

Quarterly News from the
Sacramento House Rabbit Society

All Ears in Sacramento



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Teaching Compassion: A Sixth-Grade Class Learns to Make a Difference

Traci Burnham, a sixth grade teacher at Maxwell Elementary School in Woodland, wasn't born to be a "bunny person." In fact, she didn't even like rabbits that much until she got a bunny for her classroom as a pet. Yet thanks to fate — and to the charm of a particular classroom bunny and a very enterprising 11-year-old — Traci helped make a real difference in the lives of Yolo County rabbits.

"I honestly never really saw bunny attraction... I like animals that interact with you," she says, explaining how she came to have a rabbit as a classroom pet. "But when I saw Bugs at a pet store and played with him, he was the cutest thing. He's very personable and he plays with you. I took him to school, and he fit right in. The kids love him. On weekends he comes home with me."

Traci wasn't the only one who was charmed by the new classroom rabbit. One of her students quickly developed an attachment

to Bugs. The little girl decided she wanted a rabbit of her own, so she went to the Woodland City Shelter to adopt one.

Much to the student's surprise — and Traci's, too — she was turned down as a potential adopter. The rejection wasn't because she didn't have an appropriate home, or even because of her age. Rather, it was because she didn't have enough money to cover the required spay/neuter fee.

The disappointed student talked with Traci about her dilemma. They both realized that the fees, while necessary, were probably the reason why many rabbits lingered at the shelter. Instead of abandoning the little girl's dream of getting a bunny, teacher and student worked together and dreamed up the idea of raising money to cover the costs of altering rabbits in the Woodland area. The student prepared a class presentation to win over her

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HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

Contact Us:

tel: (916) 863-9690

fax: (916) 372-8858

email: mbat35@yahoo.com

www.allearsac.org

Sacramento House
Rabbit Society
PO Box 19850
Sacramento, CA
95819-0850

Teaching Compassion *continued from page 1*

peers, and her classmates were immediately sold on the idea of making a difference in the lives of animals. They decided to start off with the tried-and-true, never-fail fundraising technique — the bake sale.

“Most of the kids in the class brought (food) items,” explains Traci. “It went on for about a month, every day at recess. It was amazing to see how motivated the kids were. Even kids from other classrooms started bringing items to sell after a while.”

Within a few weeks, the money was flowing in. The student who started the effort was able to use some of the first funds raised to alter



and then adopt the bunny she'd had her eye on, a lucky little guy she named Root Beer. Next up was the classroom bunny, Bugs. And when the kids found out that the school librarian had a wild bunny (that was producing many litters) on her property, they helped

trap, spay and release her, too, so she can continue to play without having more babies. Some of the students even adopted bunnies from her last litter.

Ironically, in the middle of this fun fundraising project, Traci found out about the House Rabbit Society quite by accident, when she spotted an HRS license plate frame on a car. A few days later, Chapter Manager Margaret Batterman happened to contact Traci's husband, who is a contractor, for an estimate on their home. When Traci's husband and Margaret met, the subject of bunnies came up and they realized what a perfect match the organization was with Traci's interests. Soon after, the Burnhams participated in the Run for the Buns fundraiser, and Traci asked Margaret to pay a visit to her classroom to talk about rabbit care. Margaret helped the teacher and her students think of even more ways to make a difference by getting involved in rescue work and educating other bunny owners in the Woodland area about the benefits of spaying and neutering their pets.

“It's fate,” Traci says about how all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place in such a short time. “What impressed me most was the kids' attitudes ... how they take something on and become passionate about it. I teach them that they are 100 percent responsible for the care and well-being of these animals. It's not a short term thing ... you can't play with a pet and then forget about it.”

And has the lesson “stuck”? Definitely, Traci says. “I have fifth graders who come in and want to visit with Bugs and help take care of him now,” she says. “All the students have learned to be responsible with pets. They really love animals. And seeing how much they care means so much to me.”

— Kirsten Macintyre



Rabbits Available for Adoption



Eleu is a male Mini-rex who loves to play with toys.



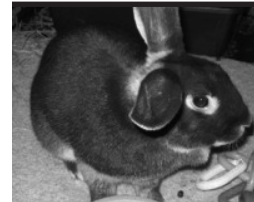
Jasper and **Ihop** are active brothers with very good litter habits. They love each other's company and need to be adopted together.



Elvira is an active adult girl who enjoys attention and lap time!



Lucia is a friendly girl who likes to sit in laps and has excellent litterbox habits.



