



**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](http://www.rabbitnetwork.org)

# Rabbit Tracks

Spring 2016

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# Let's Go to the Hop: An Introduction to Rabbit Jumping

by Sadie Macmillan

Rabbits are a lot smarter than most people realize — a fact rabbit lovers enjoy sharing with the uninitiated. The more stimulation you give him, the more you'll see a rabbit's innate intelligence at work. For rabbit owners looking to exercise their bunnies' brains and bodies, competitive jumping is an increasingly popular option.

In U.S. competitive rabbit jumping, a rabbit runs a course furnished with hurdles of various heights and depths. In appearance and practice it's a lot like show-jumping for horses, only of course much smaller. There is a "mini" course for beginners to use as practice. The number of jumps and the height of the jumps determine the skill level of the course: there is an "easy" course with 10 jumps and a maximum height of 10 inches, "intermediate" and "difficult" courses, and an "elite" course with 10 to 14 jumps that can be up to 20" high. The course is timed, and judges deduct points for faults like touching the hurdles, going off course, and refusing a jump. The bunny with the quickest time and cleanest run wins. The high jump is also a typical event at competitions.

Rabbit jumping has been popular in Germany and the Scandinavian countries for several decades, but it is relatively new to the U.S. According to Tammy Steele, founder of Allikat Rabbit Hopping and Agility, there are probably only a few bunnies in the U.S. jumping at the advanced and elite levels, but that may change as the sport continues to grow in popularity.

For her part, Tammy is doing what she can to help rabbit jumping grow. She and her daughter Alexis have participated in rabbit jumping competitions, demonstrations, and training since 2011. They have also been working on building a community around the sport, and educating people about its benefits.

"Rabbit jumping makes life better for both rabbits and their owners," Tammy says. The exercise is good for the rabbit's physical health, and just as working dogs are happiest when they are doing their "jobs," rabbits are happiest when doing what comes naturally to them, like running and jumping. Training together strengthens the bond between bunny and human, and the human enjoys the pride that comes with watching the bunny accomplish new things. Plus, Tammy adds, "It's just a lot of fun."

She encourages people to try jumping with their rabbits, but stresses the importance of doing so safely. Rabbit owners should always get medical clearance from their veterinarians before starting to train. A high-impact activity like jumping puts strain on the joints, so it's not recommended for buns that are too young, too old, or overweight. Large-breed rabbits are also at risk of joint injury. For overweight and large-breed buns Tammy recommends agility training, in which a rabbit runs a course similar to a jumping course, but with lower-impact obstacles like A-frames, bridges, and teeter-totters.



*Popcorn competes at Spruce Meadows in 2014. Photo courtesy of the Canadian Rabbit Hopping Club.*

# Antibiotics Use

by Astrid Kruse, DVM

Antibiotics save lives when used correctly to treat bacterial infection, but they can also kill. Proper selection is important, especially for rabbits and other little herbivores with sensitive guts. Some antibiotics can never be used safely in these species — for instance oral penicillin type drugs (e.g., amoxicillin, Clavamox) and drugs like clindamycin. These can cause an often fatal diarrhea because they kill off the good bacteria in the intestines, which normally control the growth of the dangerous bugs all guts have lying in wait.

Ideally, using an antibiotic would be based on culture results. A culture is bacteria or cells grown for medical or scientific use. The veterinarian gets a sample of the infected goo (e.g., urine, nasal secretion, deep ear canal, brains, etc.), and the lab grows the bacteria on a dish, adds bits of different antibiotics, and then the vet can tell which antibiotic will kill that specific bacteria. Your vet combines this information with the knowledge of what antibiotics work well to penetrate the infected area, and what medications your bunny can tolerate.

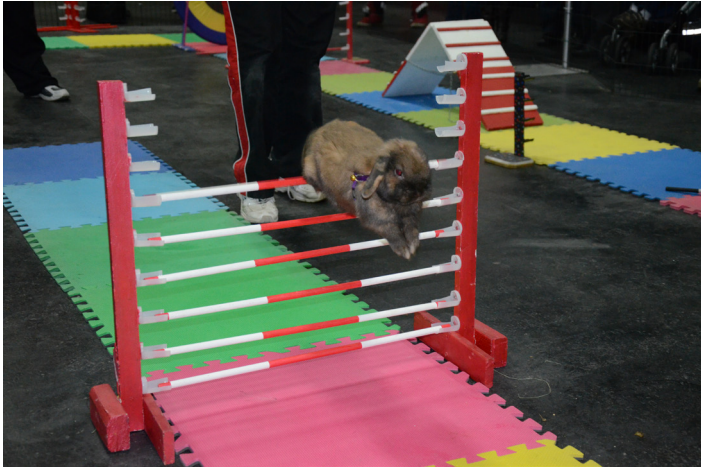


There are barriers to getting cultures every time. It takes 3-5 days for culture results to be ready, because no one can make bacteria grow faster than this. This means that during that lag time, if the bunny is sick enough (and just about all sick bunnies are sick enough!), the vet needs to make an educated guess and pick an antibiotic to use in the interim. Also, some tissues are hard to culture — it's difficult to stick a swab high up into the nose without sedation, the deep ear is just about unreachable without a surgical approach, the central nervous system's brain and spinal cord are frightening places to get close to, abscess goo usually doesn't have live bacteria anymore and you need a piece of the abscess capsule, which needs to be retrieved surgically. Third, the cost of a culture can be prohibitive to some pet parents, which can be anywhere from one to several hundred dollars. So often veterinarians are forced to do their best using their experience and what research is available.

For upper respiratory infections, I usually start with trimethoprim sulfa or enrofloxacin (Baytril). My second choices are chloramphenicol or rarely doxycycline. For my last resorts I save injectable penicillin and azithromycin — those carry the greatest risk of dysbiosis (killing off the normal gut bacteria), and I have seen several cases of fatal anaphylactic reactions to injectable penicillin. I have been reluctant to try Convenia, an injectable cephalexin type drug used frequently in dogs and cats, as I have heard of some bad reactions in herbivores. For urinary tract infections, I usually use trimethoprim sulfa and sometimes Baytril, or chloramphenicol, or injectable penicillin. For abscesses (a collection of pus in the tissues of the body, often accompanied by swelling and inflammation and frequently caused by bacteria) — in an effort to avoid surgery, for use before surgery, or if surgery isn't a good option — I will try a combination of metronidazole and enrofloxacin, or chloramphenicol, trimethoprim sulfa, or injectable penicillin. I have been lucky in that a fair number of abscesses in my patients resolve without surgery. However, I caution that abscesses in my experience go into remission, and are possibly never completely cured with medication alone. Surgical removal can be curative, especially if it is a single abscess from a known traumatic event.

*continued on pg. 4*

# Let's Go to the Hop: An Introduction to Rabbit Jumping con't



*Babbitty Rabbitty jumps at the Edmonton Pet Expo in 2012. Photo courtesy of the Canadian Rabbit Hopping Club.*

It's also important to use the right equipment when training your rabbit to jump. The hurdles should have bars that can fall away to either side, in case the rabbit suddenly decides to reverse course and jump from the other direction.

The rabbit owner also needs to keep his bunny safely on a leash. Collars are dangerous because they can easily choke a rabbit if he bolts. Harnesses are the safest, and the H-style harness allows the greatest range of movement, minimizes the strain on the neck, and doesn't carry the risk of overheating the rabbit the way a vest-style harness can.

For interested rabbit owners Tammy has one more general piece of safety advice: use common sense,

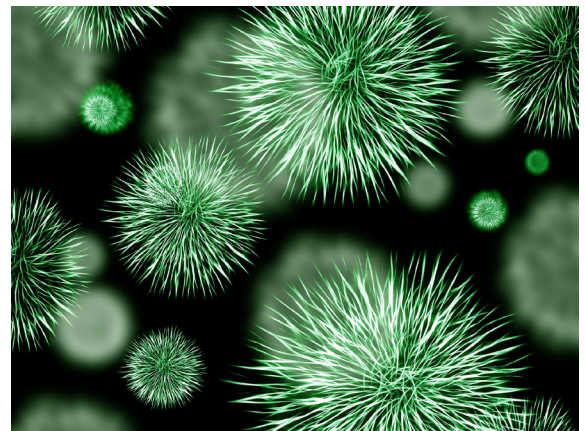
know your rabbit, understand how he communicates, and don't push him if something doesn't feel right. "It's like training any athlete," she says. "You build them up slowly."

There is so much to talk about in regard to rabbit jumping that we'll have a part two of this article in our next issue. We'll talk about the training process, and offer some resources for readers who are interested in getting involved in this exciting sport. In the meantime, you can investigate this fun sport further by visiting [www.rabbitshopping.com](http://www.rabbitshopping.com) or [www.canadianrabbitshoppingclub.com](http://www.canadianrabbitshoppingclub.com).



## Antibiotics Use con't

All antibiotics have their risks and benefits. For instance, Baytril should be avoided if possible in young growing rabbits since it can cause cartilage damage in these patients. Baytril also is more likely to have bacterial resistance develop. Chloramphenicol can cause dangerous bone marrow issues in some humans who handle it, so people should wear gloves. Injectable penicillin and azithromycin can seriously disrupt the gut bacteria. And any medication has the potential for causing a reaction, potentially fatal, in any individual patient, and should be used judiciously.



*Bacteria*

So if your bunny is sick, please take him/her to a rabbit experienced veterinarian. Discuss if a culture is possible. Antibiotics are prescribed when necessary, and make sure you follow the directions on dosing and frequency to avoid overdoses, which can cause illness, and underdosing, which can cause bacterial resistance and make the medication ineffective. And remember that although your vet wants to be a miracle worker, it heartbreakingly isn't always possible to successfully treat a bacterial infection.



# Volunteer Spotlight

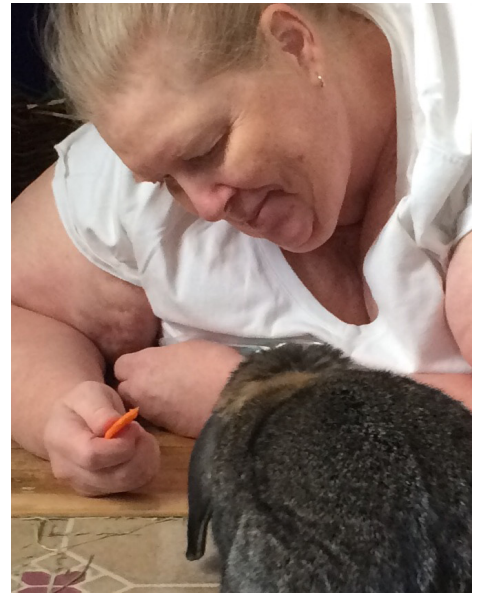
By A.A.

Volunteers are the heart of House Rabbit Network (HRN). They provide not only rescue and adoption services but also daily care, feeding, medical care, and socialization. *Volunteer Spotlight* recognizes the contributions of our dedicated bunny people. This issue's featured volunteer is Shelley Van Buren.

Shelley became interested in HRN after her son, Will, started volunteering in 2013 through EMARC — a non-profit organization that helps people with developmental disabilities and their families. Will “fell in love with the bunnies,” which prompted Shelley to start volunteering in 2014 along with him. She works directly with the shelter bunnies, providing the important everyday necessities like feeding, cleaning cages, and providing exercise and companionship. Shelley enjoys the “perks of cuddling and caring for the bunnies,” and the added benefit of having a rewarding activity that she and her son can do together.

Volunteering means a lot to Shelley because of how essential it is to a non-profit. Without the time and effort of volunteers, the crucial work of rabbit rescue and adoption simply wouldn't get done, which as Will pointed out, would leave many bunnies “neglected, unfed and unloved.”

In addition to rescue and adoption, HRN strives to educate the public about rabbit care, which is important to Shelley because of the misconceptions people have, such as the belief that rabbits are “soft, squishy pets” that like being picked up and carried. As she points out, rabbits are fragile and can get seriously injured from panicking or being dropped. It may seem like a simple thing, but informing potential adopters about proper bunny handling prevents tragic and sometimes fatal accidents. Volunteers give guidance to new bunny adopters so they can make their homes safe for HRN bunnies.



*Shelley with her bun Ben. Photo courtesy of the Van Buren family.*



*Ben in full relaxation mode. Photo courtesy of the Van Buren family.*

Shelley also knows firsthand the joy of providing a forever home. Benjamin, a 2 ½-year-old Mini Lop who loves carrots and cardboard, came to her when his previous owner could no longer care for him. His shyness and dislike of being held makes brushing and nail trimming “an adventure,” Shelley says. Despite his shyness, he loves to explore and has free range of the bunny-proofed first floor.

The bunnies also give back in their own ways by giving Shelley a sense of accomplishment and pride in helping an important cause. Since volunteering, Will feels less stress, calmer, and happier around the bunnies. Shelley has always been an animal lover and after meeting the shelter bunnies and caring for one of her own, she's now specifically a bunny lover. “They are truly wonderful creatures,” she says, and she feels fortunate to work with HRN, which she describes as a “wonderful place to volunteer.”



### Got Two Hours a Week to Take Care of Rescue Buns?

HRN shelter volunteers provide the love and care that the rescue buns need, until we can find them homes where they'll be loved and taken care of for the rest of their lives. The shelter buns would really benefit from more volunteers as there are three shifts each day (morning, midday, and evening) and they need care seven days a week. If you're interested in volunteering at the shelter in Billerica, call 781-431-1211 or drop us an email at [info@rabbitnetwork.org](mailto:info@rabbitnetwork.org). We also have a lot of other volunteer opportunities available. Please check them out at [www.rabbitnetwork.org/support/volunteering/](http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/support/volunteering/).

## Adoption Success Stories



*Mountain, Pepper, and Marie hanging out. Photo courtesy of Amy Litchfield-Kennedy.*

### Hope, Pepper, and Marie by Allison Lynch

In the summer of 2012, Amy Litchfield-Kennedy took in Hope as a foster bun from Sweet Binks shelter to help her get socialized. Hope was a former meat rabbit who was terrified of nearly everything, and Amy knew Hope would require extra and love and care to feel like a happy bun again. Amy fell in love with Hope instantly. Hope was Amy's first foster failure, which was the best failure Amy could have asked for!

In 2013, Hope met her husbun, Pepper from HRN. It took two years for the two to bond, but after that they were inseparable and madly in love. Amy says it was the strongest bond she's ever witnessed, and seeing Hope's ability to trust Pepper was one of the best experiences of her life.

Sadly, Hope came down with a vicious case of E.cuniculi in November of 2015. Pepper was there for her every minute, propping her up and cleaning her. Hope fought valiantly and did everything she could. Eventually, her body could not handle the disease anymore, and she had to be put to sleep just before Christmas.

Pepper was absolutely devastated. He was born in foster care, so he had never lived his life as a single bun. Pepper grew depressed and listless, so much so that Amy and her husband were concerned for his health. Amy figured it would be best to get him a new girlfriend to brighten his spirits at such a dark time.

That's when Marie from HRN entered the picture. Although there were no immediate sparks, Pepper seemed alright with Marie. Marie was a sweetheart and full of energy. The first day home, she was ecstatic and did binkies and circles in the living room for hours! Pepper was quite curious. Hope was an older bun, and Pepper wasn't used to seeing this much activity.

Today, Marie and Pepper live in separate pens as they continue to bond, but Pepper's mood has lifted and Marie is so very happy to have a forever home. Sometimes Amy catches them making lovey eyes at each other,



*Marie enjoying her new home. Photo courtesy of Amy Litchfield-Kennedy.*

# Adoption Success Stories con't

so she is confident they will work out. In the evenings, they roam freely together in the living room, often joined by their cat friend, Mountain, a lover of bunnies. Marie can be shy at times, but she's feisty and full of expressions. Amy is so glad they adopted her. We'll keep our fingers crossed for the happy future of this bun couple!

## Henry the Adventure Bunny

by Jessica Riel

Henry the rabbit lives on Henry Street with his bun-wife, Daisy.

Henry wasn't named after his street, and his street wasn't named after Henry: it's pure coincidence. But his mom, Donna Tivedo, feels it is a sign. "We were meant to be family!"

Daisy had lost her bunny bondmate over the summer, and the loss was hard on the whole family. But when Daisy met Henry, it was love at first sight — they groomed each other on their first date at the shelter. Love must have been in the air this past February, because Henry and Daisy were bonded within just a couple days of coming home.



Henry and Daisy sitting pretty. Photo courtesy of Donna Tivedo.

"Henry and Daisy really did well together right from the start!" says Donna. "I kept them separate when they were not supervised for a few days, but we really had no problem with them being together! They eat together, share a litter box sometimes, play together, explore together, and of course snuggle!"



Henry doing the laundry. Photo courtesy of Donna Tivedo.

Henry loves exploring his house on Henry Street. He and Daisy live in the sunroom, but are free range and spend time with the family in other rooms. "Henry has been surprisingly found in far reaches of our home and in rather unusual situations," says Donna. Henry has earned his nickname of "Adventure Bunny," going where no bunny had gone before. He has traversed to the heights of the five-foot-tall bunny hutch; crossed the house to survey his kingdom from atop the wooden kitchen rack; sampled wood destined for the fire; mingled with dust bunnies beneath the clawfoot tub; claimed for his own the dog's bed, the dog's kennel, and the dog's water bowl; and delighted in the ball pit in his human brother's room. Henry has even "been known to balance on the back of an arm chair to reach a hanging plant that is suspended from the ceiling," says Donna, "for its own protection from bunny rabbits!"

In addition to houseplants, Henry enjoys nibbling on strawberry tops, crunching carrots, munching romaine, and stuffing his belly full with fragrant hay.

"Henry is such a little character!" says Donna. "He is also very affectionate. He loves to be patted and comes right over when his family comes into the room. I can safely say Henry is pretty happy in his new home!"



# HRN News

## Facebook Auction

Our Facebook Auction ran from May 9 through May 19, and raised \$2,017. Some wonderful items were auctioned, including a night at the Castle Hill Inn, rabbit jewelry, a rabbit pillow, ornaments, towels, napkins, note cards, baby outfits, a reiki session, and lots more! Thank you to everyone who donated items:

Betsy Hartman  
Carol Youngclaus  
Castle Hill Inn  
Cordelia's Trinkets  
Cruelty Free Consumer  
Franny McKeever  
Harrows  
Healing Way Center  
Improv Asylum  
Jess Riel  
Melanie Isett  
Nicole Dunham  
Rachel Minnie  
Suzanne Trayhan  
Top of the Hub

## Petco Foundation

The Petco Foundation, which works to create a better world for animals, awarded HRN a \$2,500 grant. This grant will help HRN with animal care, medical treatments, and spays/neuters.



## New HRN Website

We are delighted to have a new website up at [www.rabbitnetwork.org](http://www.rabbitnetwork.org). The older site had been built many years ago, and the technology used for it had begun to show its age and made it incredibly difficult to maintain the site. The new site was created using WordPress open source framework. Thanks to Alan Moyer who developed the new site for us.

## Bunny Spa Day

At the first-ever Bunny Spa Day to support HRN on Sunday, April 24, 2016, at Domino Veterinary Hospital in Concord, MA, 34 bunnies enjoyed getting the spa treatment from 14 volunteers who offered nail trims and grooming, professional animal massage, a photoshoot, and reiki sessions. One bunny mama said the event was "a great opportunity for both bunny and me!" She "loved meeting and seeing other rabbits." Bunnies went home to enjoy their new apple and pear tree sticks and dried organic papaya treats. The day raised \$1,290 for HRN, and everyone who attended said they'd love to return for the next Bunny Spa Day! Anyone interested in learning more about future Bunny Spa Days or in-home massage for their bunny can email event organizer Jessica Riel, Certified Small Animal Massage Practitioner of Chloe's Paws Animal Massage, at [info@chloespaws.com](mailto:info@chloespaws.com) or visit [www.chloespaws.com](http://www.chloespaws.com).



*Sunshine after her spa treatment.  
Photo courtesy of George Delianides,  
Moments to Memories Photography.*



## Giggles Fundraiser

On April 10 the House Rabbit Network held its annual fundraiser at the Giggles Comedy Club for a fun evening of comedy, pizza, and auction prizes. 80 tickets for the event were sold! Thanks to the generosity of local businesses and individual donors, we had great prizes up for grabs, including gift baskets and gift certificates to local dining, entertainment, and retailers. With event tickets and auction tickets \$1,985 was raised! We are extremely grateful to the volunteers, guests, and donors who made the night possible. A special thanks to Deb McGillivray, Scott Inman, and Janelle Carmichael for their help at the event, and to Janelle and Deb for their assistance with gathering donations.

### *Giggles Fundraiser Donors:*

Angela Donahue  
Antonia Longo  
Bernadette Saccoia-Quirk  
Boston Duck Tours  
Busy Bunny  
Scott Inman  
Carol Youngclaus  
Cordelia's Trinkets  
Franny McKeever  
Janelle Carmichael  
Jenny Baustert  
Laser Craze  
Tanya Johnson  
Tina & Chuck Forbes  
York's Wild Kingdom



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### Donating Items for the Buns

As a non-profit organization, we are always in need of supplies for the buns. Items we could really use: paper towels, vinegar, fresh hay, quality food pellets like Purina Lab Diet or Oxbow's Bunny Basics, wood stove pellets, grass mats or balls, wicker baskets (unfinished), even cash to pay our vet bills. If you could donate any of these items, please contact us by phone at 781-431-1211 or email us at [info@rabbitnetwork.org](mailto:info@rabbitnetwork.org). Our contact person should be able to find a convenient location for you to drop the donations off.

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## 2016 Adoption Totals

77 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](http://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](mailto: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 <http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/join.shtml> or just fill out this page and mail it with your check payable to:

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*Choose your membership level:*

- Dwarf.....\$ 15.00
- Mini Lop.....\$ 25.00
- 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

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**Total.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_**

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