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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

Summer 2005



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# An Adoption Tale: Ethan & Skippy

*As told by Ethan Matchinski*

I am a twelve-year-old boy who wanted a pet that would be lively but affectionate. My family and I had considered dogs or guinea pigs as pets, but at least one of us was allergic to these animals. We then started researching rabbits and found the website of the House Rabbit Network. We liked the idea of adopting a rabbit that needed a home, and contacted Cheryl of the House Rabbit Network. She invited us to see the rabbits. Since she had several rabbits at her home, we also thought it would be a good way to see if one of us had allergies to rabbits. Luckily, it turned out that none of us had a problem.



*Is there a Celtics fan in the house?*

My parents and I spent almost two hours checking out all the rabbits. I had just about decided to adopt a pair of mini-lop bunnies when a young New Zealand white male, who had been sleeping, stood

up against his fence as if to say, "You can't leave without checking me out!" He had been given the name Skippy because he liked to hop and was curious. I went over and he nudged a ball toward me. After I rolled it back at him and he rolled it back at me, I knew he was the rabbit for me!

Skippy joined our family in late November 2004. It took him only about a day or so to get comfortable in his new surroundings. Skippy has his own room where he can run around uncaged. He stays in a large animal pen (not a cage) when we are not at home, and I built him a wooden house that he likes to sleep in while I am at school. If he knows we are home, he will either start chewing on the metal gate to his pen, or scratch on the wood door if he is outside of his pen, to let us know he wants to be around us. He loves to be petted and will come over and flop down next to one of us. He even gives "kisses" with his nose. He can also run fast, and I love it when he hops and clicks his heels. My dad says it is the sign of a happy rabbit! We quickly discovered he likes to chew, as most rabbits do. Thank goodness for apple wood bark! The hardest



*Ethan & Skippy, "the best pet a person could have"*

time we have with Skippy is trying to get him back in his pen when I go off to school, so I bribe him with carrot tops. As first-time rabbit owners, my parents and I have been pleasantly surprised at how friendly and gentle Skippy is. I think Skippy is the best pet a person could have!

*Editor's Note: Skippy was one of the relocated Williamsport rabbits rescued in July 2004, from a closing meat farm in Williamsport, PA. His good-fortune tale illustrates the significance of everyone's effort in rabbit rescue, and that no one's contribution is too small.*



**"If eyes are the mirror of the soul, then the albino rabbits must be the most colorful characters! Their scintillating pink eyes turn shades of powder blue and lavender in different lights, drawing you into their unique personalities."**

**~ Nancy Furstinger**



# All About Sore Hocks

By Tania Castañeda

## The Condition and Symptoms:

Sore hocks or pododermatitis is a pressure-related condition in which the “soles” (weight-bearing undersides) of rabbits’ feet become raw and inflamed, and in particularly severe cases, ulcerated. Pale pink calluses covered by a fold of fur can often be seen on the bottoms of rabbits’ paws, and rabbits can live comfortably with them.

Pododermatitis arises when these sensitive areas become highly aggravated. If the state becomes very serious, oozing ulcers will develop, making the rabbit vulnerable to infection. The condition is painful for the rabbit and often irreversible.

## The Causes:

Rabbits can be genetically predisposed to pododermatitis. Rexes, which have thinner fur pads protecting paw bottoms, are naturally more vulnerable to sore hocks. Larger breeds also inherently carry more weight on their hocks, and this can promote the development of sores. Genetic predispositions are greatly exacerbated by environmental factors, and even rabbits without any genetic inclination can suffer from sore hocks if exposed or subjected to the following conditions:

- extended periods of time in confined spaces,
- extended periods of immobility, prolonged time sitting on wired or hard surfaces with little “give” or pliability,
- damp or unhygienic surroundings,

- overgrown nails,
- obesity.

In order to better comprehend how or why the above factors can aggravate pododermatitis, consider your rabbit’s physical build, which has evolved for its “natural” living environment on earth and grass. Both of those naturally occurring surfaces are far more compliant and porous than wire, carpeting, wood and other indoor and synthetic surfaces. Our companion animals are descendants of rabbits who performed most or all of their daily activities (i.e., eating, sleeping, running, and playing) on surfaces into which nails and paws can sink. These more forgiving surfaces help reduce weight-related pressure and force on the rabbit’s hocks.

## The Treatment:

Of course, the best treatment is prevention. There are several ways to prevent the development of sore hocks, including these tips:

- 1. Create soft, flat, and non-wire surfaces for your rabbit.** Hay and a meshy, absorbent litter or bedding (e.g., Carefresh) will offer less resistance to your rabbit’s weight, allowing nails to sink into the material, and will remove pressure from the underside of the foot. If your rabbit spends time in a wire cage, cover a portion of the floor with a soft implement (such as fleece or faux sheepskin), which will help to evenly distribute pressure on the rabbit’s hock while s/he is resting on the surface.

- 2. Clip toenails regularly.** Once again, short nails will assist in distributing weight more evenly on the base of the foot. Longer nails cause the rabbit to shift more weight to the back of the paw, stressing that area, and increasing the potential to form sores.

- 3. Keep your rabbit’s home clean and dry.** Disinfect litter boxes, cages, or penned areas. Change litter regularly, and ensure that the rabbit’s space is dry. These preventative steps will protect your rabbit from infection and ensure that your rabbit’s natural protective mechanism (i.e., the paw’s underside fur) is in peak condition.

- 4. Soak and compress the hock area** with tea bags to toughen existing calluses.

- 5. Check your rabbit’s paws regularly for indicators of sore hocks.** If you see symptoms of pododermatitis, improve your rabbit’s environment, and treat the existing condition right away.

For situations that have already become serious, medical treatments include:

- 1.** Topical antibiotics and other soothing ointments (zinc or iodine), and
- 2.** Systemic antibiotics (to address possible infection), if ulcers are present.

Sore hocks are notoriously difficult to treat, and a challenge to prevent. You can avoid pododermatitis by

providing your rabbit with a clean, soft, and hygienic lifestyle, and by being attentive to his or her physical condition. However, even some of the most pampered rabbits still develop pododermatitis. If you notice that your rabbit's hocks have become somewhat raw, immediately

improving your rabbit's living environment and soothing the area with a topical ointment can promote recovery and prevent development of an acute condition. If the situation appears to worsen, contact your bunny-savvy veterinarian, as a prescribed treatment may be necessary.

*Note: New-Skin has been a great and highly effective treatment for sore hocks. It provides extra cushion to take weight off the hock, and protects the inflamed area, allowing it to heal. Just place some on the affected area and hold your bunny until it dries. Each treatment will last several days.*



## Bun Voyage! Traveling With Rabbits

By Suzanne Rubins

Back in the spring of 2001, I decided to move with my family from Boston to Seattle for work. Not all that unusual, really, except



*Lucy (left) supervises the packing as Wilbur (right) investigates Bubble Wrap box playhouse.*

my family consisted of three large rabbits: Lucy, Wilbur, and Wellington, as well as two large guinea pigs, Grover and Gloria.

Driving across the country was out because I can't drive, so it was airplane or nothing!

Fortunately, the wonderful HRN volunteers came through with adoptions and new foster homes or sanctuary space for all my HRN foster rabbits, so I could focus on the

logistics of the move. Packing was SO much fun... I kept stepping on the giant bubblewrap by mistake and spooking the animals. Then there were the 10 days we had camping out in the apartment, after all the furniture and supplies had been shipped out. The buns knew something was up. "Where's our Rabbitat, and why is Mom sleeping on the floor?" they seemed to ask.

Because airlines only allow two small animals in the cabin per flight, it was clear that multiple trips would be needed. The idea of shuttling back-and-forth didn't appeal to me. Two friends agreed to help by ferrying some critters for me, in exchange for a "free" trip to Seattle. It helps if you're moving to a fun destination, but even more if you have good friends around!

My first arrangements were with United Airlines, who assured me that it was

perfectly fine to take the animals in the cabin. I happened to call back the next day to order a vegetarian meal, and by chance mentioned the rabbits. The second agent stated unequivocally that animals are NOT permitted to ride in the cabin, because they might get loose. I had to cancel all the reservations. Luckily, Delta Airlines was more accommodating and consistent, but I'd had such a scare, that I printed out all their statements about small animals, to have with us when we showed up at the airport. I had a couple of nightmares about this too. Each animal needed a vet health certificate, and there was a \$75 cabin fee, but we got through check-in fine. It might be harder now than



*Wellington the bun and piggies, Grover & Gloria in the new condo.*

it was in May 2001, but nobody made me take them out of their carrier.

Wilbur and Lucy flew in a jumbo Sherpa carrier under the seat; I kept checking on them throughout the flight. They were seven years old at the time, so I was a little concerned about their health.

I lined the carrier with some large incontinence bed pads, and had a bag of damp parsley and lettuce to offer them to keep them hydrated. Since we had to change planes in Salt Lake City, I could take them into the bathroom, replace the bedding, offer greens and water, and mist their ears a little. Lucy and Wilbur didn't eat



### *Don't forget the bunny condo.*

or drink, and were a little subdued but made the trip in fine shape. It got pretty humid inside the carrier though, so we did make use of the fancy ventilation flaps.

Once we got to Seattle, our cab got into an accident on the freeway. We were delayed another hour before reaching the apart-

ment I'd rented over the phone. It was exhausting! Lucy, who had a heart murmur, began to get a little droopy, but they both made the trip fine. They settled in nicely in their new Seattle apartment—which had carpeting to zoom around on. Wellington and the guinea pigs joined us two days later, and my friends Chris and Peter and I enjoyed a long weekend seeing the sights.

One of the cards I received at the HRN going-away party noted, "Wherever you go, a rabbit will make it home." It was hard leaving Boston and all my friends, but that statement turned out to be true.



## Grooming Angoras: Avoiding a Bad "Hare" Day

*By Shannon Cail*

When I adopted Lily in October of 2004 from the MSPCA, I had absolutely no idea just what I was in for. I just knew that big ball of fluff sitting in the corner of the cage, looking terrified, needed a forever home. So she came home with me right then and there. Little did I know how much care an angora would require, and what a happy, free-spirited, bossy and charismatic bun she would turn out to be.

The "fun" started as soon as I got her home. The matts of fur that Lily had acquired from "being on the streets" needed to be dealt with

first and foremost. However, this can also occur from infrequent grooming, or a lack of grooming of an angora's coat by the caretaker. I carefully started by cutting out the matts, as a brush was no match for her fur at this point. The major problem areas were behind her ears, under her legs, between her toes, her dewlap area and her cheeks. These are frequent matting areas for angoras anyway. One leg was so badly matted from front to back, I was surprised Lily could still use it to hop or even stretch it out. That matt in particular took me an hour just to work out.

After three days of working on the matts, not only did Lily look like

a punk rocker, but I was finally able to brush her. Because an angora's skin is even more delicate and paper thin than that of most buns, one must be extremely careful when cutting and brushing. Otherwise, the skin can easily be cut without one even knowing it, and brushing too hard can cause skin irritation.

### **Important grooming tools for an angora:**

- slicker brush (extra gentle)
- widely spaced metal tooth comb
- scissors (good-quality, not necessarily expensive, as an angora's fur is thick and will cut easier if scissors are good-quality)

- electric shavers (I have found these to be very helpful to even out fur and to cut around delicate areas, such as behind the ears and the genital area – electric shavers only cut a small amount of angora fur, because of the thickness and makeup of the fur – depending on the shaver, you also do not have a chance to nick the skin as with scissors)
- blow dryer (I have heard and read that blow drying on the lowest and coolest setting prevents matts from forming, although I have yet to try this myself)

#### Weekly grooming:

1. Brushing (all over top side brushing - gently around ear area as they are very sensitive, trying not to pull the fur).
2. Feel for matts that may be forming and cut and/or shave them out if necessary.
3. Check the underside to make sure there are no matts, hay, etc. stuck in the fur near the genital area, which could lead to problems.

#### Monthly grooming:

1. Full body cut – I do it in 2-3 stages or sessions. For one or two nights (depending on how cooperative Lily is at the time) I concentrate on the body and head area with the scissors, usually cutting her fur down to about a length of 3/4". On the third night I do her underside.

2. Underside area – I enlist the help of another person to hold Lily on her back while grooming this area. Her underside area



*Top Photo: In need of a cut, Lily's fur is more of a grayish-brown color.*

*Bottom Photo: After a good cut and clipping, Lily's fur is more of a grayish-white color.*

can usually be done in about an hour with several short breaks in between. This area is by far one of the most sensitive areas on Lily. I try to be a little "rough" so as not to tickle her.

3. For the cheek area I used to try to cut around the whiskers, which proved to be almost impossible, especially when you have a squirmy bun on your hands. Not to mention, Lily despises her cheek area being touched. Now, (based on the advice of an angora rescue fanatic), I just cut the entire area, whiskers and all.

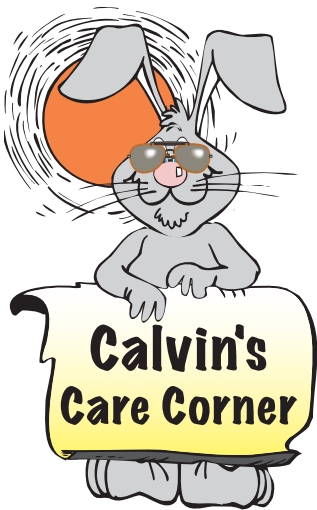
4. Her dewlap area is still the scariest part to me. You need to be extremely careful, feeling the chest bone as you go. I cut a little at a time while she's on her back. The person helping me is very good at holding Lily and will gently stretch her head upwards so I can trim that area.

Grooming is one of the biggest parts of owning an angora. Due to the massive amounts of fur produced and ingested by an angora during self-grooming, hay is a huge part of their diet. This is important with all rabbits, but angoras are even more susceptible to GI stasis or impaction.

With the mounds of fur I have left over after a grooming session (it still shocks me how much fur can come from such a little thing) I do one of three things: give it to another HRN member for crafting purposes, throw it away, or "donate" it to my wild feathered friends for their nests.

Even though Lily has proven to be a great deal of work, I wouldn't trade her or her antics for anything. Angoras are by far a breed that requires a huge amount of time in order to keep them healthy and happy. Their beautiful look doesn't just happen. It is something that only you the caretaker can make happen with time, dedication and lots of love.





*Whew!  
It's being  
a real win-  
ner of a  
summer  
already!  
I'm think-  
ing that a  
few hot-  
weather  
reminders  
are in  
order.*

*HRN has a must-read Summer Dangers article by Kathy Smith on line. Below are a few additional seasonal considerations.*

**Keep Cool** – Rabbits don't pant or sweat to cool themselves. Rabbits are cooled by their blood circulating through their ears and dissipating

the heat. Often this system needs external augmentation. Use oscillating fans or an A/C to increase air movement and decrease humidity. Ensure that newly-added appliances' power cords are bunny-proofed! Place frozen water bottles on the floor to lower the local temperature. Draw the blinds or curtains to cut the light.

**Food & Water** – Produce will spoil quicker in warmer weather, so remove fruits and veggies that are not eaten within 24 hours. Rotting food grows bad bacteria and also attracts flies (both of which bunny doesn't need). Keep the water bowls/bottles clean and filled with fresh, cool water. On super-hot days, add a couple of ice cubes to the water.

**Outside Foods** – If you want to feed your rabbit greens harvested from the lawn, such as clover, dandelion, or plantain, be sure you "know your plants" and that they are chemically untreated. Introduce gradually; feed sparingly. *(Note: Some plants that wild rabbits eat are not safe for pet rabbits to eat. Be sure to check online sources for poisonous plants.)* Untreated apple tree branches make great chew sticks; however do not feed branches from fruit trees that produce fruits with pits (e.g., plum, peach) as there is cyanide in the branches. Consider growing your own "bunny salad" in a home garden. Try parsley, swiss chard, and romaine lettuce. Keep your garden organic, and clean any food you give bunny.

## Starbuns at Starbucks

During the month of June, at the Woburn, MA, Starbucks, HRN's foster rabbits were the stars of their very own photo display. The exhibit was a collaborative effort between local photographer, "Photo by T" [aka Takako], and HRN volunteers. HRN became aware of T's emotive animal images on Craigslist. There T has been posting photos of MSPCA animals seeking adoption. She also has two large "Gift of Life" photo galleries in Boston-area Starbucks! HRN asked T if she would share her innovative concept with us, and she enthusiastically accepted. T photographed many of HRN's foster rabbits for our display.

Carol Youngclaus and Kathy King arranged the installment at the Woburn Starbucks (where Carol works) and together created the



***HRN Volunteers, Carol Youngclaus & Kathy King, at the Woburn Starbucks in front of framed photos of HRN rabbits available for adoption.***

final framed prints. On Sunday, June 12, HRN hosted an education



***Pepper & Poppy***

event at the Starbucks, featuring Pepper and Poppy, a bonded pair of adoptable bunnies (two of Greta's famous litter, as featured in the Fall '04 RT).

HRN is very grateful to Photo by T for her generosity in sharing her photography skills and her love for house rabbits! To learn more about T's work, visit [www.hopsii.com](http://www.hopsii.com).

HRN also thanks Starbucks for their continued support of all animal rescue efforts.

## HRN News

### Fundraisers Galore!

HRN volunteers hosted two yard sale fundraisers this Spring – one in Billerica, MA, and the other in Townsend, MA. The goal was to raise funds for the HRN foster rabbits. Despite the unbelievable weather-persistent rain in May and the recent early June heat wave-these yard sales netted \$1,000 altogether for HRN. HUGE thanks to everyone who participated in these events! We couldn't do it without you.

### Upcoming August Fundraisers!

HRN will be running concurrent fundraisers this August 1–15 with Yankee Candle and Pampered Chef. This will be the third year for Yankee Candle, and they have increased the percentage HRN receives to 43% of every sale! New this year is Pampered Chef, and thanks to Cheryl, HRN will get a higher percentage of each sale than is ordinarily given.

**YANKEE  
CANDLE**

**The Pampered Chef**  
celebrates 25 years

If you would like Yankee Candles send your full name and mailing address to Jessica at [tletcould@gmail.com](mailto:tletcould@gmail.com); for Pampered Chef, send the same information to Cheryl at [Lillith872@aol.com](mailto:Lillith872@aol.com). Why not get both catalogues so that you can offer a variety to potential buyers!

Remember, every bit counts – and if you don't like candles, buy a knife to cut up all those carrots!

### Kathy Smith Keynote Speaker at HRC Annual Meeting

The House Rabbit Connection (MA) was honored to have Kathy Smith speak at their Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 25th, in Springfield, MA. Kathy is well known for her comprehensive *Rabbit Health in the 21st Century, Second Edition*, and her inspiring *King Murray's Royal Tail*. Expand your reference library – both books are available in the HRN online Gift Shop!

### Summer Bunny Bash!

Saturday, July 30th in Wilmington at 2:00 p.m. Come join other HRN members, volunteers, adopters, and supporters for the annual summer potluck get-together. It's a great opportunity to meet other bunny people, trade stories, show bunny brag books, and just relax. Details are forthcoming, but keep this date open! For more information, check the HRN website or email [info@rabbitnetwork.org](mailto:info@rabbitnetwork.org).



