

Quarterly News from the
Sacramento House Rabbit Society

All Ears in Sacramento

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Brandon displays one of his favorite types of dishes to make – vegetarian!

Changing Course: A Student Chef's Dilemma

I have been an active volunteer for the Sacramento House Rabbit Society since 2000. I foster rabbits, run the SHRS web site, and enjoy educating people about what it's like to live with and share your life with bunnies. Not too long ago, I was faced with a professional challenge involving my personal beliefs and my love for rabbits. Although my story does have a happy ending, parts of it might be upsetting to some.

As many of you know, I am enrolled in the American River College culinary program. My ultimate goal is to open an organic, vegetarian restaurant. The program is thorough with courses in baking, marketing, cost analysis, wine appreciation, and actual restaurant cooking and serving to the public.

The college's fine dining restaurant received four stars from the *Sacramento Bee* last year. The menu dishes are selected by the instructor at the beginning of the semester and planned and prepared by the advanced students on a weekly basis. The menu changes every week. I cooked in the restaurant last year and the following semester I served in a restaurant for the first time.

Here's where my dilemma began (again, you may want to skip ahead a few paragraphs if you are squeamish). The restaurant served a Tuscan tasting menu with soup, an artichoke appetizer, pasta and pesto, a salad with shreds of braised rabbit, a veal meatloaf, and an apple tart dessert. Thankfully I wasn't there when the meat was being cooked.



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Changing Attitudes *continued from page 1*

I was averting my eyes from the big roasting pan every time I walked by the prep area when they were separating the bones from the meat.

As we were serving I overheard a few diners order salad without rabbit, but I had hoped more would have requested that way. Looking at the trash when the dishes are returned, it seemed all the rabbit that was served was eaten.

One beneficial thing to take away from the experience is that nobody seemed really eager to eat rabbit. When the menu said "rabbit salad," most people seemed to think it was a green salad that a bunny would eat. With the tasting menu, all courses are brought out without customer choice. Diners ate it because it was presented to them rather than specifically choosing to order it. Also, the number of customers was down a bit from other weeks. I can't say definitively that rabbit on the menu turned off the normal crowd, but I hope so.

The kitchen class knew beforehand I had pet rabbits. I kept saying to everyone that they wouldn't get any chocolate if they ate the

Easter Bunny before he could bring the eggs. During our serving days I also brought pictures of my own rabbits, Jon, Abby and Cece and I kept them on display. The students asked questions about what it was like to have rabbits as pets, and seemed sympathetic to my situation. Afterwards the instructor apologized that she upset me. I can't recall if I explicitly accepted her apology. With additional feedback she decided to never serve rabbit again. Hopefully, I've sensitized the class of future chefs that rabbits are indeed adorable companions, not food, and informed them a bit about rabbit care and behavior.

I came home and played with my bunnies an extra amount.

– Brandon Chee

Do You Enjoy... **All Ears in Sacramento?**

Then pass it on! Help us spread the word about proper rabbit care, and about bunnies in need.

Once you've enjoyed this issue, please give it to a doctor's office, a school, a community center, or anywhere else that it can be picked up and read by others.

Upcoming Events

Adoption and Information Clinics

Are you thinking about adding a bunny to your household? Or are you just looking to learn more about the one you've already got? Regardless of whether you've had a rabbit for years or if you're new to the joys of rabbit companionship, you'll have a great time at our monthly Adoption and Information Clinics. Come ask us questions about bunny behavior, care, grooming, nutrition, or anything else you can think of. We have free printed information on a variety of topics, and, of course, we also have our fabulous fosters on hand, waiting for just the right family to come along! The adoption donation is \$50 (\$75 for two), and includes a copy of *The House Rabbit Handbook*.

If you already have a bunny, you're welcome to bring him or her to the Clinic in a secure carrier. We do offer nail trims for a \$5 donation, but please call our hotline at least 48 hours in advance to set an appointment time (so we'll be sure to have someone available for you!). Please also bring your own, sterilized clippers. Grooming and de-matting services are also available outside of Clinic hours, but by appointment only. Call our hotline for more information.

November 11
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Arden PetCo
1878 Arden Way

December 9
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

January 13
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Folsom PetCo
855 E. Bidwell Street

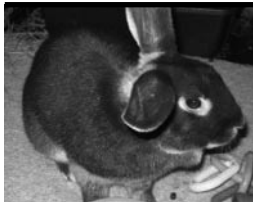
February 10
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Arden PetCo
1878 Arden Way

Rabbits Available for Adoption



Junior is an active young boy with lots of personality. He loves bananas!