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



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



Hoppy Gilmore is an active and playful boy.



Eliza (left) and **Sophie** are bonded sisters with lots of energy and big appetites!

NOT PICTURED

Sugar and **Pepper** are a young bonded pair. Pepper is an acrobat who kicks his heels up when he plays. Sugar loves to cuddle when she's not exploring.

Recent Adoptions



Talley was adopted by Lisa Bruni as a companion for her rabbit Rusty



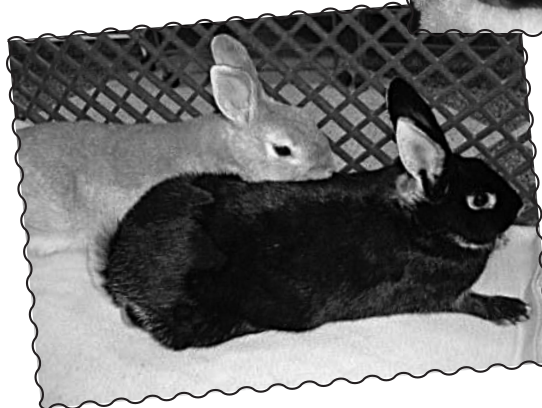
Finnegan was adopted by Daniel Corcoran and Ariele Bauers



Checkers was adopted by Rebecca Fong



Holly found a new home with Dori Libera



Reese (adopted by Jay Baker) enjoys a "get acquainted" shopping cart ride with his new companion, Tallulah



Jennifer Perdin (who works at PetCo) couldn't resist **Jimmy's** charms!

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SHRS Manager
Margaret Batterman

Newsletter Editor
Kirsten Macintyre

Newsletter Design
HareLine Graphics

Letters to the editor and newsletter submissions may be sent to:

Sacramento House Rabbit Society
P.O. Box 19850
Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

tel: (916) 863-9690
fax: (916) 372-8858

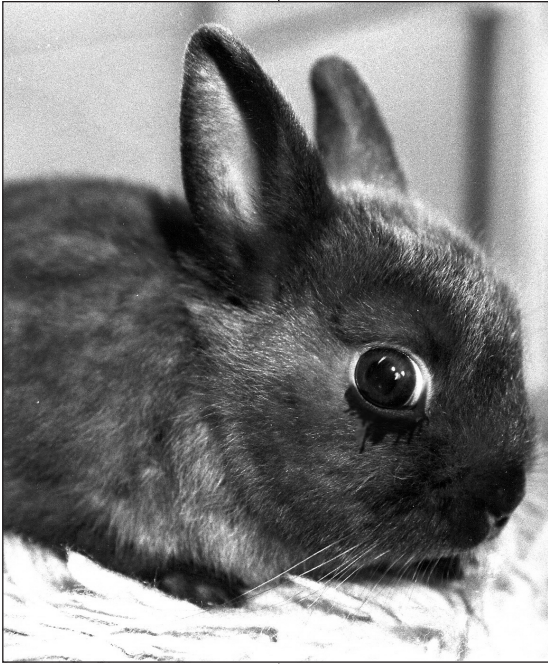
email:
hareline@gmail.com

Website:
www.allearsac.org

The Eyes Have It:

What Causes, and How to Treat, Ocular Discharge

Tennyson once wrote, "Tears, idle tears! I know not what they mean."



While it's a safe bet Tennyson wasn't referring to our lagomorph friends, his words are also a very apt description of many a bunny owner's baffled response to chronic runny rabbit eyes. There's a formal name for this condition—*Epiphora*—which is generally caused either by a problem with the tear duct, or overproduction of tears. It

is a symptom, as opposed to a disease in itself, and it manifests in several forms. Some rabbits may produce white strings of mucous from the corners of their eyes (which later harden into scab-like crusts). Other rabbits may have perpetually wet cheeks. If you're noticing it for the first time, it can be somewhat distressing, and it probably warrants a trip to your veterinarian. But don't worry—chances are, it's not a difficult fix.

Let's start by addressing what the problem isn't. Your bunny can't catch a cold from you, as human virus are not contagious to rabbits. Also, as with other animals, eye discharge isn't necessarily a sign of pain or distress (crying).

So what might the cause be? If the leakage doesn't stop within a few days, or if the discharge is white and thick and accompanied by sneezing, make a vet appointment. There are causes the vet will want to rule out right away, including:

- **An upper respiratory infection.** These are caused by bacteria and should be cultured

in order to determine the right course of antibiotic medication. With the right treatment, the discharge should clear up quickly, and your bunny will be less likely to contract a more serious condition such as pneumonia or a systemic infection. Your vet will want to check the culture for common conditions such as *Pasteurella*, *Bordetella* and *Staphylococcus*. You'll probably go home with a prescription for Baytril.

