



House Rabbit Network

P.O. Box 2602
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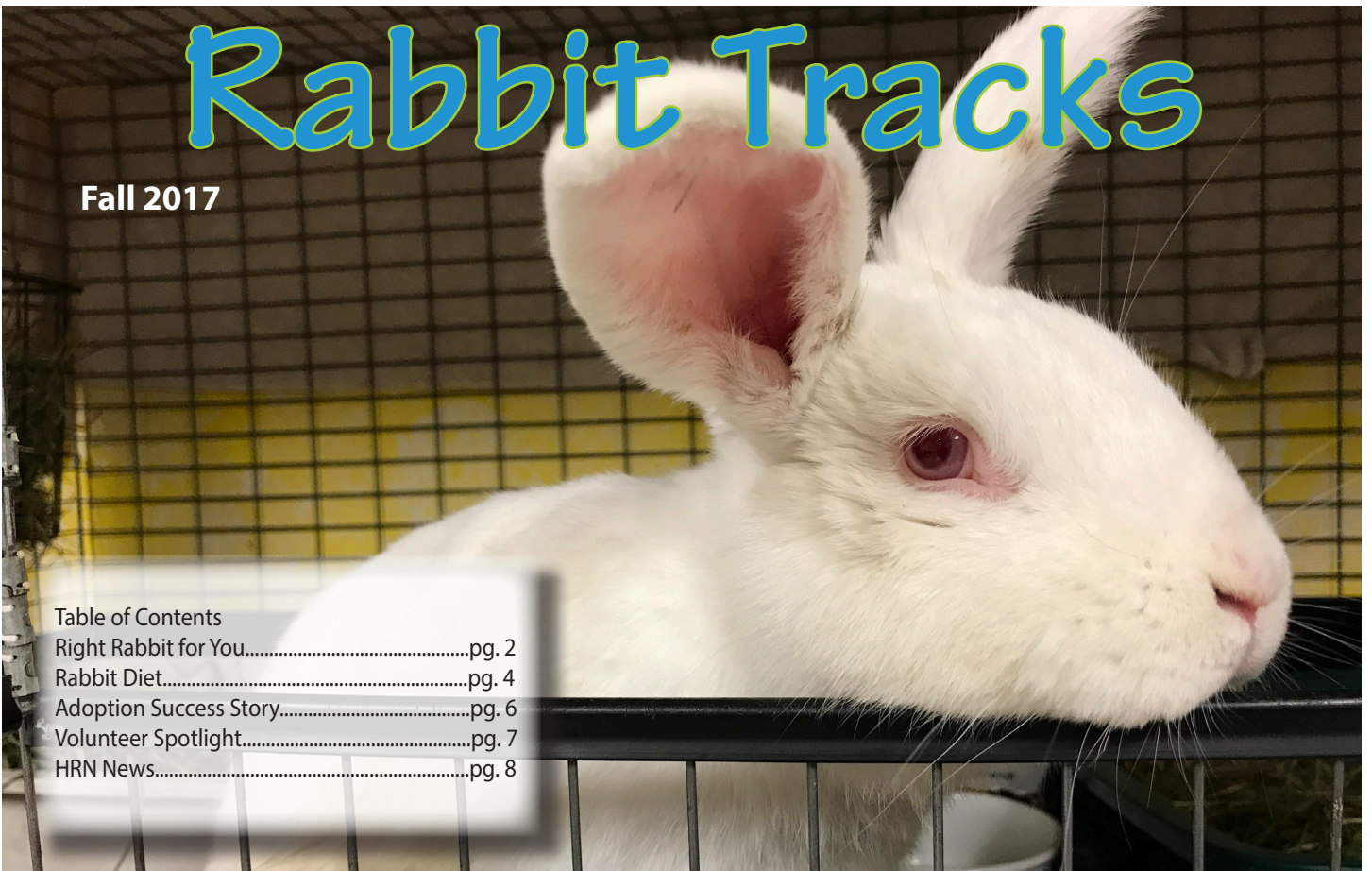


Dedicated to educating the public and to fostering and adoption of companion rabbits. 781-431-1211 or www.rabbitnetwork.org

Rabbit Tracks

Fall 2017

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Choosing the Right Rabbit for You

by Stacey Paiva



*Lionheads' manes need extra grooming.
Photo courtesy of Stacey Paiva.*

So you're thinking about adding a rabbit to your family? It's important that you choose a bun that will fit well into your family and your lifestyle. Every bunny is unique, but there are some general guidelines that might give you insight into picking the best bun for your home. Keep in mind that every rabbit has such a distinct personality, that any generalization we mention might not hold true for the buns you meet.