Ziggy is a curious adult male who is curious about everything and everyone! He gets along well with cats and dogs, and is litterbox trained.



Poi is a one-year-old mini lop boy who loves attention, exploring, and is very affectionate. He loves to be held. He has great litterbox habits.



Romeo is a young neutered boy. He is very active and likes lots of room to play. The vet said he will grow to be a big boy.



Hoppy Gilmore is an active and playful boy.



Buttercup is a shy adult female lop with lots of love. She loves to explore. She needs a quiet home with no dogs or cats.



Finley and **Phoebe** are cuddly sisters who enjoy sitting on your lap while you brush them.



Sweetie and **Little Bigwig** are a bonded brother and sister. They are friendly to people, dogs and cats.



Chester is a young boy who is playful, friendly, and curious. He has excellent litter box habits.



Cole is an affectionate and playful young adult mini rex boy.

Recent Adoptions

Cheech and **Chong** (now Dash and Jack Jack) were adopted from the No More Homeless Pets event (see page 6) by Trisha Keefe.

Jessica Rabbit (now Chloe) was adopted from the NMHP event by Maureen Whitehurst.



Cinnamon was adopted by Peggy and Dan Kern as a companion for their bunny Flint.

Buffy was adopted by Nancy and Larry Hogan as a companion for their bunny Pooka.



Penny and **Piper** were adopted by Leslie (mom) and Colleen (daughter) Scheurer.



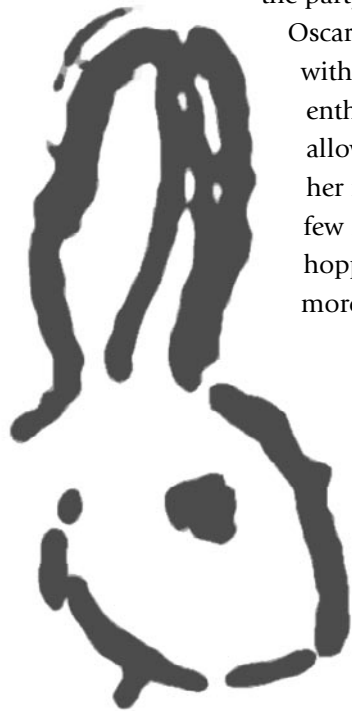
Life with an Aloof Rabbit

Excerpted from an article from National House Rabbit Society.

To celebrate the publication of *The House Rabbit Handbook*, a party was given for all the (human) contributors. When rabbit-people get together the conversation naturally turns toward our long-eared pals. Their health, foibles, sleeping habits, and whisker-twitches were discussed in unsparing detail.

One woman told me how her rabbit loves to lie on his back between her two children while they watch TV. Another described his bunny's morning routine of dancing round his feet while he makes coffee, then hopping on his lap and nibbling the bottom of the newspaper. By the time a very nice young man was halfway through a story about having his faced licked by his lovable lop, I had to excuse myself for a reality check.

When I arrived home from the party, Trixie and Oscar greeted me with their usual enthusiasm. Trix allowed me to pet her muzzle for a few minutes before hopping off to more important



business. Oscar showed his delight by not running away when I said hello.

I spent a long time wondering where I'd gone wrong. Not enough handling? Too much handling? Bad "breeding"? Maybe I just wasn't good with rabbits. Maybe they needed some little boys to watch television with.

The answers came as I began fostering. I learned and am still learning about the wide range of lagomorph temperaments. At first I was surprised by how few actually conformed to the stereotypical cute-n-cuddly or passive/timid ideals held by many humans. Having fostered several litters I have also seen that many basic personality traits are present at birth. Handling, socialization, and early environment play a major role, but bunnies are not blank slates. They arrive here with capacities and tendencies which must be recognized and respected. The first and most important step is to accept your rabbit for herself.

Humans Who Love Too Much

Being coddled and cuddled by humans is not at the top of every rabbit's wish-list. Your rabbit may not be aloof at all, but simply overwhelmed by the magnitude or volume of your affection for her. Rabbits are so irresistibly soft, adorable, and gorgeous that it is difficult to avoid smothering them with physical affection. A good substitute for kisses, hugs, and heavy petting is verbal affection. Talk to her. Tell her what kind of a day you had, and how glad you are that she is there to help you recover from it. This form of animal-assisted therapy is simple, effective, and only minimally exploitive of your friend.



