

Friends of Rabbits

Rabbit And Small Animal Rescue Newsletter

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Rescue Tales: Vida's Story

By Pam H.

This past summer, Friends of Rabbits took in a rabbit who had been dumped on a hot sidewalk in Baltimore by a young boy who took off running. Luckily, a good Samaritan witnessed the event and contacted us. This poor bunny did not have her two front feet, was covered in urine and soaking wet. We named her Vida, meaning "Life". Thank you so much to



Photo: Joanie K.

Vida was wet and in need of some serious TLC when she came into the care of FoR in the summer of 2016

the three staff members of the veterinary office SEAVS in Fairfax, Virginia, Wendy MacRaild, Vanessa Clayberg and Natyah Strange, who drove to Columbia, Maryland after work for a total of 3 hours to pick her up and bring her back to the veterinary office. Following an examination and an x-ray, Dr. Greg Costanzo at SEAVS said that she was either born with her front feet missing or they were removed surgically for some health reason. She was a little thin and had some urine scald on her hind legs.

After a few days of care, Vida was totally dry and her urine scald was healing. She was acting like a normal bunny, grunting and charging when we tried to move her poops into the litterbox. Vida made her debut at the FOR Baby Bunny Shower where Tina K. saw her. At this point, Tina took over her care and said that she was looking fabulous, was as sweet as ever and doing great! She enjoyed spending time with her feline foster sister, Mao. Thank you, Tina for fostering this precious soul.

The first time we tried to spay Vida, she stopped breathing while under anesthesia; however, she was successfully spayed on the second try.

We are excited to report that Vida has found an excellent home where she is loved. She sent us a Binkygram. Turn the page to read a portion of it.

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“Hi guys. This is Vida sending you a Binkygram from my furever home on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. I have only been here for 8 days as I was with my human brother and his son and doggie son before that for a few days. Wow, was that fun! I got to hang out in a great big bathtub with toys, a litter box, and food and hay, hay, hay. AND I got to hang out in the family room and on Mom's bed most of the time and play and play and play. Lots of love all around. I feel really special. I'm going back for Christmas, too! Can't wait to check out the tree. Here at home on the loblolly tree farm it is a lot quieter, but my doggy brother, Reggie the golden, and black cat brother, Toby, who is still kinda scared of me (hee, hee, hee) definitely keep things interesting. I am out of my very cushy suite almost all day helping Mom do laundry and stuff or just playing around in Dad's office/TV room with Mom and my sibs. I have a big kennel pad as my home base in there with hay, water, and potty pan (actually a dollar store oil pan catcher 'cause I love to flip my lightweight one). I even get to eat my dinner greens in front of the fake fireplace and sometimes TV 'cause I'm such a special good girl. Only one goof up so far- some kind of skinny white line that sticks into Mom's iPad. I don't know what happened; it just broke when I tasted it, honest. Oh well, nobunny's perfect. I went to our family vet yesterday for a well-baby check. I am super healthy and have gained 15 ounces since you guys rescued me - good job. Now I have to maintain my great figure by not over eating. Mom's on the job! Binkies to you all.



Photo: Tina K.

P.S. My new name is Emmaline (Emmie) Vida Kirkpatrick 'cause I was rescued from Baltimore on Mom's granny's birthday. How about them carrots? (do not like apples).”

A Rescue Tale from West Virginia: Gus and Theon

By Rachel R.

The day after Thanksgiving, on a curvy mountain road in southern WV, two sisters (we'll call them Lil' Sis and Big Sis) were driving home at night from a trip to the movies. Lil' Sis was behind the wheel and slowed the car because she saw a deer on the side of the road. Right next to the deer, glowing like a harvest moon, was a little white rabbit! At first it just seemed like a sweet autumnal scene. But then she realized the bunny looked like a domestic rabbit. Also, the bunny was sitting across the road from a house that had a rabbit cage out back. Lil' Sis knocked on the owner's door to let them know one of their rabbits may have escaped. A young woman answered and whispered that the owner had released the bunny into the wild a couple of days ago because the other rabbit was attacking it.