- **A lower respiratory infection.** This is less common but more serious than an upper respiratory infection; lower respiratory infections cause loud, raspy breathing and your bunny may appear to be struggling for air. Again, a culture and sensitivity test will help your vet determine the right course of treatment. Oxygen and medicated mists may be helpful in addition to antibiotics.
- **Foreign bodies.** Runny eyes can be caused by dirt, dust, bugs, or a bit of hay or food caught in the eye or in the nose. Let your veterinarian do the flushing—it's quicker, more effective, and far less stressful (for you *and* the rabbit!).
- **Dental disorders.** You might not think that a tooth problem could cause runny eyes, but it's common with older bunnies. As bone density diminishes with age, molar roots can intrude into the skull bones. And because a bunny's molars are located almost directly under its eyes, blockage of the tear ducts can follow. Your vet can flush the ducts and restore normal flow.
- **Eyelid disorders.** In rare cases, a bunny can have a bony obstruction or a misshapen eyelid that can cause an uncomfortable rubbing on the eye itself. This can be corrected with surgery.
- **Chronic dry eyes.** Some bunnies simply don't produce enough tears to keep their eyes moist, making them susceptible to scratches and abrasions. Rabbits only blink their eyes once or twice a minute, so they

need as much moisture as possible. Dry eyes can be corrected with eye drops or ointment.

- **Allergies.** Yes, it's possible! Dust on hay and dry food are common culprits. Wood shavings (which HRS does not recommend) can also make a rabbit's eyes weep. You may also want to consider where you're keeping the bunny's litterbox. Is it in an enclosed space with little ventilation, or under a shelf where urine fumes might collect? That's another possible cause.

Your vet is the best judge of what might be causing your bunny's runny eyes, but there are short-term solutions you can try at home to help comfort your rabbit. You can apply warm washcloth compresses to the affected areas, and gently rub the "goop" away once it's softened. In extreme cases, ophthalmic saline solution can help loosen mucous and crystallize the tears. A fine-toothed flea comb may also be helpful to brush the crusts out of the fur. Most rabbits don't mind this, but if your rabbit dislikes being touched around the eyes, try hypnotizing her by cradling her in your arms upside-down until she's relaxed. Our SHRS volunteers can show you how to do this, or you can call our hotline for a quick "how-to."

It's also worth noting that closely bonded bunnies groom each other — there are many cases of chronically runny-eyed rabbits whose conditions cleared up once they had an affectionate mate preening them regularly. Of course, if your bunny has a bacterial infection, talk to your vet first about the timing of getting a second rabbit, as you don't want to introduce a new bunny to one who's not yet in top form. But almost every bunny is happier — and healthier — with a companion to dote over them.

Whatever the cause, and whatever the solution, your rabbit will undoubtedly be thankful that you noticed the wetness and took the steps to dry her tears!

— Kirsten Macintyre

What Do Rabbits See?

by Dana M. Krempels, Ph.D.

Many house rabbit "parents" are curious to know what the world looks like to their lagomorph companion. Why does it seem difficult for my bunny to find food right in front of his face? Why is my bunny so easily startled or frightened when I walk into the room? Can my rabbit see colors?

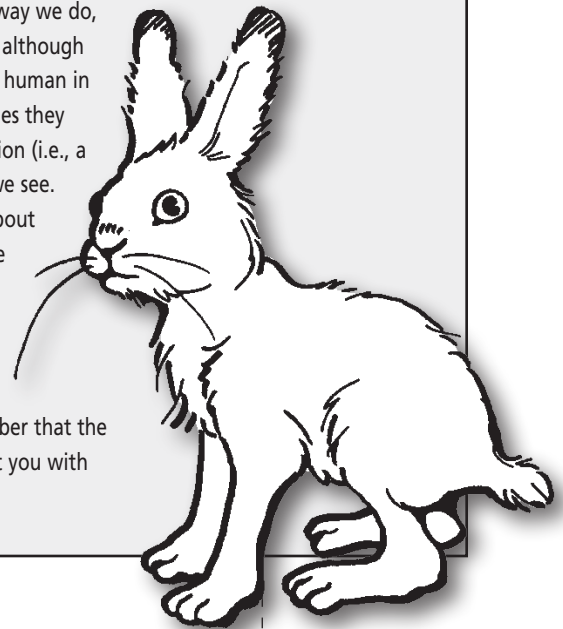
The first thing to remember is that a rabbit's visual system evolved under evolutionary pressures completely different from those which "designed" your eyes. We human primates have forward-placed eyes, binocular vision and depth perception. This is essential for an animal originally designed to leap through the trees. Also, we have excellent color vision, a trait which helped our ancestors to find ripe fruit and tasty flowers in the forest canopy.