If you tone down your demonstrativeness, you will be able to receive what your quiet friend has to offer. Your low-key bunny's messages may be getting lost. As with a shy rabbit, a useful exercise is to sit on the floor in the same room with your rabbit. That's the whole exercise. Just sit there. Read a book or stare out the window while Flopsy grooms herself or stares out the window with you. This exercise is one that rabbits do with each other all the time.

A Rabbit Friend

Although he may not ask for attention from you, your rabbit may crave the company of a rabbit friend. I don't recommend adopting a second rabbit if your only reason for doing so is to solve a problem with your present companion, but an outgoing rabbit can bring out the extrovert in an aloof rabbit.

If your goal is to become closer to your first rabbit, you should be aware that adding to the family sometimes has the opposite effect. Some rabbits are aloof toward humans but very affectionate to other rabbits. You may find that your new bunny has stolen Flopsy's heart. With all her emotional needs met by the new rabbit, Flopsy is more aloof than ever toward you. I eventually came to accept that

Oscar was Trixie's rabbit, not mine. Fortunately Trixie allows me to shower affection on her, so everyone is happy.

Ask Not What Your Rabbit Can Do For You

Because our companion animals are totally dependent on us for their physical needs, it's easy to fall in to a "benevolent dictator" relationship with them. Why isn't Flopsy more grateful for the fact that you rescued her from the pound, that you spend your hard-earned paycheck on toys and treats and vet bills?

This view overlooks the many demands we make of the animals. Love me forever, unquestioningly, no matter what kind of mood I'm in. Be affectionate toward me whenever I want you to be, no matter what mood you're in. Leave me alone when I don't feel like being bothered. Cheer me up when I've had a rotten day.

The list is long, and most animals manage to meet many of these difficult demands much of the time. Take the time to appreciate the reciprocity of your

relationship and to enjoy your rabbit for exactly who he is; in his own inimitable way, he will do the same for you.

– Amy Shapiro



Three County Shelter Rabbits Adopted Out With SHRS Help

Volunteers Seize an Opportunity and Find Success!

A recent public worker strike affecting Sacramento County employees had an altogether unexpected impact on an unusual population – the four-legged residents of the Sacramento County Animal Shelter. As they were short-staffed, shelter management turned to the SHRS for help caring for its rabbit population. SHRS volunteer Brandon Chee spent a few days cleaning and feeding the rabbits during the strike. Even during this short time, he was able to interact with the rabbits enough to learn a little about their temperaments and litterbox habits. Fortunately for them, this was the first step in an unusual chain of events that led to their rescue!

the Sacramento County Shelter was participating, they planned to bring only cats and dogs; naturally, Brandon realized this was an ideal opportunity to bring a few rabbits he had already grown to know at the shelter. He chose a sweet, mature, mellow, affectionate and litterbox-trained female named Jessica Rabbit. Jessica would present herself when petted so he knew she had previously been a house rabbit (even though her cage card said she was a stray). He also chose a pair of playful adolescent Mini Rex boys, Cheech and Chong.

Susan did a wonderful job of setting up the SHRS booth to feature the rabbits in a typical exercise pen living environment. She brought literature and information to draw the public in. Almost immediately, a passerby named Maureen asked to play with Jessica. Maureen's rabbit had recently passed away and she was looking for another companion. She said Jessica reminded her of her former bunny and she was hooked right away. This was one of the first successful adoptions of the day.

Cheech and Chong were also adopted, to a woman named Trisha who also had had rabbits before. Trisha already knew she wanted to adopt a bonded pair and Cheech and Chong poured

Coincidentally, SHRS had already signed up to participate in the No More Homeless Pets (NMHP) adoption event held at Country Club Plaza on September 23 and 24. The event was organized by the NMHP Foundation and many animal welfare organizations in the county were participating. Brandon and fellow fosterer Susan King volunteered that Saturday. The only HRS rabbit scheduled to attend was Buffy, Brandon's foster rabbit. Though

Jessica Rabbit caught Maureen Whitehurst's eye right away. She is now named Chloe.



Right: Susan King explains rabbit care to an interested visitor.

Far Right: Trisha Keefe bonds with Cheech and Chong, who are now named Dash and Jack Jack.



on the charm. Trisha and her friend went off to do some shopping and think it over, but soon came back with lots of bags and started filling out the paperwork to adopt the pair.

Several HRS members – including one person who recently moved to our area from the Central Coast – stopped by the booth to visit. One woman, Deborah Dano, brought a big bag of seeds for an Italian herb called “Salad Burnett,” explaining that she and her eight bunnies all love it. (Brandon took the seeds home to plant and will bring the balance

to the next adoption day, so if you’d like some, be sure to ask! Thanks, Deborah!)