Lil' Sis felt miserable hearing this news. She knew she couldn't leave the rabbit out there fending for himself. But she was exhausted from the holiday and not looking forward to spending all night on a pitch black roadside trying to catch this bunny. She approached the rabbit and was able to pet it but unable to pick him up. She thought about going home to get her cat carrier. “Yes” Big Sis said, “go get it and bring some lettuce, too. I'll sit with the rabbit.” So Lil' Sis left Big Sis on the side of the road and went to get the carrier. When she returned with the carrier, she put the lettuce inside and sat it near the rabbit. The rabbit hopped twice around the cage, sniffing it. Then he hopped right inside. It took all of four minutes! This bunny was starving.

Back home and on the back porch, the rabbit appeared two-tone: cream and a sort-of rusty color. The sisters would later find out that the rabbit was really white and the additional color in his fur was from blood-tinged urine caused by dehydration. More shockingly, this white rabbit, now named “Gus”, was stripped of fur on either side of his spine and back and had deep, black scarring and scab wounds all down both sides of his spine.



Big Sis knew there were rabbit rescues near Northern Virginia where she lived. She did a web search and found contact information for Friends of Rabbits. An email was sent that night and a reply came back quickly. They would help if they could. The sisters just needed to send a picture of the injuries and transport Gus to a veterinarian near Baltimore, if possible. The rescue was even willing to meet them halfway, though this generous offer was declined.

The next morning, Gus and Big Sis set off on the two-day, 350 mile trek from Pipestem, WV to Baltimore, MD. Before leaving, bloody urine poured out of the bottom of his carrier which really gave them a scare. But after 24 hours of munching on Italian Parsley, celery and Kale along the way (along with his water bottle, plenty of hay, pellets, and some soft bedding) the bleeding seemed to abate.



Gus, upon arrival at FoR (above), and shortly before his adoption (below).

Gus made it to the Emergency Veterinary Clinic in Catonsville, MD around 8pm on Sunday, November 27. There, he and Big Sis were introduced to a sweet and wonderful vet, Dr. Tino Luehman. She assessed Gus and came up with a care plan that included: anesthesia to remove abscesses from bite wounds, neutering, topical skin care, flea treatment, hydration, and diet.

While assessing Gus, Dr. Luehman expressed concern for the other rabbit. Though believed to be the aggressor towards Gus, she knew there could be myriad reasons for rabbit aggression including dominance from lack of neutering and stress. She felt that Friends of Rabbits would be able to help the other bunny, too, though she feared what kind of shape the other rabbit might be in given the condition of Gus.

Big Sis called Lil' Sis, “In a couple of days, see if the owners would be willing to give you the other bunny.” They talked about this. As upsetting as Gus’s condition was and as negatively as you might be feeling towards the owner, you can’t approach someone in anger if you are hoping to help an animal in their care.

Lil' Sis didn't wait long, though. On Tuesday, the 29th she went back to the home and told the owner she'd found someone who would care for the rabbit they released. She asked if he would consider giving her the other bunny, too. The owner then told her he'd actually let the other bunny out at the same time as Gus and approximated that it was about 2 weeks ago. They looked around and indeed, found the 2nd bunny hiding under a dog house. Lil' Sis asked if the owner would help her put the bunny in a carrier -and he did. When they moved him, Lil' Sis noticed that this bunny's leg was injured. The owner said, “Well it wasn't injured like that when I let him out.”

Lil' Sis left with the rabbit in tow and then cried for hours. She called Big Sis, though she was rather too upset to talk. It was going to take a couple of days to get this bunny to Baltimore and Lil' Sis didn't want him to suffer. Dr. Luehman got in touch with Lil' Sis and talked her through some temporary care measures. They felt

Photos: Robin S. and Alex D.

that this rabbit, now named Theon, most likely had a broken leg. But until she could be sure, Dr. Luehman wanted little Theon to see a local vet. So Lil' Sis recruited her mom to help the next day. Mom took Theon to a clinic in Peterstown, WV. Their vet believed Theon's knee seemed swollen and gave him pain medicine. Theon wasn't eating much at first but the pain meds helped him to feel better and he soon regained his appetite. Lil' Sis kept Theon immobilized for healing until it was time to travel with him to Maryland.

On Friday, December 2, a Friends of Rabbits volunteer drove quite out of her way to meet Lil' Sis at the National Harbor in Oxon Hill. The volunteer brought fresh, wet greens for Theon and took him directly to Dr. Luehman. The examination under Dr. Luehman's care revealed that Theon had a dislocated knee. He would need a specialist or this part of the knee would need amputation. Otherwise, she determined Theon to be a sweet and friendly bunny who was just a little nervous.



Photo: Beck B.

Theon, after a full day of travel, upon at Catonsville Emergency Clinic about 8pm where he was diagnosed with a dislocated knee.

After some outreach, Friends of Rabbits found a vet who is willing to attempt to put Theon's leg back in place and repair his cruciates. Theon's surgery went well, he was able to get the knee back in place. It looked like the repair was going to work really well. As he was waking up from anesthesia he stopped breathing. They placed a tube to breathe with, but he wouldn't start breathing on his own. They attempted CPR but he did not revive and passed away. He was a really sweet rabbit, and got lots of love in his final days. He deserved it. Otherwise he would have died out in the cold while in pain.

Gus has recovered and found his forever home, so in the midst of sadness, there is always still hope.

A Middle East Rescue Tale: Emir and Sultana

By Sarah S.

Emir and Sultana were victims of a cruel place in Kuwait called the Friday Market. It's a place where animals are taken to be sold in terrible conditions. The conditions are horrible and unsanitary, placing the animals' lives at risk of contracting harmful pathogens. The rabbits are cramped into tiny cages and sold to children of any age. It's mainly small rabbits sold as children's toys, and unfortunately most don't live very long. These two bunnies were rescued at different times by an expat family living in Kuwait. First Sultana was rescued after being discarded and left to die. A year later, they rescued Emir, who had also been abandoned. Both were taken by this lovely family in hopes of finding homes for them after being treated and returned to good health. This family mainly rescued cats but could not leave these two sweet bunnies to die. They feared for the rabbits' lives with the number of cats they had and reached out to BFG (Became a Foster Guardian) Animal Rescue group in Kuwait for help. BFG offered to take them until they would be re homed. BFG also knew it was near impossible to find homes in Kuwait (large rabbits are often sold for meat), so that's when they reached out to Wings of Love Kuwait in the US to help with this rescue and Friends of Rabbits was contacted to help. Thanks to Jennifer of Wings of Love Kuwait, we were able prepare the documents and send Emir and Sultana on a great journey to get them to get them to FoR where they are now in foster care and looking for their forever homes. Check them out on petfinder!.



Photos: Robin S.

Emir (left) and Sultana (right) arrived happy and healthy in the U.S. and are in foster care, awaiting their forever family.

volunteer spotlight

The Unglamorous - but Important - Job of Cleaning Foster Rabbit Cages

By Beck B.

Did you know that Friends of Rabbits has a network of about 20 homes that foster rabbits, but the 3 largest foster homes have upwards of 20 rabbits at a time? Fostering that number of rabbits requires a lot of work for maintenance and cleaning to keep the rabbits' habitats tidy and safe. Foster rabbits have about 20 square ft or more of space, so cleaning multiple habitats several times a week can be a big job. Luckily, some FoR volunteers offer their time to help clear and clean the 'bunny pools' at Susan's home in Columbia. It is a great way to socialize with some of the adorable adoptables, but provides a critical service. Providing helping hands to the fosterers allows large foster homes- Susan's, Pam's, and Tino's - to continue to take in rabbits when the rest of the foster home network is at capacity. FoR Fosterer Tino L. is a veterinarian, so she often takes in the more difficult cases of injured or sick rabbits from abuse or neglect situations, and spends a lot of time providing rabbit medical treatment. Please consider helping out by offering some of your time to spend with the rabbits and cleaning. Let's keep our foster network running strong to allow us to keep saving rabbits!



Photo: Robin S.

A bunny pool, one type of setup used for housing rabbits in the FoR foster system.

upcoming events

Adoption Events at

The following Saturdays 12-3pm

2/11- Bark! Silver Spring

[10737 Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD](#)

2/18- Bark! Olney [16822 Georgia Ave. Olney, MD](#)

3/18- Bark! Silver Spring

[10737 Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD](#)

4/9- Bark! Clarksville

[5805 Clarksville Square Drive, Clarksville, MD](#)

coincides with the **Great Sage Easter Event!**

5/13- Bark! Kentlands

[235 Kentlands Blvd, Gaithersburg, MD](#)

5/27- Bark! Rockville

[1643 Rockville Pike Rockville, MD](#)

Adoption events at

Every 3rd Saturday 12-3pm Adoption event at Petco

[9230 Old Keene Mill Road, Burke, VA](#)

Adoption events at

Every Saturday 11AM – 12 PM – New Rabbit of the Week and a short Q & A hosted by by Susan Wong
susan@friendsofrabbits.org

Every Tuesday & Thursday from 6 to 7 PM with a Q & A about rabbits, hosted by: Karissa Pensa

Every Third Sunday from 2 PM – 4 PM, with a Q & A about rabbits, hosted by: John White

[11054 Lee Highway Fairfax, VA](#) call Pet Supplies Plus to confirm (703) 359-2659

FoR Celebrates its Volunteers and Supporters at the Fall and Winter Holiday Parties

By Amy S.

This past holiday season, FoR doubled its celebrations with two parties. On November 20, the weekend before Thanksgiving, FoR's Giving Thanks Party was held at Columbia Headquarters (a.k.a. Susan W.'s house). At this well-attended gathering, the Board provided the feast for guests as an expression of gratitude for all the work that volunteers and supporters do throughout the year. Guests were also able to see many rabbits on site, and some rabbits were able to meet each other! This was also an opportunity to honor Lana Lehr, who was active in the rabbit rescue community and recently passed away. Lana founded both RabbitWise, a group focused on rabbit education and resources that frequently collaborated with FoR, and the Bunderground Railroad, an organization that connects rescues, shelters, and others to provide transportation for rabbits across the country.



This year, FoR paid tribute to Lana, a dear friend and dedicated rabbit rescuer who recently passed away.



FoR's Giving Tree, a chance to give the adoptable rabbits a gift during the holiday season.

FoR's annual Holiday Party was held this year in Mara H.'s home in Virginia on December 10, where the Board once again provided the food and festivities for FoR volunteers and supporters. In addition, potential adopters were also invited to attend and meet foster rabbits. There was a success – Louise was adopted! Guests also had the chance to see Mara's impressive "rabbitat" set up. In keeping with the tradition from last year, this holiday party also featured a Giving Tree in which guests were able to choose an ornament that specifies a particular donation need (such as a certain amount of food or supplies) and fund that need. At this party, FoR also began selling raffle tickets to a number of fantastic prizes, primarily donated by others in support of FoR. Prizes included a wooden bunny castle, litter box holder with hay rack, wooden toys, a basket of bunny goodies, and more. FoR sold almost \$700 in raffle tickets, which were on sale through the end of the year. The winners of this raffle were Melanie J.S., Sarah W., Kristine D., Jennifer B., Karin P., Dara S., and Erika C. Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to the FoR Board for hosting such wonderful holiday parties.

Rainbow Bridge Memorial Submitted with love by Barbara W.

How blessed we were to have Pal in our lives for 13 years. What a "people" bunny he was, spreading joy not just in our home but at the nursing home he visited for over 12 years. The smiles he brought to the faces there will never be forgotten. One special friend there nicknamed him "sweet baby" which really described him to a "t". One man was totally mute except when he was petting Pal!!!! His ability to count to four was impressive, also. Every morning he was given his salad greens, 2 Cheerios, a carrot and piece of banana. Forget one? He would circle my legs to remind me! We will never forget nor stop loving you, our sweet baby.

feature article

The Economy of Goodness

By Chris O.

It's that time of year to get bundled up right cozy, whether going out into the cold or staying in under your favorite blanket. Nevertheless, some warmth is a kind that you can always take with you. For Friends of Rabbits, it is that rooted feeling of contentment when raising funds to enrich bunnies' lives, knowing that what we do is good and necessary. In turn, we enrich our own everyday experience.

Our economy of goodness spans a variety of channels, from reprises of favorite fundraisers to the creation of new events, and from donations and sponsorships to purchases on smile.amazon.com. With a snapshot, let's applaud the great fundraising feats of 2016!

The year jumped forward with a three-pronged effort this past Spring. The much-venerated Bark! adoption event paired with the nearby delicious vegan restaurant, Great Sage, for a Benefit Day where 10% of proceeds went to FoR. An auxiliary troop of Girl Scouts joined forces with FoR veterans to share rabbit care and events information with the public. Proceeds from the Great Sage generated over \$1,000 in donations, adding to \$230 raised from a frequently flashing photo-booth at Bark!

Students at Stevenson University joined the fold, adding to FoR's fundraising activities and its diverse range of folks of all ages. Through the student organization People for Animal Wellness Society, PAWS, Stevenson students contributed a wonderful \$1,751 to this year's total fundraising.

