



Columbus House Rabbit Society Newsletter

Volume 6, Issue 1

Winter 2010

House Rabbits Respiratory Problems Part I – The Upper Respiratory Tract

By Barbara Oglesbee, DVM, DABVP

Snuffles, runny nose, sneezing, runny eyes, raspy breathing. All are common symptoms in house rabbits. The word “snuffles” makes most savvy caretakers, and most veterinarians, think of Pasteurellosis, to the point where the two terms have nearly become synonymous. However, the bacteria, *Pasteurella sp.* is only one of many causes of respiratory disease.

Pasteurella multocida is a bacteria that can be passed from rabbit to rabbit by contact, sharing food, water bowls or cage space, and can be passed from

mother to offspring during birth or nursing. Rabbits that are passing the bacteria may show symptoms, but they can also look completely normal and still be passing it on to other rabbits. The bacteria takes up residency in the back of the throat and, depending on the strain of bacteria and how healthy the rabbit’s immune system is, one of 3 things can happen:

1. The rabbit’s immune system can eliminate the bacteria, shortly after or even before the rabbit shows any signs of illness.

2. The bacteria can live happily in the rabbit’s throat, sinuses and nose without causing illness for long periods. This rabbit could still pass the bacteria on (be a “carrier”), and may become sick himself if stressed.

3. The bacteria can cause the rabbit to become ill. Treatment with antibiotics may eliminate the infection. But sometimes antibiotic treatment only suppresses the infection while the rabbit is taking them, then symptoms return once the drugs are stopped.

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“Make Mine Chocolate!” for 2010

By Terri Davenport Cook

After last year’s “holding pattern” due to health issues among two of our key players, “Make Mine Chocolate!” is ready to roll with renewed energy.

This year, we are using social media to create MMC buzz. With new groups and pages on Bunspace and Facebook, we are able to connect directly to supporters all over the world!

The sites also provide easy communication among group members, allowing us to offer and discuss campaign ideas.

The excitement this year is focused on our local campaign, right here in Central Ohio. Some of the ideas in the works:

- Passing out MMC flyers during the Short North’s Gallery Hop

- Sponsoring a contest to guess the number of jelly beans in a jar. The winner will receive a chocolate bunny, naturally!

On the national level, we are sponsoring a photo contest on Bunspace with prizes coming from our MMC retail partners.

We also have an exciting new Partnership with the

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Upcoming Events!

- ♦ **Midwest Veterinary Conference**
February 25-28, 2010
- ♦ **Girl Scout Troop 1388 Pet Adoption Fair**
April 17, 2010
- ♦ **Meet Your Best Friend at the Zoo**
May 15-16, 2010

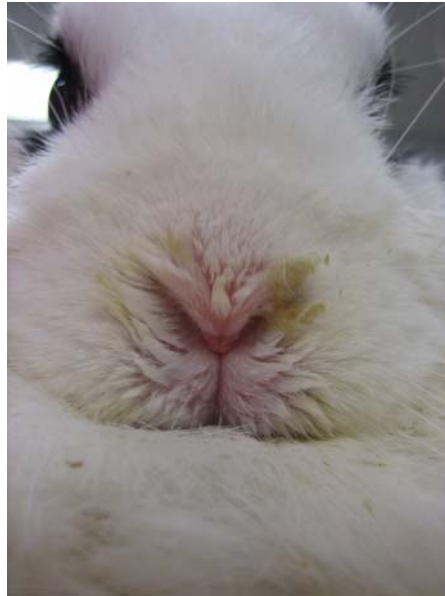
For more details, visit www.columbusrabbit.org

Snuffles

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Unfortunately, it cannot be predicted which course your rabbit will take when symptoms are seen. When infection keeps coming back after treatment, or never fully goes away, it can be very frustrating. This may be happening because your rabbit's immune system isn't strong enough to fully eliminate the bacteria. We all tend to think of antibiotics as wonder drugs, destroying bacteria and making us healthy, but no antibiotic can do it alone. A strong immune system is needed as well. (This is why bacterial infections can be so deadly for people who are on chemotherapy, or have diseases such as AIDS). Conditions that may impair your rabbit's immune system include stress, pain, poor sanitation, poor diet, and other disease conditions. So, it is not unusual for a rabbit that appeared to have recovered to suddenly have a recurrence of respiratory disease following some change in his or her environment. Your veterinarian may want to run diagnostic tests such as X-rays or blood tests to look for underlying disease that may be suppressing the immune system, such as liver or urinary tract disease.

Alternatively, your rabbit may have a very healthy immune system, but still can't eliminate the infection completely, or may have a very severe case of Pasteurellosis. This is because some strains (called serotypes) of *Pasteurella* produce toxins. These toxins by themselves can destroy bone and cartilage in the rabbits nose, can cause inflammation of the lungs and the lining of the lungs (pleuritis) or can cause fever and lethargy. Killing the bacteria with antibiotics will certainly help, but the damage to the nasal cavity or lungs can be permanent, impairing local defense



mechanisms, and allowing re-infection with *Pasteurella* or other bacteria. These are often the "chronic snufflers." Some will require treatment with antibiotics life-long, often combined with local therapy such as nebulization. Along with these treatments, there are things you can do at home to help your rabbit. Provide a healthy, nutritious diet containing fresh grass or timothy hay. It is particularly important for these rabbits to be certain that the hay is not dusty or moldy, as these will irritate the nasal cavity. Make sure that the cage and litterbox are cleaned daily as ammonia from urine will also worsen the infection. Good ventilation is a must, and air filters may be helpful.

Other bacteria can cause the same respiratory symptoms as *Pasteurella*. These include *Staphylococcus sp.*, *Bordetella sp.*, *Moraxella sp.*, *Pseudomonas sp.*, and sometimes *Mycobacterium sp.* *Bordetella* causes respiratory disease nearly as frequently as *Pasteurella*, and often more than one bacteria is simultaneously causing disease. A culture, usually obtained by inserting a swab deep inside the nostril, it needed to determine which bacteria is

causing infection. Rabbits hate having anything put in their nose, but this test is very important to determine which antibiotic is most likely to be effective at killing the bacteria causing disease. Unfortunately, veterinarians have a very, very limited arsenal of antibiotics to use against these bacteria. There are hundreds of antibiotics that can be safely used in dogs, cats and people. But in rabbits, there are less than 10. A rabbit's intestinal tract needs a normal, healthy population of "good" bacteria in order to, literally, keep him alive. Many antibiotics that would be very effective at killing the bacteria causing respiratory disease could also indiscriminately kill the "good" bacteria in the intestinal tract, thereby causing potentially fatal intestinal disease. This limitation is one more handicap that your veterinarian has to contend with when trying to treat that chronic, resistant infection.

Besides a bacterial infection alone, it is important to rule out other contributors to chronic nasal or sinus infections. One common contributor is dental disease. As you are probably aware, rabbit's teeth grow continuously. Under certain conditions, the teeth will not only grow inwards into the mouth, but they can grow upwards into the sinuses. Tooth root impaction or abscesses in the sinuses can cause or contribute to nasal symptoms or sinusitis.

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Going for the Gold with our Adoptable Bunnies

Have a favorite winter sport? Watching the Olympics? Who needs Vancouver when you can have your own world class sporting events right here at home! Get to know all of our local “bun-athletes” at www.columbusrabbit.org.

Rosario and Velvet !

Sport: Pairs Grooming

Stats: 1 yr old / Mini-Lops / Neuter

Training: These brothers were born

Skills: Velvet (the black one) and Rosario are very laid back. They love being petted. They were raised with a cat and a dog, and they're used to being handled and groomed. Velvet is grooming his brother, which is great because Rosario's fluffy coat needs extra care. He needs to be brushed every day to keep his lovely fine fur from becoming a gigantic mat. For the dedicated person who is willing to make the time commitment, you couldn't ask for a sweeter friend. For more information about them, email rabbits@cahs-pets.org.

Adopted!



Nellie

Sport: Solo Binky

Stats: 3 yrs old / 2.5 lbs / Spayed

Training: Nellie is a tiny bunny with a big attitude!

Skills: Nellie enjoys being petted, but it must be on her own terms. She loves her cottontail cottage and other cardboard boxes to play and hang out in. Nellie is friendly and loves her hay and veggies. She can do some fabulous binkies, and will even binky on the bed! She is really cute and will win your heart!



Molly

Sport: Stretching and Flopping

Stats: 12 lbs / Spayed

Training: Molly came from a daycare where she was confined to a very small cage

Skills: Molly loves to stretch out on the rug and she can often be found flopped on her side, front paws in the air, sound asleep!

Molly comes running to her name, will almost trip you for her pellets and salads, and just soaks up all the petting and kisses she can get!

Hannah

Sport: Attitude

Stats: 2 yrs old / 9 lbs / Spayed

Training: Hannah is a former stray who learned to fend for herself.

Skills: Hannah is a beautiful rabbit with an opinion on everything! She is very loving, adores being petted, and is as sweet as she can be, but... she MUST have her own way. Hannah is vocal with tooth purrs of contentment and grunts of excitement about her food. She loves to race over to greet you and then melt down for pets. Hannah loves her hay and veggies and enjoys playing in her cottontail cottage. With an interactive bun like Hannah to share your home, you won't be lonely.



We need foster homes!

Want to make a difference in the life of a bunny?

We need volunteers to care for abandoned and unwanted bunnies while they await placement in permanent, loving homes.

All you need is a little extra room in your house and your heart. CHRS can help with the rest—vet care, housing, supplies, litter boxes, food, toys (fosterers pay for hay and greens).

Want to try it first before committing? Want to help but can't commit full time? Even signing up to be an emergency or temporary foster home is a big help. Temporary shelter can mean the difference between life and death for a rabbit in critical need.

Contact Karalee Curry
karalee@columbusrabbit.org

Going for the Gold with our Adoptable Bunnies



Greta

Sport: Salad Tester

Stats: 2-3 yrs old / Spayed

Training: Agents from the Humane Society of Delaware County found Greta filthy, hot, and crowded in an outdoor enclosure. She's easy to pick up and very gentle.

Skills: Greta is a very easy Bunny chew toys, too. Although her fur is still stained from her old life, she grooms herself fastidiously, and with her next shed, she'll morph into the fluffy white rabbit she was meant to be.

Adopted!

Mira

Sport: High Jump

Stats: 6 mos old / 3.5 lbs / Spayed

Training: Mira was born with only one ear, and thus aptly named Mira which is a command in Spanish that means "to look."

Skills: Mira has quite the adventurous spirit. She has mastered slippery floors and steps in record breaking time and does impressive bunny binkies. Mira doesn't mind being picked up and enjoys attention and getting pats. One of her favorite pastime activities is running and jumping on the living room couches. Don't let her size fool you, she has a hearty appetite and loves to munch on willow baskets and hay.



Eliot

Sport: Goofiness

Stats: 4 mos old / Himalayan

Training: Eliot was rescued by the Humane Society of Delaware County, along with twenty-five other rabbits, from filthy and overcrowded living conditions.

Skills: This guy thinks everybody is his friend. He'll bound over to say "Hi!" and can't get enough pats. He's also a frisky, fun-loving bun who loves to explore, sprint, dash, and binky. The big ears on his sleek little head give him an earnest and endearingly goofy look that's hard to resist. He likes to sleep at mom's feet as she works, nudging her every now and then to remind her that there's a very cute rabbit who would love some pats. He enjoys nibbling his willow toys, and looks forward to his daily greens and bedtime fruit.



Purdy

Sport: Sweetness

Stats: 3 yrs old / 6 lbs

Training: Purdy is active but a little shy because in her former home she didn't get a lot of attention.

Skills: Purdy is a gorgeous white bunny with black spots. She was named for the momma dog in 101 Dalmations. She is not aggressive at all. She has been living at a vet clinic for about a year and she will be spayed prior to adoption. If you are interested in adopting Purdy, please contact the vet clinic for more information: Winchester Veterinary Clinic 614-837-5555



SweetPea

Sport: Exploring

Stats: 5 mos old / 2 lbs

Training: Rescued from a parking lot

Skills: Sweetpea is the perfect name for this sweet and tiny bun. She is quite sociable, and bounces right up to you for a treat or a stroke on the nose. When sitting on the floor she'll check out your shoes and your knees. Sweetpea is curious about everything and there is no shortage of happy jumps and binkies as she explores her surroundings.



Coming Soon: A Rabbit-Only Shelter for Ohio

By Heather Dean

Ohio will soon have a facility specifically designed for homeless and abandoned rabbits. Ohio House Rabbit Rescue (OHRR) is an organization dedicated to the rescue and adoption of house rabbits and the education of their owners and the general public. OHRR is incorporated in Ohio and is awaiting approval as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. CHRS member Heather Dean spoke with the founder of Ohio House Rabbit Rescue, Beverly May.

What inspired you to start Ohio House Rabbit Rescue?

I have always been aware of the issue of homeless pets. There are non-profit organizations in central Ohio that operate shelters for cats, dogs, and a small number of rabbits, but there is no facility specifically for rabbits. I am reminded everyday of the issue of abandoned rabbits because I am the pet parent of 4 abandoned

rabbits: a female rabbit, whom I named Sadie, gave birth to three beautiful babies the day after she arrived. My four rabbits inspire me to work toward creating a facility for all of the other abandoned rabbits who need a place to stay on their way to their forever homes.

By starting this rabbit rescue organization, what do you hope to accomplish?

Ohio House Rabbit Rescue will build and operate a facility for abandoned rabbits, educate the general public about rabbits, and continue the education of those of us who are already rabbit pet parents. The organization will also have a robust adoption program.

Could you describe the rabbit facility?

It will be called the Ohio House Rabbit Rescue Center and will include space to provide shelter

for homeless rabbits, classrooms for programming, and a children's library/reading area. Ideally there will be a bonded pair of rabbits that roam free to allow visitors to interact and socialize with them. The rabbits available for adoption will be housed in enclosures that are on the floor and at least 4x4 feet. The rabbits will have access to exercise in the "rabbit runs."

What are some of the challenges you have faced while getting this organization off the ground?

Starting a non-profit organization from scratch is never easy. There is a lot of required paperwork and logistics to accomplish. Probably the most difficult challenge is assembling a group of people who share the mission of the new organization and are willing to work hard to make it a reality. We have been very fortunate to have a core group step forward to help.

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Our Rabbit Community: Local Shelter Updates

By Danielle Patterson

Through the years, there have been many transformations at the Capital Area Humane Society (CAHS), and most have benefited the rabbits. A shelter environment is very dynamic, so change is a way of life. Some of the more recent changes at CAHS include the removal of the lobby cleaning duties from volunteers, as it is now done entirely by staff. A new "Rabbit Room" was carved out of the large adoption counselor area and contains two specially-built rabbit housing units where our bonded couples currently reside. Rabbits can still be found living with the cats in room H as well. Locks on the rabbit cages have once again been added for the

safety of the rabbits, helping to ensure that no one without training or knowledge mishandles them. Rabbit spays and neuters are now being performed by Dr. Laurie Millward every month.

There have also been radical rabbit developments at another Columbus area shelter. On Friday, September 11, 2009, the humane agent from the Humane Society of Delaware County (HSDC) seized 26 rabbits from beneath a suburban home where they were living in their own feces. The owners started out with two or four rabbits; before long the breeding was out of control, so their neighbors called in a report.

All the rabbits are either New Zealands or Californians.

Of the original 26 rabbits, two were transferred to Columbus House Rabbit Society and five were transferred to CAHS where two have been adopted. The remaining rabbits are living at HSDC except for three who are in foster care. Previously, the largest number of rabbits housed at HSDC at one time was three. Despite the awful living conditions these rabbits experienced, they have some of the sweetest personalities you could imagine. If you need a bunny friend for your existing rabbit or are interested in adopting a single

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Snuffles

(Continued from page 2)

Importantly, the bacteria that are found in tooth root infections or abscesses are usually very different than those mentioned above (anaerobic bacteria) and these organisms will not be killed by most of the antibiotics used to treat *Pasteurella* and other bacteria. It is therefore important to have a thorough oral examination, sometimes requiring anesthesia and X-rays of the skull to rule out dental disease as a contributor to chronic snuffles.

Occasionally, rabbits will inhale small objects up into their noses. The most common inhaled foreign material is a small piece of hay. These can poke into the lining of the nose and become stuck, become infected, and cause sneezing and nasal discharge. Often, the infection is in one nostril only, and seems to clear up when treated with antibiotics. When the antibiotic treatment is finished, the infection usually returns. Most of the time, the foreign material does not show up on an X-ray. However, X-rays can be helpful in demonstrating that the infection is truly one-sided, to rule out other problems within the nose or sinuses, and to rule out tooth problems. The offending object can be found and usually removed by inserting a small endoscope or other lighted

magnification into the nose under general anesthesia.

Infections, abscesses, tumors or foreign material in the nose can be a more serious problem in rabbits than in most other pets. This is because rabbits are obligate nasal breathers, meaning that they cannot normally breathe through their mouth. The trachea or windpipe essentially hooks over the soft palate, forcing air from the nose into the trachea, and preventing any air from escaping into the mouth, or from the trachea to the mouth. If we get a stuffy nose, we breathe through our mouths, but this is not an option for your rabbit. If the nostrils become very clogged, treatment inside an oxygen cage may be required. At the same time, oral or injectable antibiotics, and medications to help open up airways are administered. Treatment can be directed right into the nose by means of a nebulizer. Nebulizers create a mist of moistened air combined with drugs that are inhaled directly into the nose. For rabbits with severe, chronic nasal or sinus infections, nebulizers can be purchased or rented for home treatment.

Bacterial infections in the nose and sinuses will frequently travel. They can move up the tear ducts (nasolacrimal ducts) into the eyes and cause eye infections or excessive tearing. They can move down the trachea to the lungs and



cause pneumonia or pleuritis. They can move through the Eustachian tube into the inner ear. A major portion of balance control is maintained by the inner ear. When the middle ear becomes infected, rabbits will develop a head tilt, have an unsteady gait, may be unable to stand, and are sometimes so disoriented that they roll continuously. Infectious that are untreated may actually move from the inner ear into the brain; an untreatable, life-threatening condition.

Infection can move into the lungs, causing pneumonia, pleuritis or lung abscesses. These infections are often subtle and insidious in onset. In the next issue we will discuss lung disease in house rabbits, including infection, tumors and heart disease. 🐰

Dr. Barbara Oglesbee operates an exotics-only private practice within the facilities of Capital Veterinary Referral & Emergency Center in Hilliard, Ohio. Call 614.870.0480 for an appointment.

"Make Mine Chocolate!"

(Continued from page 1)

Historical Chocolate Company. They will be producing chocolate bunnies using a vintage chocolate mold, with a portion of the proceeds being donated to MMC!

More information on our local activities can be found on our MMC website. For updates on

what our Partners are doing this year, check out our blog. Visit www.makeminechocolate.org.

Want to get more involved?

Have an idea on how to help spread the word that rabbits are not disposable pets?

Want to help pass out flyers or hang them on a bulletin board?

Email Terri Cook at terri@columbusrabbit.org.

Visit our Bunspace group at www.bunspace.com/groups

Visit us on Facebook - log in and search for "Make Mine Chocolate!" We've got a Fan Page, a Group page, and a Cause page - join one or join them all!

Let's make this a Happy Easter for bunnies, too!

Columbus House Rabbit Society Newsletter

Helping and Educating, One Call at a Time

By Terri Davenport Cook with Laine Kathary and Julie Schram

In 2008, CHRS implemented a new voicemail and email system. On a rotating schedule, volunteers check for messages and respond to inquiries. From time to time, we will share some of their stories.

Loving Luigi from Laine Kathary

About a year ago, I picked up a voice mail on the CHRS help line from a woman named Allison Coleman who had found a bunny in her neighborhood. She had taken him in and was offering to have him neutered and foster him until a home could be found. She was an animal lover, I could tell, and was already a mom to two cats. She had also, in a short period of time, started to fall in love with the bunny. We did talk about where to have him neutered and how to house him in the mean time, and, of course, I was oh-so-gently trying to tell her bunnies and cats can live together very happily (hint, hint). Allison was going to spend some more time on the CHRS and other websites to do a bit more research on his care, and I hung up with a good feeling that at least for the time being this little rabbit was in good hands. And, of course, hoping he'd already found his home.



A few months later something reminded me of this and I wondered how things had gone, and was curious that we hadn't

received a call about getting him a home. Since I had the e-mail, I contacted Allison to see what was up. Well, the news was all good! This lucky rabbit gained a wonderful new home and a new name. "Luigi" seemed to be adapting well, as was the Coleman family and their two cats.

I've heard from Allison a few times since then and all is still well and everyone seems happy. I hope to continue receiving the updates and adorable pictures she sends. Luigi is lucky and I feel good knowing we are making a difference with our efforts.

Bonding Advice from Julie Schram

For those who have bonded their rabbits or assisted with a bonding, you know it has the potential to be a long process which requires a great deal of patience. I received an e-mail in November of 2008 from a bunny mom (Amy) who was seeking help re-bonding her buns who had become unbonded after 2½ years, subsequent to one of them undergoing surgery. As Amy left her phone number, I contacted her via both e-mail and phone. When Amy called me back, I provided her with some of the more common suggestions about bonding (ie- car rides; neutral territory; a litter box for each bun; lots of hay and toys; two people to monitor the bonding; end the bonding session on a positive note). I also offered to go over to Amy's and help her with some bondings. Although Amy decided to try to continue with the re-bonding on her own, I told her to keep my name and number handy in the event she needed additional support at a later date.

Amy contacted me again through the help email address in

February 2009 since her buns still were not bonded, as her one bun had undergone a second surgery. At that time, she was seeking assistance in providing sub-Q fluids.

Amy wrote yet again in April 2009 saying she decided not to proceed with the re-bonding due to everything her one bun was going through health-wise. However, as things were getting back to normal with her health, Amy wanted to try to get the buns back together. She also felt the buns were getting lonely, and was concerned about them since their free time had been cut in half as she could not let them out to play at the same time. This time, Amy took me up on my offer to come over and assist her with a bonding. Amy set things up in her garage (which was the only neutral area in her condo) and things could not have gone much better. Even Amy was surprised! The girls did not lung or growl at each other (which is what she said had happened in prior bonding attempts), and they enjoyed being around one another. I'm hoping the buns are living happily together again, as Amy has not called to request further assistance.

Before leaving, Amy showed me where her buns live. (As a side note, I would be remiss not to mention that Amy is also the mom to two cats!). In addition to the hay, litterboxes, and ample space to move around, the buns had various toys, including a condo that was three stories tall. Not only was this positive experience for all (both human and rabbit), but it was nice meeting someone who is as much of a bunny slave as I am!

If you are interested in answering inquiries to our helpline, please contact Terri Cook at terri@columbusrabbit.org. 🐰

New Rabbit Shelter

(Continued from page 5)

This group is Kim Banks, Heather Dean, Wendy Weagle, Derek Knaub, Mary Rose Molinaro, Carrie Hall, Pat Barron, Beverly May, Barbara Armitage, and Robert Shapter.

How can others get involved or support the organization?

Right now, you can get involved with Ohio House Rabbit Rescue by joining the Planning Team, participating in our fundraisers, or becoming a supporting member. If you wish to join the Planning Team, email me at bmaywshs@aol.com. You don't have to live in Columbus to be on the Planning Team - one of the members, Carrie Hall, lives in Oxford, OH. To participate in our

fundraisers, to become a member, and to stay informed of our progress, go to our website at www.ohiohouserabbitrescue.org.

The Ohio House Rabbit Rescue Planning Team meets approximately once a month to tackle everything from website design to planning fundraisers. Ohio House Rabbit Rescue will soon have a logo thanks to the generosity of CHRS member Ellen Eder. Business cards, postcards, and other marketing materials are also being developed. Additionally, fundraising efforts are underway with a holiday card sale (shop online now) and a yard sale planned for spring of 2010. 🐰

In addition to serving on the OHRR planning team, Heather Dean is an active member of the Columbus House Rabbit Society.

Shelter Updates

(Continued from page 5)

bun or a bonded pair, please keep these rabbits in mind!

The following organizations and individuals should be recognized for their willingness to jump in and help out when the rabbits needed them most.

Many thanks to Columbus House Rabbit Society and Capital Area Humane Society for opening their hearts and doors by accepting some of the rabbits into their adoption programs and donating dog crates, rabbit cages, heavy crock bowls, and hay.

Thanks so much to Oxbow and Busy Bunny for making sure the rabbits would not go hungry by supplying them with timothy and orchard hay, pellets, critical care and willow toys.

A special thank you goes out to Cathy Schoppelrei, Karen Winstead, Dr. Laurie Millward, Sarah Schmitz and Caroline Garrett who all volunteered their time to drive up to HSDC to medically evaluate and separate the 26 rabbits within a week of their arrival at the shelter.

Last, but not least, a very grateful thank you goes to Dr. Susan Borders, Dr. Beth Logan, and the wonderful staff at Norton Road Veterinary Hospital for the discounted spays and neuters they performed so the rabbits would be ready for adoption.

One moral of this story is if you are looking for places to adopt a rabbit or are searching for somewhere to volunteer your time to work with rabbits, we definitely have some options for you. The other moral of the story is that "rabbit people" may be small in numbers, but we come together and join forces to do amazing things for the rabbits.

My Bunny, My Muse Rabbit-inspired Haiku

Fluffy tail punched out.
Hay-stained feet so kissable!
Twitching whiskers breathe.

— Alisa Homann

A lay-down bunny
So serene, all stretched out long.

Love-pillow belly!

— Ellen Eder

Crescent shaped moon.
Chin to floor resting comfy.

Feet kicked out behind.

— Alisa Homann

Drowsing lazily.
Somnolent Security.
Egg-shaped furriness.

— Alisa Homann

Pretty pink and white
Ears move gently, nose twitching

Sleeping in the sun

— Terri Davenport Cook

If you'd like to share your own bunny-inspired poetry, send it to terri@columbusrabbit.org.

If you would like more information about the rabbit programs at either CAHS or HSDC, please contact Danielle Patterson at 614.392.0154 or danielle@columbusrabbit.org. 🐰

Danielle Patterson is a Board Member of HSDC, CHRS/CAHS liaison, and an active member of the Columbus House Rabbit Society.

The Faux Fire Incident

Mary Beth Parisi

Amazing as it may seem to some folks, bunny parents tend to be as passionate about their furry companions as any cat or dog owner. I, for one, could be considered passionate about my pets and have been known to go to tremendous lengths to ensure my guys are safe, happy and healthy.

As a traveling, international consultant, I am often away from home, traveling the world for work. As exciting and glamorous as it may sound to some, I miss my pets terribly when I am gone. In 2008, I took an assignment in Baghdad, Iraq, supporting the US Department of Defense reconstruction efforts. In addition to making all the necessary arrangements for myself, I spent a considerable amount of time planning and making arrangements with our Vets, Pet-sitters, neighbors and friends for the comfort and care of my 3 house rabbits and my Kitty.

One of the splurges I indulged in was two wireless internet web cameras (called by us- "the buncams"). The buncams are set up in the bunny play areas where the bunnies and kitty spend most of their time, so I can visit and see them while I am away. For the most part, the pets don't seem to mind Mom's spying on them and it gives me piece of mind to be able to check in every day.

Well, in June 2009, while working in the International Zone, I got back to my billet from the office and got on-line to check on the buncams. Since it's about an 8 hour time difference, it was 7:00 PM in Baghdad and about noon in the eastern US. As I was looking through the camera into one of the play areas, I didn't see any of the pets, but what I did see was a



Bunnito and Daisy

white/grey wisp trail coming from under the big wooden armoire in the play area. I thought "Oh My Goodness! That looks like smoke!" and called some friends in our living quarters to look, too. The wisp was all wavy and everyone thought it might be smoke!

I was panicked! There I was, half-way around the world, watching my house catch on fire! So, I proceeded to call everyone I knew had keys: brother, bun-sitter, neighbors, friends, even my ex-boyfriend...no-one answered, so I called the local Columbus Fire Department!!!!!!!

I explained to the dispatcher where I was and what I thought was happening. After several minutes of discussion about where I thought the smoke might be coming from and authorizing the fire department to break into the house, the dispatcher informed me the FIRETRUCKS were on their way!!

It was all very dramatic, I was crying on the phone with the Fire dispatcher (who was VERY nice), my friends in Baghdad were all on their phones trying to reach people in Columbus for me; and the Firemen were breaking in to our house through an upstairs window!

In the International Zone in Baghdad, there is a special alarm that goes off when they are under attack. It begins as a very loud warbling siren with verbal instructions as follows: "Incoming! Incoming! Incoming! Take Cover!" This is the signal to hit the ground and crawl to the closest safe point. You get about 10 seconds before...well you get the idea.

Well, as it would happen, as I am on the phone with the Dispatcher, the alarm sounds. We all hit the ground and I dragged my laptop and phone with me into the hallway. It was a little slice of chaos that I didn't need at that moment. I'm lying on the ground with my phone and the computer still hooked up to the buncams; the Dispatcher is shouting into the phone asking what was going on, and all I could do was shout back over the alarm: "Don't worry about that, it's just a couple of rockets, my only worry right now is to GET MY BUNNIES OUT OF THERE!" Crazy bunny lady? You decide.

As the crisis in Baghdad ended, the Fire Department got into the house and I watched through the camera as they came into the area where I saw the smoke....and guess what...no smoke and NO FIRE! But I could still see the smoke on the camera! Those poor firemen looked and looked until my brother arrived



Worf

Faux Fire

(Continued from page 9)

on the scene about ten minutes later.

As they cleared the scene and declared that no fire was present, I was still on the phone with my brother and watching the "action" on the buncams. As we are talking, I see a close-up of his face on the buncam. A pair of fingers moves toward the camera and plucks off a little clump of bunny fur that was stuck under the camera, and with the air moving from the ceiling fan in the room ... it was waving in front of the camera lens and LOOKED JUST LIKE SMOKE!!!

Well, everyone was very understanding and I thanked them all profusely, but boy, was I embarrassed!

The firemen went home and my brother checked all the pets: one bunny slept through the whole



Bella

thing and my bonded pair just hid in the other room until the firemen left. The only pet brave enough to meet the firemen was our kitty, who spent the whole time supervising the search.

It took me two days to calm down from the whole episode and now all my friends at work are calling me "Miss Faux Fire!" Oh well, better safe than sorry! When I got home on the following rotation, I dropped off some treats at the Fire Station for the fantastic work they did for us AND did a MAJOR dusting and de-fuzzing of the whole house. 🐾

Mary Beth Parisi is a member of the Columbus House Rabbit Society.

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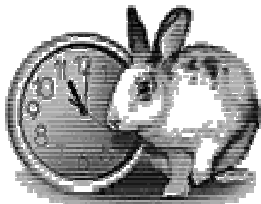
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