Male vs. Female

Let's face it, rabbits that aren't spayed/neutered tend to have only one thing on their minds — the drive to mate. To reduce behavioral problems, aggression, and urine marking, it's important to have rabbits neutered/spayed. Spaying is also important since 60% of female rabbits develop uterine cancer by the age of four if they haven't been spayed. Spayed/neutered rabbits can live 8-12 years.

After rabbits are altered, their own personalities come out, and they will be calmer and more loving. Is there any personality difference between a male and female bun? Some people think that males tend to be slightly more outgoing than females.

What Size and Breed?

The American Rabbit Breeder's Association recognizes 49 unique rabbit breeds, and they come in several sizes: dwarf, small/medium, large, and giant. Common sizes of rabbits tend to be from 2.5 lbs to 12 lbs. Larger rabbits tend to be more laid back and may have slightly shorter lifespans than dwarf rabbits. We recommend larger buns for households with cats that might have some hunting instincts, and also for families with small children, since small children are less likely to try to pick up bigger buns.

Long-haired rabbits such as Angoras or Lionheads need more grooming. Angoras need more protein in their diet. Dwarf, Lop eared, and Lionhead rabbits are more prone to eye and teeth problems which can be costly. Dwarf breeds also might be more highly strung and need careful handling.

What Age?

The age of a rabbit significantly affects his behavior. Are you looking for an extremely active companion or would you prefer a more laid back one? The behavior we outline by age uses generalizations, so you will meet buns that don't quite match the behavior of their age category as every bun is unique.

Babyhood (0-3 months old): Rabbits typically become fully independent from their mother and are able to survive on their own by the time they are eight weeks old, which is why rabbits should not be adopted before that time. House Rabbit Network (HRN) doesn't adopt out buns until they are spayed/neutered, around 3-8 months depending on the sex of the bun, rate of growth, and certain biological factors. Sadly, many pet stores offer rabbits as young as four weeks old for sale. Some of those buns haven't been properly weaned from their mothers and might have digestive issues.

Teenagers (6 months to 1 year): Ah, the teenager. Buns become fully mature at this stage and might be a

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little moody. They are likely to be mischievous as they chew and dig everything in their paths. These furry teens are extremely active and full of energy.

Young Adulthood (1-3 years old): Buns continue to be active, but a little less so than teenagers. They need lots of exercise and can often be caught "binkying" (jumping in the air and flicking their legs). They spend much of their time exercising and roaming around the house, and they still like to chew, dig, and explore. It's best to keep them busy by giving them plenty of toys, chewsticks, boxes, etc.

Middle Age (3-5 years old): At this age rabbits tend to slow down a little, sleep more, and generally be less active. They may also become more affectionate, particularly house rabbits who live closely with their owners. Their level of trust in their people has built up so that they feel completely safe and secure in their homes and able to truly relax.

Late Middle Age (5-7 years old): Age-related health problems like arthritis may come their way, which can lower their level of mobility a little.

Old Age (7 years and older): Many rabbits can still be quite active at this stage while others may slow down to the point where they will need a different litter tray or access routes through their enclosures, due to an inability or hesitation to hop or jump. A large number of rabbits at this age may deal with chronic illness and require regular medication and/or care. This often leads to an even more loving bond between rabbit and owner.

What Personality?

One personality trait to consider is how easy or difficult the rabbit is to handle, pick up, and hold. The truth is that most rabbits don't like to be picked up, but even for those buns you still need to learn to handle them for taking trips to the vet, nail trims, etc. For fun, we've categorized some common bun personalities, but the reality is that you can find all personality types in all breeds, and rabbits can be a mix of several personality types.

The Youngins: These rabbits are overly curious and full of energy. They will race over to you and happily greet you whenever you enter the room. They will enjoy any kind of affection and openly show their joy by binkying around the room frequently. They are also more likely to chew, dig, and push their way into areas you have tried to keep them out of, and they often feel the need to investigate the taste of a book or a wooden shelf. These rabbits enjoy new toys, games, and challenges, and they openly show their emotions.

The Carefree Bun: Nothing ruffles this dude's fur. He's happy and confident. His days consist of eating yummy food, cuddling with his peeps, and restful snoozing.

The Energizer: This bun speed races around trying to work off some energy. These buns can be fun to watch. If you're busy and don't have a lot of time for petting, having these buns to watch while you're



*Shelter volunteer Sadie MacMillan cuddles a bun.
Photo courtesy of Stacey Paiva.*

The Well-Rounded Rabbit Diet

by Suzanne Trayhan

Rabbits are interesting creatures with delicate gastrointestinal systems that need a well-balanced diet. The food they eat should have lots of fiber, and they should be eating all day long. Proper diet helps maintain your rabbit's weight and teeth, and keeps him healthy.

Hay

Hay, hay, and more hay. The most important thing in your rabbit's diet is hay. Rabbits should eat about their body size in hay every day, and hay should comprise 75-95% of their intake. It's essential that they have hay for a number of reasons. First, they need to be eating most of the day to keep their digestive tract moving. They are hindgut fermenters and need to have their gut moving all the time. Second, eating lots of hay helps maintain their teeth. Since their teeth are constantly growing, the chewing helps prevent molar spurs and keeps the incisors at the correct length.



Ollie loves eating hay.

For most adult rabbits, you should be feeding a grass hay. Grass hays include timothy, brome, orchard grass, and oat hay. For nursing mothers and juvenile or baby rabbits, a legume hay like alfalfa is preferred. It's higher in calcium and calories which is necessary for the babies to grow and the mother to nurse.

Greens/Salad

Giving your rabbit a nice selection of greens to eat is important for nutrition. Just like humans, variety is important. We recommend at least three different greens each day and offering different greens over the weeks. You can choose from different lettuces, such as red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, romaine, chicory, and escarole to give a variety of nutrients. Carrots are high in sugar and should be considered a treat. There's a lot of discussion about feeding high calcium greens (e.g., parsley, kale, collard greens) with many different opinions. For a normal, healthy rabbit, some calcium is good for dental and bone health. Veggies high in calcium are fine in moderation. For rabbits with sludge or urinary tract issues, some vets recommend eliminating high calcium veggies. Other vets think the water content in greens will help flush out the calcium so you don't need to worry about it. If you have any concerns, consult your veterinarian.

Pellets

You'll hear different opinions on pellets. Some people say they aren't needed and shouldn't be fed. Others believe that a limited amount will help make sure rabbits are receiving all the necessary nutrients. If you feed pellets, make sure you limit the quantity as pellets are the leading cause of obesity in rabbits. General guidelines say to feed 1/4 cup pellets per 5 pounds of body weight. When choosing a pellet, the most important thing is to get a straight pellet; no seeds, treats, or other items added in. Look for one that's 14-16% protein (16% for long-haired rabbits), high fiber (> 20%), and low fat (< 2.5%).

Treats

Who doesn't want to spoil their bunny and give treats? When feeding treats, the key is to limit them. I also recommend healthier treats you can purchase at the grocery store over stuff you can purchase at the pet store. I would avoid anything with added sugar (such as yogurt drops). Most rabbits go nuts for banana. A thin 1/4-1/2 inch slice, and you might see the "banana butt twitches." You can also feed raisins. Small baby

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carrots are also a good choice. Just work on resisting those pleading rabbit eyes that always want more!

Cecotropes

Rabbits have two different types of poop. They have the dried brown balls that we're used to seeing, and cecals or "night droppings." Cecals or Cecatropes are a dark brown, have the consistency of toothpaste, and often resemble a bunch of grapes. While humans might find this disgusting, rabbits eat these. It's important for their health and helps them maintain healthy gut flora. With a normal, healthy rabbit you will rarely see them because rabbits tend to eat them straight from their anus. If your rabbit becomes disabled and can't eat his own cecals, you'll need to help him eat them by scooping them up and presenting them so he can eat them. In cases where your rabbit has diarrhea or his intestinal flora is off, feeding healthy cecals from another rabbit can help your rabbit recover.

Salt or mineral licks aren't needed. Many rabbits will not use them either, so they are just a waste of money.

When you bring your rabbit in for his annual exam, you should discuss your rabbit's diet with your veterinarian. While there are general guidelines, you can fine tune the diet to your specific needs. Your veterinarian can help make sure you are feeding the correct food for your bunny, helping to maintain his health.



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working can be quite entertaining.

The Divas: These rabbits rule the house. The only house rules are the ones the buns make. If they don't like something, they will make it perfectly clear and will expect you to correct whatever terrible tragedy has befallen them. You can pet them, but only when they are in the mood. It can be quite interesting to see so much attitude in a cute ball of fluff.

The Explorer: Somehow this cheeky rabbit always seems to be in trouble. Whether scaling the bookcase or digging a hole to Australia, The Explorer just has to see more of life and won't let anything stand in the way. Even outstanding rabbit proofing might not stop this rabbit.

The Shy vs. the Timid Bunny: Some bunnies are shy and need to get to know you before their personality really comes out. Then there are buns who tend to be timid. These rabbits are generally fearful, don't easily warm up to humans, and scare very easily when there are noises. The timid bun does best in a quiet household without young children.

The Snuggler: This bun just wants to be cuddled and loved. Wherever there's a person to rub him, he'll be there ... looking cute and adorable with eyes that say, "I'm yours. Please snuggle me."

It's important to find a bun who will fit well into your home and your life. One benefit of working with a rescue group is that the people there are very familiar with their rabbits and can help you choose a bun. They have spent time with the buns and learned their personalities, habits, etc. Keep in mind that rabbits will act differently around different people, so pay attention to how the bun is acting around you. The bottom line is that you're the only one who can tell if you feel a special connection with a certain bun. Good luck in your search for a new family bun.



Adoption Success Story

Kissed by a Moose

by Jessica Riel

After losing her bunny Petunia in November, Caitlin Solberg knew that the best way to honor her departed bunny would be to bring home a new bunny to love. In December of 2016, Caitlin brought Petunia's sister and widowed bondmate, Cheerio, a Holland lop, to HRN to meet the bachelor bunnies.

A Flemish Giant bunny named Brownie instantly captured her heart with his bounds of energy and big binkies. "Before I left HRN, he already became our 'Moose,'" says Caitlin.

Back home, Caitlin spent a month bonding Cheerio and Moose. "They both wanted to be the dominant bun," she says. "The first three weeks I kept them separated and then slowly introduced them to each other while monitoring them." Many dates later, the bunnies were ready to spend their lives together as best friends.

Moose is a free-range bunny, living in the kitchen. He loves to settle down for a nap on the area rug near the kitchen sink. "Moose loves to flop," says Caitlin, "but the way he forces his flop is hilarious. He puts his whole body into the flop." That hefty, happy, Flemish thud!

Though Moose loves to relax, if he hears the crinkle of a treat bag, he'll leap up to binky with excitement. "Moose enjoys his greens and hay," says Caitlin, as well as "baked timothy hay cookies."

Caitlin adores Moose and his sweet ways. "Moose is such a love!" He loves to snuggle. Cheerio is the smaller bunny, but that doesn't stop Moose from adorably tucking his head under her dewlap. He also snuggles with his favorite stuffy, a Patriots bear.



*Moose enjoying some hay.
Photo courtesy of Scott R.*



Caitlyn and Moose enjoying the moment. Photo courtesy of Scott R.

Moose loves his mama, too. "My favorite thing that Moose does is give me kisses!" says Caitlin. "Every day I stoop down to his level, and he will come running over and kiss my face. So sweet!"

"I honestly think Moose was a dog in a past life," says Caitlin. "He gets excited for food, loves attention, and gives the best kisses."

Moose has found his way to a happy and loving forever home. "Moose is the light of our lives, and we couldn't have adopted a bun any sweeter than him."



Volunteer Spotlight

by A.A.

Volunteers are the heart of HRN. This issue's featured volunteer is Yolanda Girouard. Yolanda started with HRN about five years ago on the recommendation of a veterinarian she was working with who was closing his practice. "I was a new bunny owner and thought it would be a good resource and a valuable learning experience," she said.

Yolanda has a hands-on job at the shelter that starts with a cage check in the morning to make sure the bunnies are well. She then brushes them, provides exercise, gives them pellets and hay, cleans cages, refills hay bins, and washes their food bowls and litter boxes. "I find the time at the shelter fun and relaxing, plus it's interesting to see the different behaviors of the various breeds," she said.