On the other hand, the rabbit visual system is designed not for foraging and locomotion, but to quickly and effectively detect approaching predators from almost any direction. The eyes are placed high and to the sides of the skull, allowing the rabbit to see nearly 360 degrees, as well as far above her head. Rabbits tend to be farsighted, which explains why they may be frightened by an airplane flying overhead even if their human companion can barely see it. *It could be a hawk! Run!*

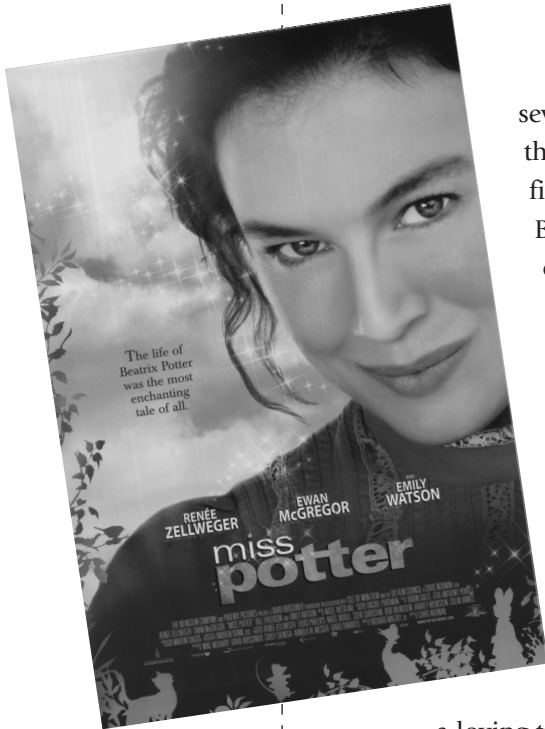
The price the bunny pays for this remarkable field of vision is a small blind spot directly in front of his face. But forward-placed nostrils and large, spooning ears compensate for that minor loss of predator-detecting space. For an animal to have binocular vision, the field of view of both eyes must overlap to some degree. The central blind spot in the rabbit's field of view precludes a three-dimensional view of nearby objects. When your bunny cocks her head and seems to be looking at you "sideways," she is actually looking as straight at you as is possible for a bunny. As far as we know, she does not have our level of depth perception at such close range.

What about color vision? Studies indicate that rabbits do have a limited ability to discriminate between what we call "green" and "blue" wavelengths of light, perceiving them as different colors. Although rabbits may not view green and blue the way we do, they can tell them apart. And although a rabbit can see better than a human in low light conditions, the images they see have much poorer resolution (i.e., a "grainy" picture) than what we see.

Knowing a little more about how another creature sees the world allows us to come one step closer to understanding its behavior—and modifying our own to make life happier for everyone. Remember that the next time your rabbit gazes at you with those deep, ancient eyes.



“Miss Potter” Review



I was excited to hear several months back about the upcoming release of a film biography of the life of Beatrix Potter, the creator of the “Peter Rabbit” stories. Potter was arguably one of the first to keep an indoor rabbit, in addition to being a wonderful author and artist. Unfortunately, it wasn’t easy to find in the theater locally, but it’s now available on DVD.

“Miss Potter” is a loving tribute to its subject and very nicely shows how a very shy young lady became first a wonderful artist of nature and a great storyteller. She was very good at both by age eight. In all her characters, you see how she first understood them as artistic subjects and then saw the whimsy in them. They are as realistic as any of our furry friends but at the same time are very imaginative and delightful.

The movie tells the story of how the young Beatrix nurtured her talent, even as her family struggled to understand her inspiration. In time, she met two brothers who owned Warne Publishing House, who to this day still have

copyrights on her characters. At first, they were not enthused about her “bunny book.” Fortunately, Beatrix found a kindred spirit in their younger brother, Norman, a typically decent English gentleman. Norman had the knowledge and foresight to hold her book to 31 drawings, so she could capture the effect she wanted. Beatrix was adamant about not wanting to publish just another “cheap, nasty children’s book.”

