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## Notes from a First-Time Bun-Mom: Driving Cross-Country with Rabbits

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*By Jennifer J.*

Traveling cross-country with rabbits can be daunting to first-time rabbit parents. At least that was the case with us. Having read all the adoption materials when we adopted our first rabbit, Mortimer, and then again when we adopted his bonded friend, Snowball, we were beyond anxious when we started planning how to get our buns out west with us. Our biggest worry was that by day two of the trip our furry friends would get GI stasis from the constant shaking of the moving car.

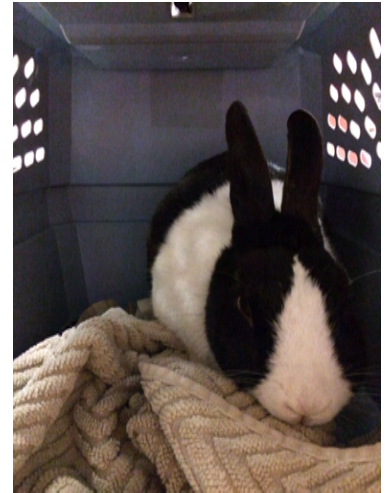


Photo: Beck B.

As an anxious bun-mom, I decided to consult anyone who would listen to me and ask as many questions as possible on how to make the journey without risking the lives of our furry friends. I toyed with the idea of flying instead of driving. Everyone we spoke to about flying told us it was *possible* to fly with our furry friends, but this would be fairly tricky. Airlines used to be more rabbit friendly, but now most do not allow passengers to bring their rabbits into the cabin. Everyone we talked to and all the online articles we read agreed that rabbits safest in the cabin area of the plane, so we quickly

ruled out the option of flying. Paying for a service to transport the rabbits did not seem to be an option considering our current location and our destination. Our only viable option was to drive.

Once we decided to drive, we wanted to be as prepared as possible for the trip. We reached out to our veterinarian, who gave us the following suggestions:

- 1. Have the rabbits undergo full medical workups to make sure they are healthy.**
- 2. Prepare an emergency kit for the road in case a rabbit needs medical attention (for example, treatment for GI stasis) when far away from a veterinarian.**

### 3. Take a break every few hours to let the rabbits rest, eat, drink, and sleep.

We had full workups done for both of our furry friends and with the help of our vet, put together an emergency kit (see below), which contained GI stasis medication, a laminated instruction card explaining how to determine the correct dose of the medication based on a rabbit's weight, gauze, Critical Care recovery food, and feeding syringes.

#### Here are some of what may appear to be minor tips people gave us that ended up being a huge help:

- To help prevent the rabbits from getting motion sickness, place the rabbits in a container where they cannot see out. We used a very large Rubbermaid container, which did the trick.
- Seat belt the rabbits' container if at all possible. Even small fender-benders could be fatal to rabbits. If seat belting is not possible, wedge the container with a reclined seat or other firmly-attached objects in the car.
- Place towels at the bottom of the container to level the container floor. Car seats are usually not flat, which means that the container will not be level, making it difficult for the rabbits to stretch out comfortably.
- Place foam over the towels to minimize the rabbits' exposure to the car's vibrations.
- Last but not least, use the car's air conditioner. Rabbits overheat easily during car rides.

When the big day rolled around, we felt prepared. Our plan was to drive during the day and rest at night. In our minds, this was the best plan not only for our furry friends but also for us. Our friends suggested staying at La Quinta hotels because they are pet-friendly. We stayed at various La Quinta locations along the way. Bringing our furry friends into the hotel room each night allowed them to eat and drink, stretch out, relax, and sleep in a less stressful environment.

Our furry friends successfully made it out west from DC to San Francisco. We doubt they remember the five days on the road, especially since we added a third bun-friend to the mix. Shortly after, Mortimer and Snowball settled into their new three-story rabbit mansion, we added a third friend to the crew. Most days, the first floor of the rabbit mansion is occupied by a pile of snuggling bunnies.

#### CHECKLIST: (Make your own) RABBIT EMERGENCY KIT

- Plastic digital thermometer (rectal temperature measurement)
- Ice pack (cooling overheated rabbits)
- Heating pad or warm water bottle (warming rabbits with low body temperature)
- Oxbow Critical Care (emergency feeding)
- Pedialyte (rehydration)
- Feeding syringes 10 ml, 30 ml and 60 ml (oral administration of fluids and/or Critical Care)
- A can of V-8 juice, fruit juice or canned pumpkin NOT pie filling! (for mixing with medications to increase interest)
- Styptic powder, cornstarch, or flour (stopping bleeding)
- Mineral Oil (lubrication of thermometers, wax removal from scent glands, alleviating skin irritation)
- Pediatric gas relief medication:  
Generic name: Simethicone; Brand names: Little Tummys, Gas-X, Phazyme, Mylicon, and Ovol.  
For dosage info, see <http://www.morfz.com/rx/drugcalc.html>
- Probiotics: Benebac or other rabbit-friendly brand (for repopulating essential gut microbes)
- Blunt ended scissors or a disposable razor (for trimming hair around a wound)
- Sterile saline solution (for wound flushing)
- Eyedroppers (saline flushing)
- Towels (for burrito-ing your bunny)
- Tweezers (removal of foreign objects)
- Antibacterial ointment: Medihoney or Bactriban (mupiricin)  
DO NOT use ointments with pain relief e.g. Neosporin 'Plus'
- Antiseptic wash: Betadine, chlorhexidine solution, Hibiclens, or Novalsan (wound cleaning)
- Sterile gauze and wound wrap (covering and stabilizing wounds)
- Q-tips or tongue depressors (application of topical ointments)



## Wound Care in Rabbits

*By Gail N.*

Although veterinarians are our best friends when our rabbits are sick, often the instructions we are given on home care lack the background and practical details we need to provide good wound care for our rabbits. This article will cover wound care basics such as fundamental theory, challenges of wound care in rabbits, available materials and practical tips. Wounds in rabbits may be from diagnoses like abscesses (probably the most common), moist dermatitis, or ulcerations. In no way does this article or any information referred to within it replace veterinary care or advice by a knowledgeable rabbit veterinarian.



Freya in her Medical Pet Shirt during recovery from abdominal surgery <http://livestockconcepts.com/en/wound-care/9788-medical-pet-shirt-protective-shirt-rabbit-medium.html>

**All Photos: Gail N.**

A primary consideration when caring for wounds in rabbits is their thin, delicate skin protected by their thick fur. The combination of fur, fragile skin and the relatively slow healing rate of rabbits, makes choosing materials for bandaging particularly challenging. The purpose of bandaging wounds is to keep wounds moist but not wet. Successful bandaging decreases infection, healing time and scarring (Mickelson, et al, 2016). We found that several techniques and various materials were necessary to manage long-term abscesses in Henry and Lapin. If you missed a previous newsletter article, Henry had an open ear abscess and Lapin had an open abscess at the base of a lower incisor. If you see your bunny making little progress towards healing, ask your vet if another method would be more effective.

Common procedures you may be performing on your furry, (squirmy!) friend include flushing and/or cleaning a wound, applying topical medications, applying, and changing dressings. Here we discuss each in turn.

### Supplies and pre-care planning

Wounds require extra calories to heal (Mickelson et al., 2016) so ask your vet to recommend a supplement. A common supplement is Critical Care, which comes in original (anise) and apple/banana flavor. All but the sickest of our bunnies have eaten the apple/banana flavor with enthusiasm. Adding a little extra banana can encourage them to eat until their appetite returns. Keep the environment quiet, comfortably warm and meticulously clean. Wash litter boxes, bowls, bottles and bedding in hot, soapy water. For wound patients, after washing items with soap and water, we rinse them in white vinegar, a mild disinfectant. If your rabbit is bonded, ask your vet if they can remain together. This may depend on whether the bond mate will be gentle with the wounded bunny or if there is a danger that the untreated rabbit will ingest a topical medicine from an open wound. If they must be separated, it causes less stress to keep them within sight, smell and touch of each other, if possible. We found this method effective for Henry. The initial treatment of his open abscess involved several medicines that would have been toxic to his bond mate, Adele. Keeping him in a pen outside her condo allowed the two to touch noses and take comfort in each other's presence. FoR has had success in rebonding rabbits separated by health issues.

When it is time to treat the wound have clean towels, gauze pads, and other needed supplies nearby. It is amazing how often you have the rabbit perfectly positioned- and the betadine flushing solution is across the room! Wash your hands before handling your rabbit and after cleaning the wound. Gloves are a good alternative because they can be changed without disturbing your rabbit. Consider using a storage box as shown in Fig. 1.

Label the kit with the rabbit's name and tape a treatment sheet to the top. Put the rabbit's medications, gauze pads, sterile Q-tips, surgical scissors, and any other needed supplies inside. The container can easily be carried

to a treatment area. Include a container of treats to make wound cleaning and dressing a more positive experience for you and your bunny.

Although your vet will initially shave/trim the fur around the wound you may need to do some additional trimming. Try using surgical steel, curved and/or blunt nose scissors. Using mineral oil on the scissor blades will keep fur from contaminating the wound. Soak scissors, tweezers and other tools in Nolvasan Solution Animal Premise Chlorhexidine Diacetate disinfectant (from [www.valleyvet.com](http://www.valleyvet.com) ,or [www.lambertvetsupply.com](http://www.lambertvetsupply.com) ) when not in use. FoR can assist with shaving or trimming your rabbit's fur.



Fig 1. Rabbit Wound and Medication Kit

### Flushing/cleaning wounds

The first step in caring for open wounds, particularly abscesses, is often cleaning or flushing (lavage) the wound. This step cleans off dead cells and other debris important to allow healing. It is important to wear gloves, wash hands thoroughly and keep your work area as clean as possible to avoid the possibility of introducing bacterial residing on your skin or work surfaces into the wound.

Follow your vet's instructions carefully. Wounds can be worsened if a solution is pushed too aggressively into the wound. One percent povidone iodine (Betadine) solution is often used to lavage a wound at home (Wildlife Information Network, The Royal Veterinary College, 2004). Chlorhexidine sponges are commonly used to clean a wound. NOTE: The Chlorhexidine used for wound cleaning ( Chlorhexidine *Gluconate* ) is NOT the same chemical you use to soak scissors or other tools ( Chlorhexidine *Diacetate* ) between uses.

Ask your vet what healthy tissue looks like. This will tell you if you are being diligent enough (or too diligent) about cleaning a wound. Remember- too much cleaning could remove helpful immune cells, new tissue, delay healing and cause your rabbit additional discomfort.

### Topical medication

In some cases, you may apply a topical medicine. Wounds that are infected, caused by myiasis (fly strike), and burns are examples of wounds that usually require topical medicines (Graham, 2004). Neosporin, a commonly used broad-spectrum ointment, for humans is not generally recommended for rabbits. The same is true of SSD 1% Silver Sulfadiazine Cream and Nitrofurazone (Wildlife Information Network, The Royal Veterinary College, 2004) (Graham, 2004). Only use topical medications prescribed by your vet that are explicitly stated to be safe for use on rabbits. Manuka honey, complying with precise standards, has been researched (references on request) for its antibacterial and healing properties. Medihoney, a form of Manuka honey, is used for large surface wounds, like burns or myiasis.

### Bandages

Bandages consist of three layers. The primary or contact layer is sterile and provides a moist environment to promote wound healing. The secondary layer absorbs the liquid (exudate) from the wound and the third or tertiary layer holds the primary and secondary layers in place. The tertiary layer's additional function is to immobilize the wound to promote healing (Mickelson, Mans, & Colophy, 2016; Graham, 2004). Many materials available to you combine the layers in one bandage. Improper bandaging can impair wound healing and damage healthy tissue. Always contact your vet if you are unsure of your technique. There are numerous topical treatments, tapes, bandages, dressings and covers (to discourage chewing). There are several resources provided in the references section for more information. Fig. 2, 3 and 4 show examples of materials you may be given to use. To keep your rabbit from chewing bandages, try covering them with baby socks, baby t-shirts, Medical Pet Shirt for Rabbits or 3M Vetrap. Tubular gauze bandages (Fig. 3) are another option.

Elizabethan collars are rarely successful on rabbits, as we found with Henry. Effective pain relief and temporarily taping his paw so he could not scratch the wound proved more effective.

Figure 2 (right). Clockwise from left: Medihoney, Skin Prep ( better adhesion over fur), Mupirocin ointment, Manuka Honey (UMF +20), Tapered, curved tip, 12cc syringe (for flushing), Tongue depressors (gentle, topical medication applicator), alcohol wipes (for use on flushing syringe tip, etc) and Chlorhexidine Gluconate wipes



Figure 3. (Left). Clockwise from upper left: Smith&Nephew one handed membrane bandage, Tegaderm non-stick pad film dressing, Nexcare waterproof bandages and flexible fabric Band-aid

Figure 4 (right). Clockwise from top left: Non-adhesive dressing, wound closure strips (can be cut to size, close small wounds), moleskin (used as padding and adhesive), tubular gauze bandage, Stomahesive (long-term adhesive), 1/8" umbilical tape (wound packing), 3M foam, cloth and porous tapes.



You may be asked to care for a wound two or more times a day. If you work, find someone to help you with this or check with your vet about how you may space the treatments. For example, you may be able to do a treatment before work, after work and at bedtime. Check your bunny during every treatment looking for signs of skin breakdown from lack of exercise, diarrhea or other unusual symptoms. The home care you provide is often the deciding factor in the chances for survival and quality of life for you your bunny. Always, always, ask your vet if you are unsure of any procedure or material!

### References

Campbell, B. G. (2006, July). Dressings, Bandages, and Splints for Wound Management in Dogs and Cats. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice*, pp. 751-791. Available from [www.academia.com](http://www.academia.com) (by logging in with your google or facebook account) [http://www.academia.edu/3930851/Dressings\\_Bandages\\_and\\_Splints\\_for\\_Wound\\_Management\\_in\\_Dogs\\_and\\_Cats](http://www.academia.edu/3930851/Dressings_Bandages_and_Splints_for_Wound_Management_in_Dogs_and_Cats)BUILDING THE BANDAGE SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS Bandaging Surgically Closed Wounds

Graham, J. E.-A. (2004, Jan). Rabbit wound management. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Exotic Animal Practice*, pp. 37-55.

Mickelson, M. A., Mans, C., & Colophy, S. A. (2016, January). Principles of Wound Management and Wound Healing in Exotic Pets. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Exotic Animal Practice*, pp. 33-53.

For open access to , see [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net) select "join for free", select "No, my work is not scientific" then "Start browsing". Enter the title of the either the Graham, J.E. or Mickelson, M.A. article above and click download.

Wildlife Information Network, The Royal Veterinary College. (2004). *Treatment and Care- Wound Management*. Retrieved from Wildpro - the electronic encyclopaedia and library for wildlife: <http://wildpro.twycrosszoo.org/S/00Man/VeterinaryTechniques/TreatmentCare.htm#WoundManagement>

## Emergency services recommended by Friends of Rabbits:

### Warning signs:

- Unconsciousness
- Inability to respond to stimulation
- Behavior changes
- No eating for 12 hours
- Gasping for air
- Stretching the neck and head up
- Seizures
- Acting "drunk"
- Rolling or tilted head.
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Extreme diarrhea.
- Ingestion of a toxic substance
- Nonproductive straining to urinate
- Dangling limb or awkwardly angled limb
- Inability to bear weight on a leg
- Hind limb paralysis.

*NOTE: ALWAYS CALL FIRST as if the exotics veterinarian are not there, the present vet may not be able to see exotics.*

Dr Tino Luehman  
Emergency Veterinary Clinic  
32 Mellor Ave  
Catonsville, MD 21228  
410-788-7040

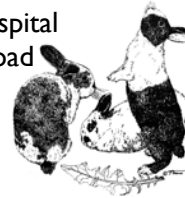
Dr Nelson Bricker  
Rocky Gorge Animal Hospital  
7515 Brooklyn Bridge Road  
Laurel, MD 20707  
301-776-7744

Anne Arundel Veterinary  
Emergency Clinic  
808 Bestgate Road  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410-224-0331

Animal Emergency Hospital  
807 Baltimore Pike  
Bel Air, MD 21014  
410-420-7297

**One place that will always see exotics is:**

Pender Veterinary Centre  
4001 Legato Road  
Fairfax, VA 22033  
703-654-3100



Emergency cut-out card- snip and save!



## Volunteer Activity Spotlight

### Girl scouts volunteer with the rescue rabbits and earn Bronze Stars

*By Maxine K.*

Two local Girl Scout troops have been volunteering with Friends of Rabbits for the past year and a half, but the one helping on a regular basis is GS Troop 1592 of Columbia, MD. The girls clean pens and litter boxes and groom and socialize the rabbits. They also do laundry, pack adoption bags, and help organize the sanctuary inventory. Five of the scouts earned a Bronze Star for their contributions.

The second troop, GS Troop 5017 of Silver Spring, MD, is a much larger group led by Amy DeMouy. They have been tasked to collect a variety of wish list items for FoR. The scouts helped out by grooming the rabbits at the sanctuary and made some wonderful bunny clips

out of clothes pins.

Although the Troops are currently taking a break for the summer, we hope to have them return to FoR in the near future!



Photo: Susan W.

Girl scout mom Brenda with her daughter Ally, socialize with FoR rabbit Catherine and a young bunny friend.

### FoR Fostering and Sanctuary Wish list

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| rubber boots of all sizes          | cement mixing tubs (from Lowe's or Home Depot)  |
| toilet bowl brushes                | exercise pens of varying heights                |
| black metal dog crates (all sizes) | area rugs (e.g. Ikea 4x6 ft rugs)               |
| lightweight folding tables         | carpet squares                                  |
| small clipboards                   | water bottles                                   |
| blue painter's tape                | large trash bags                                |
| chloroplast                        | bug, pesticide and fertilizer-free apple sticks |
|                                    | cardboard hidey boxes (all sizes)               |

### Featured Foster Rabbit



**Chai**

Chai is a lovely brown and white Dutch rabbit who was left at Prince William County Animal Shelter when family thought she was pregnant. FoR took her in, expecting babies, but after three weeks, she was found to just be cute and rotund. Like her namesake, she is sweet and is the color of cinnamon, tea and milk. While she is a bit shy at first, after she warms up to you she will make an amazing house rabbit. She enjoys

sitting next to you on the sofa, and watching television with the humans. Meet Chai and let her warm your heart!

## Brews FoR Bunnies continues to bring good cheer and great beer in support of rabbit rescue

*By Beck B.*

In April, FoR hosted another successful Brews FoR Bunnies fundraising event, this time at Bad Wolf Brewing Company in Manassas, VA. The brewery debuted a Sour Raspberry Wit Bier in honor of the occasion, aptly called Witty Bunny. The event was simply hoppin' - the venue was standing room only for much of the time. Overall, it raised about \$2,000 for the rescue and brought rabbit lovers - old and new - together for libations, conversation, and cake-walking.

In August, Brews FoR Bunnies will be returning to Jailbreak Brewing in Laurel for another high energy night out for beer geeks and bunny nerds to convene.



## Get Involved! Summer Volunteer Initiatives

*By Amy S.*

Are you looking for new opportunities to volunteer for Friends of Rabbits or foster bunnies waiting for their furever homes? If yes, then look no further because FoR is looking for YOU! There are two new volunteer training initiative this summer where you can contribute your valuable talents or learn new skills.

### Social Media and Website Team Workshop- July 17th

FoR is forming a social media and website team to enhance the current website and coordinate social media efforts. The FoR website is being revamped and will have a new look this month. For example, plans include an events calendar, online store, and other useful new features. FoR is looking for volunteers who can assist with both content and the

technical aspects. In particular, if you have experience coding html, your skills would be an indispensable contribution to these efforts to enhance and maintain the website. FoR also values the ability to create new content for the updated website. For example, people are needed to help work on high traffic sites like the adoption pages as well as update resources such as the list of rabbit-savvy veterinarians. Social media is also an important way to communicate with the public as well as each other. Volunteers are needed to improve the effectiveness and creativity of FoR's communication on various social media platforms, which will be coordinated with the website for a unified look and message. The July workshop offered a chance to join the team that will work on the upcoming enhancements and help plan future goals. If you were unable to attend, but are interested in helping out, email [alex@friendsofrabbits.org](mailto:alex@friendsofrabbits.org).

### Adoption and Fostering Team

#### Workshop- August 14th

see Events, page 16 for more info

There are multiple steps in the process of finding permanent homes for foster bunnies. When FoR takes in new rabbits, those rabbits must be provided with temporary foster homes for proper care while they await adoption. If you are interested in providing a foster home to one or more rabbits, this will be an important training session for you to attend. You will learn from experienced foster parents about both fostering and rabbit care more generally. In fact, if you are new to rabbits, you may want to join this workshop just to learn about rabbit care! Volunteers are also needed to help work through the adoption process for these foster rabbits and attend FoR adoption events. For those interested in becoming adoption counselors, you will learn how to screen applications, talk to potential adopters, and conduct home visits to make sure that the new family is ready for the commitment of caring for an adopted rabbit.

**Your motivation to help FoR save the bunnies is all that it takes. However, light refreshments will be served at the workshop as an extra incentive to attend.**

[Even if you cannot attend either workshop, you can always contact us if you'd still like to help!](#)

## Coping With Pet Loss

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*By Maxine K.*

"Bunnies we love don't go away, they hop beside us every day, unseen, unheard, but always near, still loved, still missed and very dear."

Anyone who has loved a house rabbit knows how intelligent, sensitive, and loving they are. Our rabbits are not "just pets"; they're a member of the family. Sadly, their lives are tragically short in comparison to our own. The average life span of a rabbit is 7-10 years. No matter how well we care for and love them, sooner or later we all must confront their passing. Unfortunately, our society is not always sympathetic to the plight of pet owners. This can leave the grieving person feeling misunderstood and isolated. Fortunately, there are many excellent resources available to help the grieving rabbit owner work through their pain.

Intense grief over the loss of your bunny is a normal and natural response. There is nothing silly or crazy about grieving your pet's loss. For some, the loss of a rabbit is as equally traumatizing as the death of a human family member. People who do not understand the pet/owner bond may not understand your pain, but that does not make it any less real. "Part of losing a companion animal is knowing that no other pet or person will ever fill that special place." (Adapted from the Michigan State University Pet Loss Support Hotline) Do not allow anyone to dictate your grief timeline. On Homevet.com, Connecticut veterinarian Dr. Jeff Feinman says, "Realize that you do not need anyone's approval to mourn the loss of your pet, nor must you justify your feelings to anyone."

Grief is a universal reaction, but everyone experiences it differently. For some, grief is experienced in stages. Confusion, anger, guilt and depression are all common responses to the death of a beloved pet. Others find that grief is more cyclical, coming in waves, or a series of highs and lows.

Grieving is a gradual process. There is no set timeline for healing. According to Moira Allen, author of *Coping with Sorrow on the Loss of Your Pet*, "Grief is our final expression of love, the last gift we have to offer. It isn't to be rushed." Some people will start to feel better in a matter of weeks or months; for others, the process is measured in years. Whatever your experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to unfold. Don't let society dictate how long mourning should last. Ignoring your pain or "bottling it up" will only make it worse in the long run.

There are several things that the grief-stricken owner can do to assist themselves in the healing process. First, give yourself permission to grieve. Only you know what your bunny meant to you. Find a way to memorialize your pet. This makes the loss real and helps you to get closure. Eat right, exercise, and get plenty of rest. Surround yourself with others who understand your loss. Take advantage of online support groups and rabbit forums for bereaved pet owners. Learn all you can about the grief process. This will help you to see that what you are experiencing is normal. Accept the feelings that come with grief. Give yourself permission to backslide. Holidays, smells, sounds, or certain words can trigger a relapse. Be sure to consult a "Higher Power", whatever that means for you. Finally, don't be afraid to seek professional help if you need it. There are numerous pet loss counselors in the Washington, D.C. area who are specially trained to assist you in working through your pain. A list of resources is provided at the end of this article. It may help to take comfort in the fact that you gave your bunny a good life, one which he or she might otherwise not have had. Many rabbits die alone in hutches through neglect. Still others are set "free" only to die at the hands of predators.

Humans are not the only ones who experience grief. While you are mourning the loss of your bunny, you must be careful not to neglect the needs of our other pets, particularly if your rabbit was part of a bonded pair. In fact, grieving pets can show many symptoms identical to those experienced by the bereaved pet owner. The



Photo: Beck B.



surviving pet(s) may become restless, anxious and depressed. They may have trouble sleeping or refuse to eat. You can help your pet cope with the loss by keeping his routine as normal as possible. Be attentive and loving, but try not to overdo it as this can contribute to separation anxiety. Allow the surviving animals to work out the new dominance hierarchy themselves. Finally, do not rush to get another pet to help the grieving pet(s) unless you are ready; this will backfire if you are not emotionally ready.

There are many wonderful reasons to consider adopting another rabbit, but the decision of when to do so is a very personal one. It may be tempting to rush out and fill the void left by your bunny's death by immediately getting another pet. But your beloved bunny was unique and can never be "replaced." In most cases, it's best to mourn the lost bunny first and wait until you're emotionally ready to open your heart and home to a new rabbit. You will know when the time is right. Yes, you risk loss by loving again, but the rewards are well worth it. "The act of bringing a new animal into your life shows courage, strength, and hope for the future." (Recover-from-grief.com). And Friends of Rabbits will be here when you're ready to adopt your new best friend.

#### **HOTLINES:**

**Washington, DC:** <http://peopleanimalslove.org/programs/pet-loss/>

**VA/MD:** Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, <http://www.vetmed.vt.edu/centaur/service-programs.asp>

#### **SUPPORT GROUPS:**

**Alexandria:** Kathy Reiter, Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, Vola Lawson Animal Shelter, 4101 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304, 703-746-4774, [staff@alexandrianimals.org](mailto:staff@alexandrianimals.org), <http://alexandrianimals.org/pet-bereavement.html>. Meets the 1st Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the shelter's community room. Free; all welcome.

**Fairfax:** Kathy Reiter, Fairfax County Animal Shelter, 4500 West Ox Rd., Fairfax, VA 22030, (703) 830-1100, [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/animal/pet\\_support\\_meetings.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/animal/pet_support_meetings.htm). Meets 3rd Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m.

**Frederick:** Lou A. Lichti, Ph.D., City Park Psychological Services, LLC, 209 W. Patrick Street, Frederick, MD 21701, 301.401.2813. (Enter through 211, 1st door on right. Pet Death and Bereavement Support Group: Meets Tuesdays 6-7, Fee: \$40 payable before meeting by cash, check or credit card. Owners of Terminally or Chronically Ill Pet Support Group: Meets Wednesdays 6-7, Fee: \$40 payable before meeting by cash, check or credit card. Please email [drlou@cityparkpsychological.com](mailto:drlou@cityparkpsychological.com) or call 301.401.2813 by the day before to reserve a seat. <http://cityparkpsychological.com/services/pet-loss-support-group/>

**Reistertown:** Nicodemus Memorial Park at Baltimore Humane Society, 1601 Nicodemus Rd., Reisterstown, MD, 410-833-8848, <http://www.bmorehumane.org/>-. The group meets the first Tuesday evening of each month at 7pm for one hour. Please call to RSVP. Call 410-833-8848 ext. 219 or email [amazan@bmorehumane.org](mailto:amazan@bmorehumane.org). Or visit our Facebook Bereavement Group Page for online help. Counseling, memorial and cremation services also provided.

**Rockville:** Dr. Mary Knipmeyer, Montgomery County Humane Society Pet Bereavement Seminar, Montgomery County Animal Shelter, 14645 Rothgeb Dr., Rockville, MD, 240-773-5973, [petbereavement@mchumane.org](mailto:petbereavement@mchumane.org), <http://www.mchumane.org/your-pet/bereavement/>

#### **COUNSELORS:**

**Alexandria:** Dr. Ursula Weide, PhD, JD, LPC, FT, 801 N. Pitt Street, Suite 113, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703-548-3866, [sevenfortyseven400@earthlink.net](mailto:sevenfortyseven400@earthlink.net), <http://www.coping-with-loss-and-grief.com>


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**Websites:** <http://www.aplb.org/> - Nonprofit Association for Pet Loss & Bereavement. Professionally trained volunteers offer free pet bereavement counseling.

<http://www.petloss.com> - Supportive forums, phone counseling resources, candle-lighting ritual and general information

<http://www.griefhealing.com/comfort-grieving-animal-lovers.htm> -- a grief support website with a varied and informative pet loss section



Send your fond memories of bunnies who have passed over the Rainbow Bridge for inclusion in our Memorials section to:

[editor@friendsofrabbits.org](mailto:editor@friendsofrabbits.org)



## Intestinal Parasites in Rabbits

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By Steph M.

There are two basic kinds of *intestinal parasites* that can affect rabbits: multicellular worms (helminths) and single-celled microscopic organisms called protozoa. Typically, a rabbit that lives entirely indoors is very unlikely to be affected by the worm variety, as most of these parasites cannot survive in an indoors environment. However, worms can be picked up fairly easily outdoors. Microscopic protozoa such as coccidia may already live in your rabbit's body, and only rarely cause disease. However, when disease strikes, it can sometimes be fatal and present with mild to no symptoms. These microorganisms multiply within host cells and cause rupture upon release of progeny, damaging the host organ.

### Common Parasites

- **Coccidia** are a class of common internal microscopic parasite that invades through rabbit's GI tract. Some types of non-harmful coccidia naturally occur in a rabbit's body, but certain species of *Toxoplasma*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Eimeria* can lead to acute disease causing diarrhea, weight loss/anorexia, dehydration. Acute infection can sometimes be fatal, especially if the parasite spreads to the liver. In other cases, coccidia present with mild or no symptoms at all, or can lead to manageable chronic neurological issues like head tilt in the case of *Toxoplasma*. Coccidia are transmitted through ingesting contaminated food, water, or feces of other animals. NOTE: *Toxoplasma* reproduces only in cats, so if you have a cat co-habiting with your rabbit, don't let the rabbit walk in the cat's litter box to avoid your rabbit ingesting spores when he/she grooms their feet.

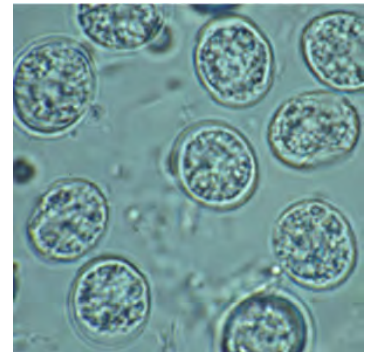


Photo: CDC

*Toxoplasma* oocysts in fecal floatation.

- **Roundworms** are potentially fatal for rabbits as these worms will migrate to the brain, liver, eyes, spinal cord and other organs. Symptoms include head tilt, tremors, lethargy, and impaired mobility. Transmitted through ingesting contaminated feces of other animals, often raccoons or skunks.
- **Pinworms** are extremely common, but are not as potentially dangerous as other parasites. As they are so difficult to prevent and relatively harmless healthwise, some owners may not even get them treated. Telltale signs are the presence of threadlike worms in the feces. Transmitted through contaminated food and water.
- **Tapeworms** are less common than some other parasites. Symptoms include anorexia, enlarged abdomen, and swelling under the skin. Transmitted through ingesting food/grass contaminated feces, usually dog feces.

### General Prevention

- Keep your bun's living environment very clean, dry and cool to reduce the likelihood of unwanted parasites being able to survive.
- Avoid letting your bun out in outdoor areas (e.g., a garden or run) where they will have the opportunity to ingest contaminated fecal matter of wild animals/other pets.
- Avoid letting your bun drink or get wet in stagnant water that may contain contaminated fecal matter/parasites.
- Keep rabbits away from cat litter boxes.

### Early Detection - See your vet right away if you observe any of these things!

- Be vigilant about checking your droppings every day to look for abnormalities, such as worms, diarrhea or the presence of blood/mucus.
- Look for physical changes such as weight loss, bloating/abdominal pain/hunching, or poor coat condition.
- Any significant decrease in appetite is cause for concern generally when it comes to rabbit health, but may be associated with parasites in particular.

- If your bun is excessively grooming his or her tail area, that may be an early sign of worms.

### Diagnosis & Treatment

Only a rabbit-savvy veterinarian will be able to diagnose intestinal parasites. Generally speaking, fecal analysis will be part of the diagnostic process, but other diagnostics may be required as well, especially if secondary health issues emerge. Some intestinal parasites like coccidia are unfortunately very difficult to detect if not being actively shed in the feces (coccidia only shows up in feces during specific parts of its life cycle).

Treatment will vary depend on the diagnosis.

- Coccidia is often treated with sulphaquinoxaline or other antiprotozoal drugs, as well as with antibiotics for secondary infections.
- Pinworms, roundworms and tapeworms are often treated with a variety of worming medications.

Note: Not all antibiotics and worming medications are safe for rabbits, so it is very important you work with a rabbit-savvy vet to prescribe an appropriate drug/dose/frequency for treatment regimen.

### Spotlight on Lola and Bruce

Despite the best of intentions, it's REALLY HARD to notice all the subtle clues that buns will give us into their health. Ran and Richard were experienced parents to their bun Bruce when they added Lola to their family. Bruce had always been healthy, so when subtle changes started to occur in both buns, they went unnoticed, and one day, Lola unexpectedly crossed the rainbow bridge. As it turns out, a necropsy revealed that Lola had coccidia. Luckily, Bruce recovered after some intensive treatment for coccidia (and a host of other health issues).



Photo: Ran C.

Lola and Bruce.

To help shed light on the challenges of noticing symptoms of coccidia, one of the more insidious and asymptomatic intestinal parasites that rabbits can get, FOR asked Ran and Richard to share some of their lessons learned from their tragic experience.

- Take newly introduced rabbits to your vet for a check up to make sure everything is in good order.
- Paying attention to weight loss can save your rabbit's life. Rabbits can very subtly wither to skin and bones over time, so it's important to weigh them regularly to make sure they are not losing weight inexplicably. Buns should have a certain roundness to them, so if your bun's bones are showing, take them to a vet to confirm that your bun's lean physique does not have an underlying health-related cause.
- Dramatic changes in behavior can be telling. If your bun usually hates being held, but all of a sudden no longer resists, this may be a sign that they are sick or becoming weak.
- Insist on an immediate/emergency appointment with your vet if you see signs of illness in your bun. Bunny health can be very delicate, and an appointment several days from onset of symptoms such as dehydration may not be soon enough.

*"As bunny parents, while you enjoy having adorable buns hopping around in your home, you also have a huge responsibility to keep them healthy. Rabbits are a quiet lot, they don't vocalize their pain or discomfort like many other animals. So you really need to pay attention to your bunny's behavior. If you feel like something is out of the ordinary, don't be too alarmed but do talk to an expert, someone with experience. If you notice weight loss, take it seriously! Illness in bunnies can develop really quickly, take actions fast so that you don't regret it later." ~ Ran Cui*

### References

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## Preventing Urine Scald with Disabled Bunnies

By Pam H.



Sunflower was one of many sanctuary buns that benefitted from this bedding.

Do you have a pet rabbit that does not move well enough to keep his urine from soaking his fur and/or skin? This can be a serious problem for people with disabled rabbits. Some people are able to keep their bunny clean with frequent changing of the material that he is sitting on along with washing and drying his hind end and sides several times a day. This is not always possible for people who are not available for long hours, either during the day or night. In our experience, even when we were available every 4 hours to change pads or towels and wash the wet fur, the rabbit still lost his fur and developed urine scald.

These past few months we finally found a method that appears to work, at least for the two rabbits with which we tried it. It is a three layer method. Sigi, the featured rabbit in our last newsletter, spent his first few months sitting back on his butt due to a spinal injury. Within a few days of coming home from the hospital, he started to lose all his hind end fur and was very quickly heading toward urine scald. However, once we had all the materials and began using the new method, his fur dried very quickly and started to grow back within days. Sunflower, who had severe head tilt never had wet fur with this three layer system.

The first layer is some sort of pee pad, either washable or paper. They can be obtained from selected pet stores or over the internet. Two such websites are [www.ezwhelp.com](http://www.ezwhelp.com) and [www.personallypaws.com](http://www.personallypaws.com). Personallypaws tends to have a wider variety of sizes and colors whereas ezwhelp has choices in two thicknesses as well as round ones. The large round ones fit into the 5 foot hard plastic swimming pools that people often use as an easily washable floor for rabbits when their home base is a dog exercise pen. The two ply thickness pads are less expensive than the three ply and work very well for rabbits.

The second layer needs to be slotted plastic layer thick enough to completely separate the top layer from the bottom layer. The slots or holes allow the urine to drip through onto the pad below. Garage drainage tiles with slots work quite well. They can be found on the internet or in a large hardware store such as Home Depot or Lowes. Eighteen inch square Easy Tile Versa Floor is one type that can be used.

The third or top layer is a thick, one sided fleece layer, usually with a tight webbing material on the bottom side. The thicker ones help keep the fluid away more readily than the thinner ones. Three examples are palace pet pads ([www.usaknit.us.com](http://www.usaknit.us.com)), vet bedding ([www.lakesideproducts.com](http://www.lakesideproducts.com) -the super deluxe has a tighter, thicker pile) and profleece (Profleece Ultimate Vet Bedding is also a better quality, [www.profleec bedding.com](http://www.profleec bedding.com)) The fleece is washable. We found that it kept the rabbits so dry that they did not have to be bathed often (except for removing cecotropes).

If your rabbit chews the fleece, he may be able to sit directly on a nonabsorbent tile or something similar if the holes are such that



Urine scald prevention bedding. The three layers are shown: of pee pad ((white), slotted plastic (black), and fleece (brown and green)

All Photos: Pam H.

he won't be likely to catch a nail or have sore hocks. Neither of our rabbits chewed the fleece. Our head tilt bunny, Sunflower (pictured, above), used the setup while she was recovering. She was in a large plastic bottomed cage with the 3 layer bottom and rolled towels on the sides of the cage (she was not rolling at this point of her recovery).

**A note for rabbits that already have urine scald:**

For bunnies that are so immobile that they can no longer groom themselves, we have found that Desitin works very well. It is a skin barrier cream. It has zinc oxide in it, so it cannot be used on rabbits that can groom it off. Edward, a disabled bunny that was on his side for his last 6 months had lost much of his fur on one hind side but never got urine scald because of the Desitin. He could not groom it off so it was safe for him. We tried another skin barrier film called Cavilon No Sting Barrier Film by 3M. It works well but Edward preferred the Desitin. Some people have recommended Bag Balm and CAL/ECH. Both are in a petrolatum lanolin base so check with your vet to see if that is safe on the skin with bunnies that cannot reach it while grooming. CAL/ECH is a homeopathic ointment that has Calendula and Echinacea in it.

For grooming bunnies that already have urine scald, the choices are more limited. CarraVet acemannan wound gel is good for wound healing. It has aloe vera in it and is safer for grooming rabbits, although a rabbit can lick it off fairly quickly. When Arwen had severe urine scald, we tried this but she removed it so quickly that our only option was to get her into a cart with her hind end away from her urine until the urine scald healed. We also tried diapers with Arwen. These work pretty well if you change them often. For Arwen, dog diapers were better than baby diapers because we did not have to cut a hole for the tail. They come in different sizes. The pads inside are removable so that they can be changed. We recommend using human incontinence liners such as Poise, Always Discreet or Tena. These are more absorbent and slightly wider than the pads that come with the dog diapers. We did find that we needed to change these quite often because poop and cecotropes would collect in them. These are just a few options that you may try with disabled rabbits that are developing urine scald. For more suggestions, there is a disabled rabbit group on Facebook, the members of the group are very helpful and supportive. You will need to get permission from the moderator to join.

Disabled Rabbits Group on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/201759429869484/>.



## Friends of Rabbits

### Pet sitting Services

**Daily Rates:**

\$15.00 per rabbit

\$ 5.00 for each extra rabbit in the same space

\$10.00 for each rabbit in a separate space

**Weekly Rates:**

\$90.00 for a single rabbit

\$125.00 for a pair

### Your bunny buds will be in good hands with FoR!

**Extra fees apply for:** special feeding, administration of medications, trips to the vet, or other special needs. In-home bunny sitting is subject to extra fees and subject to sitter availability.

Discounts are available for long-term rabbit sitting, caged housing, military deployment, and low income community members.

Volunteers receive a 20% discount.

**Please email [info@friendsofrabbits.org](mailto:info@friendsofrabbits.org) to schedule your rabbits' stay with us, or to get a quote**

(if you email us individually and we're out of town, we may not get your request in a timely manner).

# For Events Calendar



**Saturday 8/6** 12-3 pm - Adoption Event at Bark! Olney  
16822 Georgia Ave, Olney, MD



**Sunday 8/7** 2pm - Baby Bunny Shower!!  
Fairfax Station, VA  
RSVP at <http://evite.me/XCntNGyGcm>  
Amazon registry:  
[smile.amazon.com/registry/wishlist/2HJNQISIJ9ZRW](https://www.amazon.com/registry/wishlist/2HJNQISIJ9ZRW)



**Sunday 8/14** 2-5pm - Adoption and Fostering Team Volunteer Workshop  
Rabbit Central (Susan's House), Columbia MD  
RSVP to: [info@friendsofrabbits.com](mailto:info@friendsofrabbits.com)  
Rabbit Supplies will be available for purchase



**Thursday 8/18**, 3-10pm- Brews For Bunnies,  
Jailbreak Brewing Co., Laurel, MD.  
[jailbreakbrewing.com](http://jailbreakbrewing.com)

**Saturday 8/27**- Bunny Spa Day!  
Fairfax County Shelter  
4500 W Ox Rd, Fairfax, VA



**Saturday 9/10** 12-3pm Adoption Event at Bark!  
Silver Spring  
10737 Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD



**Sunday 9/11**, 10am-3pm - Loudoun Pet Expo  
An event to promote community support and awareness for pet/animal businesses, organizations, non-profits and rescues.

Free family-friendly event. Volunteers for our table are needed.



**Saturday 9/17** - Midwest BunFest,  
Columbus, OH  
<http://www.midwestbunfest.org/>



**Saturday 9/24** - DC VegFest  
<http://dcvegfest.com/>



**Saturday 10/8** -12-3pm Adoption Event at Bark! Rockville  
1643 Rockville Pike Rockville, MD



**Saturday 10/22** - Adoption Event at Bark! Kentlands  
235 Kentlands Blvd, Gaithersburg, MD

## Recurrent Adoption Events:

**Every 3rd Saturday** 12-3pm Adoption event at Petco 9230 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke, VA  
next events: **8/20 and 9/17**

**Every 3rd Sunday** 12-3 pm Adoption events at Pet Supplies Plus 7007 Manchester Blvd. Franconia, VA  
next events: **8/21, and 9/18**



## Friends of Rabbits

has all your bunny's favorite consumables- at great prices!

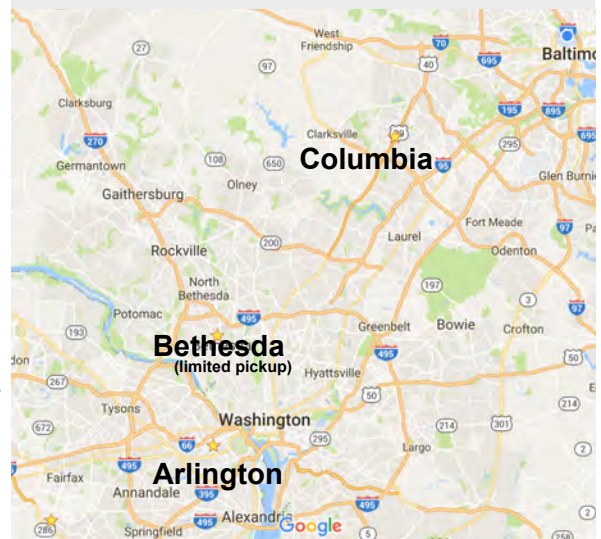
Local Hay Bales  
CareFresh Bedding  
Oxbow Bunny Basics T 10lbs.  
Western Timothy Hay

Grass & Willow toys:  
Willow Bowls  
Chew Rings  
Grass Ball  
Unpeeled Willow  
Tent Tunnels  
Baskets  
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Grooming supplies & much more!

\*ask about our volunteer discounts!

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**Fairfax Station**  
(hay only)