People looking to adopt a pet don't usually have rabbits on their radar. For Yolanda, one of the most rewarding parts of working with HRN is how the organization raises the profile of house rabbits. "HRN is a great educational tool to teach the general public that domestic rabbits make great house pets. I have found that so many people are not aware of this (I used to be one of them)!" Yolanda has a bonded pair of eight-year-old Lionhead / Jersey Woolly mix brothers who have been with her since they were babies. They are free-range and litter box trained.



Yolanda snuggling with a shelter bun. Photo courtesy of Stacey Paiva.



Yolanda's buns: Rafael Pedro and Fernando Miguel. Photo courtesy of Yolanda Girouard.

Yolanda describes HRN as a dedicated organization and a "great resource for new and experienced bunny owners alike," with many different volunteer opportunities that extend beyond the shelter. Yolanda has always loved animals and has had a positive experience being part of the process of helping bunnies find their forever homes. "I believe having or working with animals greatly enriches those who have them in their lives," she said. "I can't imagine life without them!"

For more information on adopting a bunny or volunteering, visit www.rabbitnetwork.org. A complete list of available volunteer positions can be found at www.rabbitnetwork.org/support/volunteering.

Thank You to Our HRN Friend

The House Rabbit Network would like to thank Day Pitney LLP for their recent pro bono assistance on a copyright issue. Their hard work and support was invaluable to protecting our assets.



HRN News

Annual Flatbread Benefit a Success!

HRN's annual Flatbread benefit took place on September 26 and raised over \$3,993! This is the 11th 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 for every flatbread sold that night. More than 300 HRN members, volunteers, and friends came to the restaurant to enjoy food and bid on wonderful auction prizes. Visit www.flatbreadcompany.com for more information about this generous local business.

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

A & J Steampunk Jewelry
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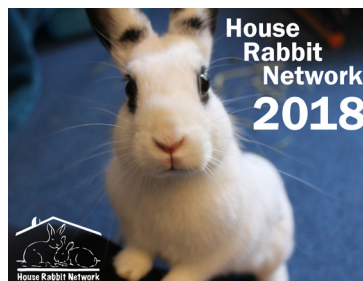
The New HRN Calendar is Here!

Our 2018 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. Order online with PayPal at www.rabbitnetwork.org. If you'd prefer to pay by check or money order, make your payment out to the House Rabbit Network and mail it to:

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

Shipping rates:

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



To order 5 or more, please send an email to info@rabbitnetwork.org, and we will let you know what the shipping rate will be.

Oxbow Grant

HRN is the happy recipient of \$1,000 from the Sharing our Garden Animal Rescue Giveback — Oxbow Animal Health's donation campaign to benefit small animal rescues. A portion of the proceeds from purchases of Oxbow's Garden Select food was used to fund the donation. The public voted online, and the five rescues with the most votes received \$1,000 each. This donation will support the purchase of food and care items for our buns who are waiting for their forever homes. Thank you to everyone who voted and to Oxbow for creating such a thoughtful and much-needed donation effort.

Annual Bunny Hop & Volunteer Awards



Volunteers Stace Fedan and Mindy Rae Labrecque showing off their friend's award.

A huge thanks to Bernadette and Mark for hosting the Bunny Hop in August. It was fun to relax and mingle with our bunny friends.

HRN exists because of all of our wonderful volunteers. You're all making a difference for the bunnies. We acknowledged the work of several of our volunteers by giving out the Volunteer Awards:

Shelter Support – Susan Hegarty and Susan Park (a.k.a. The Sunday Susans)

Shelter Support – Trudy Sivixay

Shelter Adoptions – Suellen Champagne

Foster Home – Cheryl Arena

Foster Home – Wendy Cook

Hotline Rookie – Lauren Franco

Volunteer of the Year – Deb McGillivray

Facebook Auctions

Our Summer Facebook Auction raised \$1,062. Thank you to everyone who bid and to the HRN team members who set up and monitored it, especially Betsy Hartman. Also, thank you to all the local businesses and HRN friends who generously donated items:

Allyson Grossman

Boston Duck Tours

Jess & Mark Riel

Suzanne Trayhan

Abigail Loewenstein

Cheesecake Factory

Laura Scafati

Trudy Sivixay

Betsy & Jeff Hartman

Jane Kavcak

Melanie Jury Smith

Keep an eye out for our next **Facebook Auction in November**. Information will be available on www.facebook.com/houserabbitnetwork.

Adoption Totals

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



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

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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 www.rabbitnetwork.org or just fill out this page and mail it with your check payable to:

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