The adoptions were handled by the county shelter and the rabbits went back to be altered the following week before going to their forever homes. Three rabbits and two humans found loving companions though this short but well publicized event. It was a valuable opportunity for SHRS to participate, and a fulfilling reminder of why we devote our time and attention to this wonderful cause.

– Brandon Chee and Susan King

SHRS Volunteers Teach UC Davis Students

Fall is in the air, students are cracking the books, and their thoughts turn to...rabbits!

Each fall for the past six years or so, SHRS volunteers have been invited to present a guest lecture on rabbit care to Prof. Anita Oberbauer’s Companion Animal Care and Management undergraduate class at the University of California, Davis.

At this year’s lecture, given on October 20th, Margaret-Rose Batterman and Jill Walker brought slides to show typical rabbit antics and behavior while presenting an overview on domestic rabbit care, behavior and health. Jill and Margaret-Rose were able to punctuate the lecture with personal experience stories about living with rabbits, which entertained the students and engaged them more in the class. But the real stars of the show were Phoebe and Finley, foster rabbit sisters who both went blind from cataracts early in their lives. At the end of class, the students were invited to come up and hold them, and they were amazed by their friendly personalities as well as their story.

According to Prof. Oberbauer, these SHRS lectures sometimes turn out to be a pivotal point for young students leaning toward a veterinary career. Special training is required to treat rabbits, which are considered exotic pets. For some students, the SHRS lecture provides their first real exposure to rabbits, and their first glimpse into some of the nuances of rabbit health.

But even for those students who don’t plan to go on to become “bunny doctors,” the lecture is still a morning well-spent. “All of them enjoy learning more about rabbits, and every year, it’s one of the most popular and well-attended lectures of the course,” Prof. Oberbauer says.

A lucky handful of students also got to leave class with more than just knowledge – participants of a “pop quiz” at the end of the lecture had the opportunity to win posters, t-shirts or a copy of the *House Rabbit Handbook*.

“It’s so much fun to talk about rabbits to an enthusiastic audience,” Jill comments. “Some of them already have house rabbits and know a lot, but many of them clearly have ‘light bulb’ moments when they learn something new and start scribbling down notes.”

SHRS extends our gratitude to Prof. Oberbauer for inviting SHRS to share our rabbit knowledge with her students! We enjoy the opportunity every year.

– Kirsten Macintyre and Jill Walker

Margaret-Rose Batterman
(with Phoebe), Professor
Anita Oberbauer, and
Teaching Assistant Gena
Fagerberg (with Finley)



DID YOU KNOW?

(See how well you do on the pop quiz presented to the UC Davis students!)

True or False: Rabbit feces can be used in compost. (Answer: True. Only feces from vegetarian animals works ... so your bunny is good for your garden, but not your cat or your dog.)

True or False: Iceberg lettuce is good for rabbits. (Answer: False. Other kinds of lettuce are fine for rabbits in small amounts, but the water content in Iceberg is too high and can make your bunny sick.)

True or False: Rabbits pant to cool themselves off when they get hot. (Answer: False. Rabbits don’t pant. Their bodies regulate temperature by releasing heat through their ears, where the blood cools off before returning to the body.)



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membership
 expiration date



Not a Member?

Sacramento House Rabbit Society depends on donations to keep running. Please fill out the form below to keep receiving *All Ears in Sacramento*, and to support local rabbits in need! *SHRS does not sell or share our member's information with any other organizations or companies.*

Keep in Touch!

Time to renew your membership? New to the House Rabbit Society? The annual membership to the House Rabbit Society is \$18. This includes a subscription to the quarterly *House Rabbit Journal*. The annual membership fee for the Sacramento Chapter, which includes the quarterly *All Ears in Sacramento*, is \$15. The House Rabbit Society is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. All membership fees are tax-deductible and go towards care expenses for the rabbits and for providing educational materials, such as these newsletters.

- Please sign me up for the National Membership, \$18
- Please sign me up for the Sacramento Membership, \$15
- Please sign me up for both for \$30
- I have enclosed an additional donation of \$_____
- I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

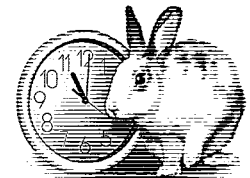
email address: _____

*Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:
 Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850*

Volunteer!

Would you like to help local rabbits and bunny-lovers? We could use volunteers in the following areas:

- Public Events (staffing education tables)
- Fundraising Events
- Distributing Literature
- Working with Shelters
- Transporting shelter rabbits to local adoption days
- Fostering



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