Zellweger is very convincing as Beatrix, depicting the quiet determination of a 32-year-old Victorian woman struggling against the conventions of the time. She had a strong personal vision of Peter Rabbit’s world and was willing to fight for it.

As a house rabbit lover, I enjoyed many scenes that illustrated Beatrix’s deep understanding of bunny behavior. One scene at a Christmas party depicts Beatrix presenting Norman with a personally illustrated tale of “The Rabbits’ Christmas.” She uses the opportunity to explain how social rabbits are. I wish “Miss Potter” had explored this theme even further; this might have made the movie a real classic as well as a ground-breaking film for the cause of house rabbits. Nonetheless, I’ve long hoped for any mass media which would show the kind of joy which our long-eared friends bring to us, and I was very pleased with the result.

— Jim McDaniel

SHRS Board News

The SHRS board of directors was re-elected at the November 14 board meeting. The board consists of Margaret-Rose Batterman (Chapter Manager/President); Susan King (Treasurer); Jill Walker (Secretary); Barbara Koenigsmark (Assistant Secretary) and Brandon Chee (Webmaster). All board terms are for two years.

“I am excited that the existing board wanted to continue to expand the chapter in the positive direction we are heading,” said Margaret. “We are lucky to have such an outstanding group of dedicated volunteers. Their collective leadership has made our chapter a successful and relevant animal rescue operation.”

According to the SHRS bylaws, the board is responsible for making policy changes and financial decisions for the chapter, taking current events and community needs into consideration. The board also plans public education events and fundraisers and ensures that the chapter maintains and cultivates a close relationship with Sacramento area shelters and veterinarians.

All SHRS members in good standing are welcome to attend board meetings, which take place quarterly. Contact Margaret at mbatterman@gmail.com to find out when the next board meeting will be held.

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.

December 8 10:00 am – 3:00 pm Fair Oaks PetCo 8840 Madison Avenue	January 12 10:00 am – 3:00 pm Folsom PetCo 855 E. Bidwell Street	February 9 10:00 am – 3:00 pm Arden PetCo 1878 Arden Way	March 8 10:00 am – 3:00 pm Fair Oaks PetCo 8840 Madison Avenue
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Screening Adoptee Homes

The recent media uproar surrounding comedienne and talk show host Ellen Degeneres' "re-homing" of a dog she adopted from a Southern California rescue group struck a personal note with many of our fosterers. Like the Southern California group, SHRS has a return clause that states an adopted rabbit can only be returned to SHRS. Without that clause, adopters who grow tired of their rabbit or find that it's not a good fit with the family could give it to a shelter, turn the bunny loose, or worse. Our fosterers put a lot of time and love into training SHRS rabbits, and if an adoption doesn't work out, we will give the rabbit another chance in a new home.

Recently, our Board of Directors took additional steps to ensure that our foster bunnies are going to safe, carefully pre-screened homes.

Because such great deal of time, energy, personal investment, and financial support is put into each foster rabbit, we felt that a more involved start-to-finish adoption procedure was appropriate. Instead of potential adopters being screened at the adoption site and taking the foster rabbit home with them the same day, SHRS fosterers will conduct a home visit first. We will arrange to take the rabbit to the adopter's home, and if all checks out, the adoption contract is signed and the bunny will stay with his new family.

This new procedure is a little more time-consuming, but we feel it's in the best interest of both our rabbits and their human companions. A home visit allows us to assist in troubleshooting any potential problems, help with the new bunny setup in the house, suggest bunnyproofing tips

and provide any other educational support the new rabbit owner may have. Also, if we find for some reason it is not the best situation for our foster rabbit, we have the right not to adopt to that home (because the contract isn't signed until the home visit goes well).

The home visit also provides a wonderful opportunity for the foster parent to see where their foster rabbit will live and create a bridge for continued communication with the new pet owner. We encourage bunny adopters to stay in touch with SHRS and update us on how the rabbit settles into his home. (Adoption can be the start of a beautiful friendship!)

Our goal is to ensure, as best as we can, a permanent, happy home for each bunny, and to reduce the number of returned rabbits overall.

— Margaret-Rose Batterman



Sacramento House Rabbit Society
 P.O. Box 19850
 Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

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 \$20. 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, \$20
- Please sign me up for both for \$35
- I have enclosed an additional donation of \$_____
- I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

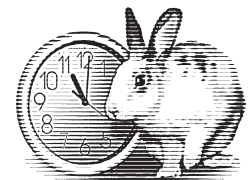
email address: _____

*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



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY