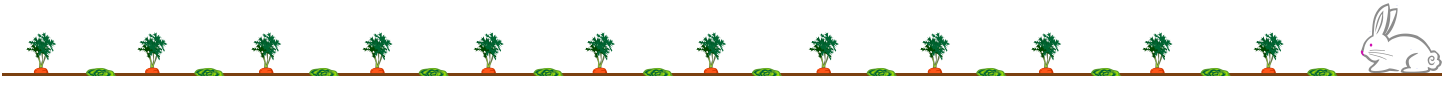




House Rabbit Network

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

Winter 2017



Table of Contents	
Tips for Picking Up Your Bun.....	pg. 2
Liver Lobe Torsion in Rabbits.....	pg. 3
Adoption Success Stories.....	pg. 4
Volunteer Spotlight.....	pg. 6
HRN News.....	pg. 8

Tips and Tricks for Picking Up Your Bun

by Suzanne Trayhan



Picking up Munchkin. Photo courtesy of Yolanda Girouard.

First and above all, be confident. I can't stress how important this is. If you have any hesitation, a bunny will sense this and you are toast. You need to be confident. Think "I am picking you up and you will cooperate." Repeat that in your head. Believe in it. Make it clear you will not settle for anything less. You're the boss.

Since they don't like to be picked up, most buns turn into what I call "squirmy wormies." They wriggle, squirm, nip, and do other things to try and get down. Never put them down like this. What they will learn is that if they squirm, they get put down. Instead you want them to learn they need to be calm to be put down. When they wriggle and squirm I pull them into my chest, wrap my arms around them tightly and in a soothing voice I say "calm." Often I even elongate it, "caaaaallllllm." When they chill out, then I try once again to place them down. If they squirm, I pull them right back into my chest with my arms, wait for them to calm down and try again. When I first start working with a bun, we can sometimes go through this ten times before he's finally calmed down so I can put him/her down. Be persistent.

Another tip I have for you – when you're putting your bun down, put him down facing you. Head towards your body, butt out. It seems more natural to put a rabbit down with his butt towards you and head out. What happens then is that the bun wants to start running before the paws even hit the floor. If you place your bunny down facing you, he'll run into you. This will make him less likely to run. It's also helpful to bend and get low to the ground. As a note, once your bun behaves well, I do prefer to put him down facing out if he's being placed into a carrier or a cage.

Most people realize that the average rabbit hates to be picked up. They are prey animals and much more comfortable with their paws on the ground. Even though we don't encourage people to hold their rabbits for snuggle sessions, it's important that your bunny be used to being handled. You still need to trim nails, take them to the vet, etc., and having a well-behaved cooperative rabbit is helpful and better for his well-being. Most people know the standard "one hand under the chest, the other under the bum" for picking up their buns, but that does not always lead to a cooperative bunny. Here are some tips and tricks to help you.



Calming a bunny. Photo courtesy of Yolanda Girouard.

Liver Lobe Torsion in Rabbits

by Jacqueline Warner, DVM

Liver lobe torsion is a problem that can occur in many different kinds of animals, including dogs, cats, rabbits, pigs, horses, rats, and humans. The liver is comprised of many different lobes. Liver lobe torsion occurs when a lobe twists on itself, cutting off circulation to that part of the liver. This results in the release of liver enzymes as those cells die off. Eventually this can lead to shock and death. In rabbits, liver lobe torsion occurs infrequently, though it seems to be diagnosed more frequently in the Greater Boston area.

We don't know why some rabbits experience this particular problem, or why we see it more commonly in New England. It's possible that some rabbits are born

without ligaments that support the liver, or that these ligaments could be stretched by trauma or disease. We do know that it seems to occur more commonly in mini-lop rabbits. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to track the lineages of these rabbits to see if there's a common ancestor. It's also possible that there are more reported cases of liver lobe torsion in New England rabbits because we have the experts in this disorder practice at our referral institutions, and they have raised awareness of the disease in local veterinarians and veterinary students.

Liver lobe torsion can present with non-specific signs. Usually rabbits are brought to the vet for loss of appetite, lethargy, and decreased stool production of one-day duration. These are the same reasons that many rabbits are brought to the vet and diagnosed with GI stasis. There are a myriad of problems that can result in GI stasis, including dental disease, poor diet, anesthesia, stress, pain, infection, and lead toxicity. In a perfect world, every rabbit that comes into the vet's office with GI stasis would have bloodwork and x-rays performed. This doesn't always happen, mostly because of financial concerns. So how do we know when to be more aggressive about pursuing these diagnostics? One of the key factors is abdominal pain, especially in the front part of the abdomen. Another is breed disposition – a mini-lop would raise the index of suspicion since they are overrepresented in the literature on liver lobe torsion in rabbits. Usually there's a range of severity of clinical signs on presentation, and clearly a rabbit that looks worse would warrant more aggressive intervention.

Liver lobe torsion can be diagnosed using a combination of bloodwork and imaging. On bloodwork, many rabbits with liver lobe torsion are anemic. All of them have moderately to severely elevated liver enzymes. Some have elevated kidney values as well, which could be attributed to dehydration. Radiographs may provide some clues, but findings can be non-specific. An abdominal ultrasound is the diagnostic modality of choice. An ultrasound can show enlargement of a liver lobe, rounded liver lobe margins, and a lack of blood flow to a particular lobe.

Once a diagnosis of liver lobe torsion is made, the treatment of choice is surgical removal of the affected liver lobe. Rabbits that are taken to surgery early do quite well. These rabbits are generally treated with fluid therapy, pain management, antibiotics, prokinetics to help with gut motility, and nutritional support.



Conan is a beautiful mini-lop rabbit. Photo courtesy of Suzanne Trayhan.

continued on pg. 4

Liver Lobe Torsion in Rabbits Con't

Some rabbits are not taken to surgery, either because of a delayed diagnosis or because of financial constraints. There are rabbits who are treated with medical management alone, but it is a long, labor intensive process to get them back to health. Many of these rabbits have a recurrence of GI stasis issues in the future, and some of them don't survive.

Liver lobe torsion is a diagnosis that should be considered in rabbits (especially mini-lops!) with GI stasis, abdominal pain, anemia, and elevated liver enzymes. Once a diagnosis is confirmed with ultrasound, surgery can have a successful outcome. While this disorder is relatively rare, we're lucky to have experts in the field as local resources.



Adoption Success Stories

by Jessica Riel

My Only Sunshine

I first met Sunshine while completing internship hours for animal massage training through Doggone U at the Bancroft School of Massage in Worcester. Over the summer and fall of 2015, I went to the House Rabbit Network (HRN) shelter three times to massage some of the bunnies there. When I asked which bunnies needed the comfort and attention the most, volunteers always mentioned Sunshine.

Sunshine lived in a big dog crate, the same crate in which two of our other bunnies, Topsi and Bambi, lived while at the shelter for three years until we adopted them at age five. Sunshine likewise was five and had been with HRN for two years.

Sunshine reminded me of how Topsi had behaved toward me when we first brought her home. Topsi was nervous about being touched and for many weeks would lunge, bat, and growl at me if I stroked her sides or her backend, approached her too quickly, or in some other way made her nervous. By the time I met Sunshine, Topsi had softened from a feisty cat-bun into a gentle and curious kitten-bun, and she loved to be cuddled and kissed.

During those three visits with Sunshine, she enjoyed her massages, and I ended each session by holding her close, snuggling her, whispering into her soft ears that she was loved, and wishing her happy blessings and a forever home.

An HRN volunteer, Beth, brought Sunshine to Bunny Spa Day this past April. I was so excited to see Sunshine again and gave her a massage. I didn't want her to have to go back to the shelter at the end of the day, but I gave her the biggest apple stick we had – a whole branch! – and well wishes.

Within two weeks, my husband Marc and I decided to open our home to Sunshine so she could have all the massages she wanted. We have since moved into our first home, and Sunshine has the living room to herself, where she has a lovely view of the trees and gardens outside. She enjoys



Sunshine enjoying her new home. Photo courtesy of Jessica Riel.

continued on pg. 5

Adoption Success Stories Con't

snuggling with her little stuffed bunny, who she sneaks kisses to when she thinks we aren't watching, and she loves to be snuggled and massaged.

When I massage Sunshine, I focus on the places she most enjoys being touched – her face, ears, and the top of her head. Once she is relaxed, I work on her back, where she holds some tightness along her spine. As I sink in deeper into the muscles, Sunshine shifts and further relaxes, like pancake batter stretching out across the pan. Sometimes she chatters her teeth contentedly, and other times she falls asleep and starts to snore. I sing softly to her, "You are my Sunshine, my only Sunshine..."

Maple's New Neighbor

Maple had come a long way from her former life as Lem-onciello. She was found abandoned and brought to the Animal Rescue League of Dedham before making her way to House Rabbit Network. From there, she met her two humans, Ali and Chris Wall, and in November of 2015 Maple finally went home.

"When we first met Maple she was very cuddly, affectionate, and curious," says Ali. "These were all the things we were hoping for in our first bun."

After twelve months of tossing her ball around, flipping her ring, running about with her treat toy at the end of her nose, grooming everything in sight, and flopping next to her beloved daddy for cuddles, Maple was surprised to find herself on a trip with her family. Where was she going? She hoped she was on a journey to the treat store, where her Mommy and Daddy would buy all of the treats and she would eat them, like in her dreams.

When Maple felt her carrier being lifted, she roused herself and looked around. When her carrier was set on the floor and the door opened, she curiously made her way out, only to discover she was back at the HRN shelter!

Before she could even begin to fathom why she'd returned, Maple realized that another bunny was in her midst. She turned to see a rabbit approach her. She sniffed this new bunny and received a wiggling nose in response. Bunny after bunny came to visit her, but none of them were very interesting to Maple, who was still trying to figure out what was going on.

Soon a black and brown bunny was placed near Maple. Her name was Saturn, and she gave Maple some kisses. Maple relaxed a little beside Saturn, thinking that this bunny wasn't so bad, and then, just when she thought she might take a little snooze, back into her carrier she was placed for the journey home.

About to take a nap in her own room once more, Maple was shocked to see that Saturn had somehow followed her back to her house and was sitting in her room! Worse still, Mommy and Daddy seemed okay with this imposter, and they'd begun calling Saturn by a new name, Jemma, and were giving this other bun-



Maple and Jemma getting to know each other. Courtesy of Alison Wall.

Adoption Success Stories Con't



The Wall family. Photo courtesy of Ali Wall.

ny Maple's cuddles, kisses, and treats! Maple eyed Jemma suspiciously as she chewed a twig ball in the adjoining pen.

It's been a couple of months now since Jemma moved in, and Maple has gotten used to having a new neighbor. She watches Jemma hop on top of her hay holder and lean out over the edge to contort herself to eat hay upside down like an acrobat. To prove that Jemma isn't the only gymnast bunny in the family, Maple will sprawl out on the couch in all sorts of positions "that don't look comfy," says Ali, "but that must be to her."

Maple still likes to lick everything (except Jemma). "They have had their moments where I think they like each other," says Ali, who has been trying to bond the two buns, "but there always seems to be a fight at some point. We won't give up, and if they decide they don't want to bond, then they will just live as neighbors, and that's fine with us because we love them both."



Volunteer Spotlight

by A.A.

Volunteers are the heart of HRN. This issue's featured volunteer is Dawn Lewis who began volunteering in 2014. Dawn, who has always loved rabbits, first started following HRN on Facebook in 2011 after a friend shared a post with her. Dawn ended up adopting a bun in May of 2012. During that process, she went to HRN events and found a community of knowledgeable people who loved bunnies as much as she does. "My love of rabbits made me want to get more involved," she said. "People need to know what wonderful companions they are."