### Wedding Bell... Bunnies!

In Feb. 2005, Kim Labow and David Olsen were married. They asked for donations to HRN as their wedding gifts. We received \$600 from their friends and family! Kim and David are both HRN supporters and



David & Kim

the proud parents of their own house rabbits, Baxter and Berkley. Congratulations to Kim and David on their wedding, and many thanks for their generosity!

### In Memoriam

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

~ Beth Mende Conny

### Marlo

Our precious little Marligator with the deep, soulful eyes. It is heartbreaking to say goodbye when we'd barely finished saying hello. However short our time together was, we are nonetheless grateful to have been touched by your gentleness, spunk and incredible zest for life. You were an amazingly sweet and courageous soul whose indomitable spirit made you unwilling to give in to a body that had betrayed you. Though your pain must have been great, you rose above and faced each day with joy in your eyes and love in your heart. You taught us so much about love, trust and determination of the spirit. Though small in size, the hole you left in our hearts is enormous. Your Mom, Dad and your partner in crime, Poppy, will forever miss you. We thank you for enriching our lives with the gift that was you. You may now rest peacefully, little one. You are free from pain and unfettered from the limits of your ailing body. You will always be remembered as our little dancing machine, a blessing from above. Until we meet again, sweet girl.



*Love and snuggles,  
from Mom, Dad and Poppy.*



# Bunnies Looking for Loving Homes!

HRN has many bachelors, bachelorettes and couples looking for their very own loving and forever homes. All of the adult animals listed here have been spayed or neutered. For information about these bunnies or other bunnies for adoption, please contact us at [781-431-1211](tel:781-431-1211) or [info@rabbitnetwork.org](mailto:info@rabbitnetwork.org).

## Bachelors

Hamilton



Bramble



Jay



Garfield



Comet



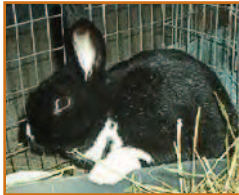
Newton



Preston



Thomas



Chubby



Snorbles



Chip



Dorian



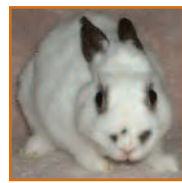
Winston



Ruby



Chester



Spice



## Bachelorettes

Bubbles



Zsa Zsa



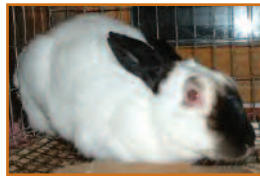
Sonia



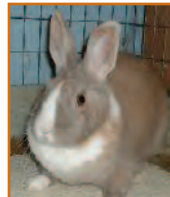
Millie



Malakai



Dusty



Alice



Scooter



Ginger



Chiquita



Piper



Sydney



Mae



Kaley



Sally



Pup



## Pairs

Snowy & Jacob



Cookie & Oreo



Opal & Pearl



Pepper & Poppy



Pickles & Cricket



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

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

Through our network of dedicated volunteers and members, we are making amazing strides to improve the welfare of house rabbits everywhere. Your support can only further our goals, so become a member, and get involved. *Visit our website to find out how to help [www.rabbitnetwork.org](http://www.rabbitnetwork.org).*

***If you are not already a member, please join HRN!***

*Your membership dollars will go towards rescue and rehabilitation, community outreach and education, and veterinary expenses.*

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

Contact HRN at [info@rabbitnetwork.org](mailto:info@rabbitnetwork.org) or (781) 431-1211.



## House Rabbit Network Membership and Ordering Form

Your membership donation is tax deductible and will be used for medical costs (spays/neuters, vet bills) and education expenses. All members will receive a copy of our newsletter, *Rabbit Tracks*, when it is published. Currently, we are publishing three issues per year.

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

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

*Choose your membership level:*

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

*Choose your newsletter delivery preference:*

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

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

2nd Edition  
at \$20.00 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_