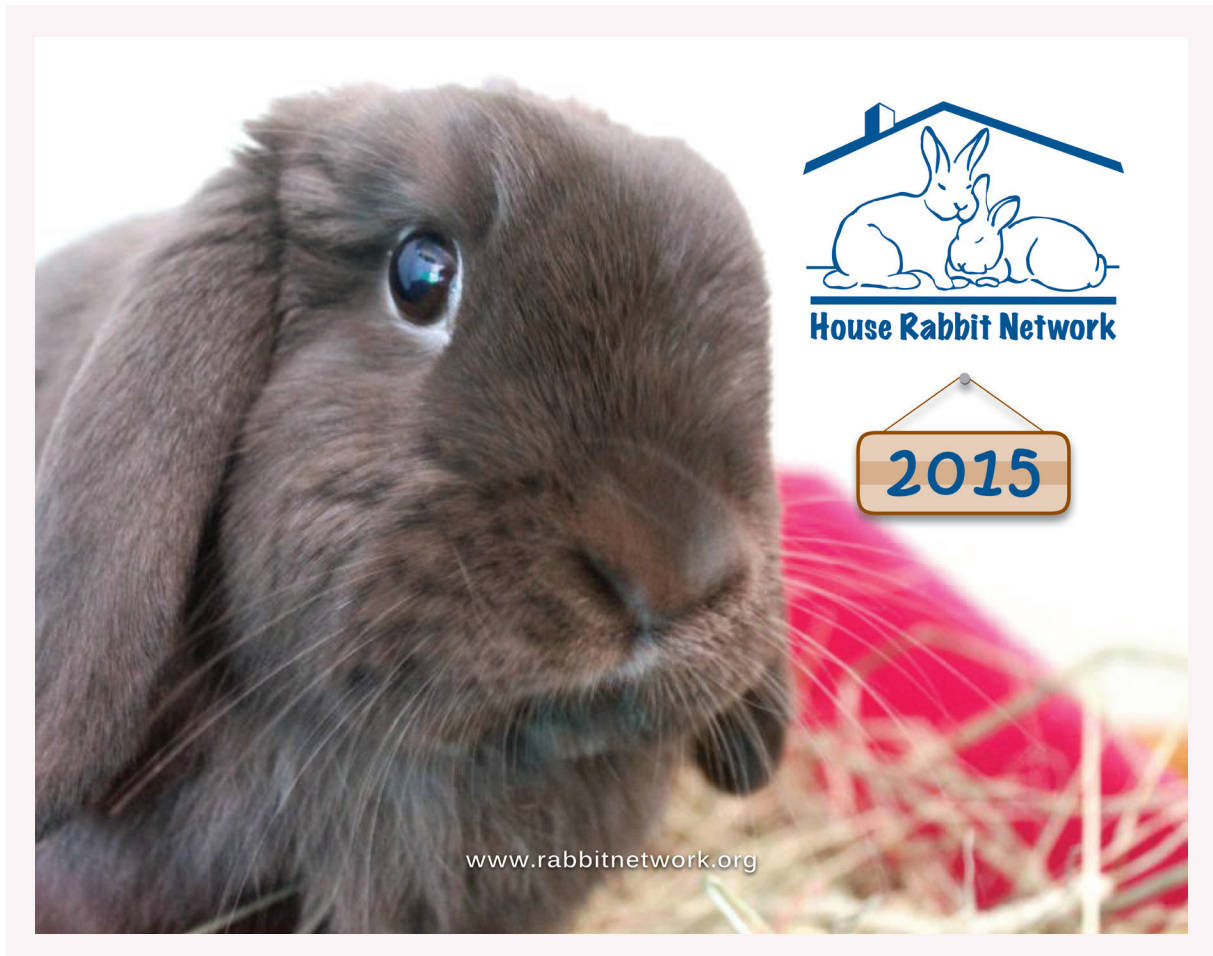
This article is an excerpt from the following book:

Smith, Kathy. *Rabbit Health in the 21st Century: A Guide for Bunny Parents* – 2nd Edition. New York: IUniverse, 2003. Print.

*Harcourt-Brown, Frances. *Textbook of Rabbit Medicine*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002. Print.



HRN Calendars Available Now!



Our 2015 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
P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102

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.

HRN News

Annual Flatbread Benefit A Success!

HRN's annual Flatbread benefit took place on September 23 this year and was a great success, bringing in a total of \$2,392! This is the eighth 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. The House Rabbit Network was honored to be the chosen charity for September 23. More than 285 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:

A Spa to Remember
Brown Dog Pet Photography
Burlington Veterinary Hospital
Cabot Creamery
Canobie Lake Park
Captain Bill and Sons Whale Watch
Celebrities for Charities
Charles River Boat Company
Cheesecake Factory
Chopps American Bar and Grill
Cruelty Free Consumer
Courtney Hughes
Ebony Kennel
Essex River Boat Cruise
Friends of HRN
Fuddruckers
Harrow's Chicken Pies
Ironstone Farm
Jenny Mullen
Jessica Geraldo
Keurig
Lesa Hall
Lisa DeMasi & Dennis Ravenelle

McGrath Animal Hospital
Merrimack Repertory Theatre
Middleton Golf Course
Mohegan Sun
Neptune's Harvest
New England Aquarium
Old Hippy Candles
Rachel Thomas
Red Sox
Sky Zone
Small Pet Select
Starbucks
Stephanie Pereira
Steve Paiva
StoryLand
Tavern in the Square
Tina & Chuck Forbes
True Bistro
VCA Wakefield Animal Hospital
Vicki Bilafer
White Rabbit Beauty
York's Wild Kingdom

Summer Bunny Hop and Volunteer Awards

House Rabbit Network volunteers and their families got together at the annual Bunny Hop on August 16. The pot luck 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 our volunteers are outstanding. Thank you!

The recipients of this year's awards are:

Foster Home of the Year - Betsy Hartman
Shelter Support - Beth Ann Fay
Shelter Support - Sasha Roberge
Hotline - Megan-Marie Henrici
Marketing - Stacey Paiva
Intern - Kelly Rogers

Support HRN by Shopping

We have affiliate programs with several companies. That means that when you purchase an item from that organization, HRN will get a percentage of the sales. All of our affiliate programs are listed on:

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

Whether you're buying hay, pet supplies, beauty or baby products, or you're looking to buy whatever your heart desires on amazon.com, your shopping can help raise money for the buns.

Wish List

If you'd like to donate to HRN, check out the wish list we've posted on our website:

www.rabbitnetwork.org/wish.shtml

The list includes items that we will always need more of, like hay, wood stove pellets, and cleaning supplies.

We also have a wish list on Amazon.com:

<http://amzn.com/w/1RF2AMA3DV6S1>

If you purchase from our Amazon list, the items will ship directly to us with no extra legwork on your part! A warm thank-you to all of our donors, past and future!

We're Looking for Your Adoption Story

There have been so many adoptions of HRN buns to wonderful homes. If you adopted from HRN, we'd love to hear from you. Please share your story with our Facebook folks, and you could see your beautiful bun on Facebook. Just let us know about when you

met your bun, how you knew s/he was the bun for you, and how your rabbit has flourished into being a hoppy family member. Please contact: facebook@rabbitnetwork.org

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
 781-431-1211
 P.O. Box 2602
 Woburn, MA 01888-1102



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:

**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

Membership\$ _____
 Other Contribution.....\$ _____
Total.....\$ _____

NAME(S) _____

STREET _____ APT. _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____