Dawn works on the HRN email team and loves being a first point of contact for people interested in adopting. Many adoption inquiries come from petfinder.com and adoptapet.com as well as social media posts. The team gives information about the adoption process and details on particular bunnies. Team members are always available to answer questions even after the adoption is completed and often give information on bonding, bunny behavior, diet, and health. "We're the 'free support' you get when you adopt through HRN! We're here to answer questions and help you with a new rabbit in your home," Dawn said. One of the perks for her is getting emails and photo updates from past adopters whose bunnies are happy in their forever homes.

Rabbit rescue is an important personal issue for Dawn because of an experience she had as a child. When she was six, a man dropped off a hutch and two bunnies – a black one and a Californian – at her aunt's



Dawn and Speck. Photo courtesy of Sean Lewis.

continued on pg. 7

Volunteer Spotlight Con't

house. "My uncle proclaimed, 'HAPPY EASTER!' We had no idea how to take care of rabbits and these two only lived with us for a short time before my parents re-homed them (thankfully!)," she said. This situation is still all too common and often ends with rabbits being abandoned, euthanized, or neglected. Dawn sees too many people who believe that rabbits can live in a hutch outdoors, and that they have naturally short lives which makes it okay to release them outside. The memory of her childhood rabbits led to a desire to "do right by the bunnies" and she now educates people so that other families won't make the same mistakes.

Dawn feels that HRN's work is essential in fighting neglect and abuse, rescuing strays, and reducing the overpopulation problem by spaying and neutering. Even something as simple as HRN's social media does much to educate people and bring rabbit lovers together. Dawn received emotional support from the online bunny community when one of her rabbits had a rough night with stasis.

Dawn's bunnies, Speck and Sprinkle, are a bonded pair. Speck is a seven-year-old female who reminded her of the black rabbit she was given for Easter. She's shy at first but loves pets once she warms up to someone. Her mate, Sprinkles is a five-year-old "grumpy lop with a beautiful racing stripe down his back." He's prone to stasis so both their diets are highly regulated.

Working with HRN has made Dawn more aware of the impact living with a bunny can have on someone's life. She hears some sad stories about childhood bunnies but also touching ones where someone's bunny lived to old age and shared a bed with their human. "Animals change us and make us better people," she said. "And living with bunnies you learn patience – and not to get too attached to your Xbox controllers!"

If you're interested in volunteering at HRN or adopting a bun, contact HRN at info@rabbitnetwork.org. We have several volunteer opportunities available like being a videographer, becoming a foster home, doing accounting work, responding to HRN phone calls, and much more. Check out the volunteer positions at www.rabbitnetwork.org/support/volunteering.



Dawn and Sprinkle. Photo courtesy of Sean Lewis.

Tips for Picking Up Your Bun Con't

Next step is to practice. The key to practice is to try to do this at least once a day and also to make it quick. Scoop up your bunny, hold him for 20-30 seconds, then put him down. You may want to give him a treat when you place him down. If you make it quick, your bunny will learn that if he behaves, it's over with quickly and he can go back to his routine. Don't pick him up and hold him for 10-20 minutes. If you hold him for a while, he'll associate you with those torture sessions he must endure and he may fight harder. If things are going well after a month you can start increasing the time. However, if he doesn't enjoy it, don't push it. The main goal is to have him behave when you need to pick him up. When you're first working with rabbits, unfortunately you can sometimes get scratches. You might benefit from wearing a sweatshirt while practicing or working with a new bunny. This will help protect your arms and chest from scratches.

Just remember, be confident, make sure your bunny is calm and have him face you. Pretty soon you will master picking up your rabbit.



HRN News

A Yummy Chocolate Fundraiser

HRN is teaming up with Gertrude Hawk Chocolates again to raise money to help with medical costs (spays/neuters, critical vet care), educational expenses, and all that we do to provide care to the buns. Last year, people commented on how wonderful the chocolate tasted. You can save the shipping charge by picking up your order from HRN in Billerica, or orders can be shipped directly to your home. Enjoy some great chocolate and help the buns at the same time. Use this link to order by March 10, 2017: <http://www.rabbitnetwork.org/chocolate>

Check Out Our Online Facebook Auction

Our next fundraiser is going to be an online auction right on Facebook. We've received some wonderful donated items to auction off, including gift certificates to fabulous, local retailers; jewelry; artwork; and even a week's stay at an oceanfront condo. All of these great items will go to the highest bidders. All items, descriptions, starting bids, and bidding increments will be posted in a Facebook album. The auction will run from March 22, 2017, through March 29, 2017. More details are available on www.rabbitnetwork.org and our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/houserabbitnetwork.

Remembering a Friend

Alan Moyer of Chelmsford, MA was an incredible friend to HRN. When we needed to build a new website because the technology on our old one had become outdated, Al was there to volunteer his time. Unfortunately, Al passed away on January 12, 2017, at the age of 73. He is survived by his wife of 37 years Pamela Montella-Moyer, his son Neil Moyer, his daughter Alissa Evangelista and her husband Dave, a sister Nancy Ratz as well as granddaughters, nieces, and nephews.

He had a Master's and PhD in Electrical Engineering from Syracuse University. After working at prestigious companies like Kodak, Polaroid, Wang Labs, GE, and Mathworks, he retired in 2013. He enjoyed rabbits and playing the piano and guitar. He liked camping, hiking, and being an amateur photographer. He even held two patents related to electronic imaging.

We are so thankful for all the time Al dedicated to help the HRN buns. Our website is a key element to getting the buns adopted, and words really can't express how important he was to HRN as a volunteer and a friend. For those who wish to make a contribution in his memory, his wife has requested that donations be made to the House Rabbit Network, P.O. Box 2602, Woburn, MA 01888-1102.

Thank You Mount Ida College

A big thank you to Mount Ida College in Newton, MA for the HUGE donation of pellets, hay, and various supplies! Coordinated by vet students Rachel and Brianna, the drive also raised a little over \$1,000 from bake sales. Thank you for supporting our bunnies!

Giggles Fundraiser

Join us on Sunday, April 9 at the Giggles Comedy Club in the Prince Pizzeria in Saugus, MA for a night of comedy, pizza, and a prize auction – all proceeds to support HRN. Tickets are \$25 each until April 5, and \$30 after that. We'll be selling tickets at the door but the number of tickets is limited, so we encourage you to order ahead. The ticket price includes unlimited cheese pizza from 6:00-7:00 pm, and a 75-minute comedy show that begins at 7:00 pm. The comics billed for that evening are Lenny Clarke, Paul Gilligan, and Christine Hurley.

Visit www.rabbitnetwork.org/giggles to buy your tickets securely online with PayPal. On that same page, you can pay by check or money order by using the order form. Also, check out the HRN website to see what will be in the prize auction. What a fun and easy way to support HRN and the bunnies. Please note: Tickets are non-refundable and comics are subject to change. For questions, contact info@rabbitnetwork.org.

Treat Your Bun to a Spa Day

When: Sunday, April 2, 2017, from 11 am to 5 pm

Where: Domino Veterinary Hospital at 29 Domino Drive in Concord, MA

Bring your bun to Bunny Spa Day to enjoy a day of pampering in support of HRN. For \$30 per rabbit, your bun will get a relaxing, full-body massage by a certified small animal massage practitioner. Buns will also get nail trims and a fine grooming/brushing.

We'll also have goodies for sale for your bun like dried papaya and willow sticks, and gift certificates for massage services will be available for purchase. At the end of all that indulgence, you and your beautiful, happy bun will get a glamorous portrait to remember your experience.



Sunshine at last year's event. Photo by George Delianides, Moments to Memories Photography.

Payments on that day can be made with cash or check. If you have any questions, please contact info@rabbitnetwork.org or 781-431-1211. Please bring your house rabbit in a pet travel carrier.

Adoption Totals

2016 was a good year for HRN bunnies as we had 193 adoptions. Thank you to our volunteers, donors, and other supporters for all of your help! So far in 2017, 21 rabbits 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

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 www.rabbitnetwork.org 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.....\$ _____

Date_____

NAME(S) _____

STREET _____

APT. _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____