It was the perfect year for so many groups to share in FoR's mission, as an unexpected crisis required extreme intervention. One of the hardest times of the year came at the discovery of an extreme rabbit hoarding case in New Jersey. FoR sprang to the rescue of about 30 of the 300+ rabbits (some unbeknownst to us to be pregnant). Just to begin to sustain this life-saving work, FoR set a fundraising goal of \$10,000. There are still four rabbits with chronic upper respiratory infections that keep resisting all types of treatments. And four more not yet ready for adoption. The average cost of each rabbit rescued from this case ranged from \$300 to \$400 and still counting. Fun times and fundraising went on to raise spirits.

Two Brews FoR Bunnies events were held, which brought in extra funds and contributed to saving more rabbits than ever in the history of the rescue. In April, Bad Wolf Brewing Co. brewed and bottled an exclusive line of beer for FoR appropriately coined *Witty Bunny: A Sour Raspberry Witt*. Volunteers Patricia Deckert designed and painted the label and Alex Cook created the t-shirts using his graphic design and inspiration from the label. The tapping took place the day of the B4B event at the brewery's Manassas location, which was packed with rabbit supporters from far and wide. These successful and festive gatherings culminated with \$2,689 in raised funds. August was busy with our 2nd Annual B4B event at Jailbreak Brewing Co. in Laurel, which is always held the day they tap their Carrot Cake Conspiracy beer. A repeat Bunny Spa Day later that



Photo: Beck B.

EB, a recent FoR adoptee, basks in the warmth of giving.

month at the Fairfax Animal Shelter proved again to be a hit, in which 30-some rabbits were pampered with unbreakable attention and FoR took in Kenny G, a sweet little white dwarf rabbit who had been at the shelter the longest of all the rabbits. As of this writing, he is still looking for his forever home.

New events marked the calendar and took off with such success that 2016 would be incomplete without them. Mara Hurwitt went down the rabbit hole of a wonderfully whimsical thought and ended up with Baby Bunny Showers. This adorable event for recent rabbit mothers and their kits even landed an article with Care2.com, an enormous online community of green living, abuse awareness, and calls to action. As is customary of FoR events, there were puns and raffles abound in addition to adorable bunnies. A baby bunny shower gift registry was a great success and donations poured in from generous supporters throughout the month who couldn't make it to the shower and on the day of, when guests brought piles of donations that directly went towards the care of over 30 babies and mother rabbits in 2016.

In 2016, FoR found forever homes for 170 animals: 154 rabbits, 9 guinea pigs and 7 chinchillas. Compared to 2015, adoptions increased by 50%. This could not have been done without the support of fundraising efforts taken on by dedicated volunteers and the donors, adopters and all other supporters of the rescue. FoR anticipates another record-breaking year in 2017, but not without your help! **Check out the new Classifieds section to volunteer or go to www.friendsofrabbits.org to adopt or donate.**

These are all the animals who found forever homes in 2016!



**Thanks to everyone's efforts 170 animals were adopted in 2016:
154 rabbits + 9 guinea pigs + 7 chinchillas**

Photo collage: Alex D.

Dental Disease in Rabbits

By Maxine K.

Dental disease is the single most common problem seen in domestic rabbits today. It's also one of the most stressful and expensive health problems that a rabbit can have. Rabbit teeth differ from human teeth in that they are constantly growing throughout the rabbit's life. Rabbits are herbivores. Their natural diet consists of grass, dried grass, weeds, leaves and branches. These items are tough and fibrous, so the teeth get worn down naturally from chewing these foods. Herbivores adapted to this diet by having teeth that are constantly growing in order to replace what is lost by chewing.

In a healthy rabbit, there are 28 teeth which are aligned so that they wear against each other as the rabbit chews. Rabbits have six incisors, two big ones on top, two big ones on the bottom, and two tiny ones behind the upper incisors, which are called peg teeth. The incisors meet in a scissoring action, with the upper incisors in front of the lowers that slices through vegetation. The incisors are used only for cutting the food into manageable pieces. Behind the incisors is a flat space without teeth called a diastema. When the teeth are not properly aligned, this is called malocclusion, and can lead to overgrowth of the teeth, possibly leading to wounds in the mouth, or abscesses.



Photo: Beck B.

Normal rabbit incisors

The molars, or cheek teeth, are used for grinding food into a fine "mash" that is swallowed and sent down the GI tract for further processing. There are six on top and five on the bottom on each side. All rabbit teeth are very long, but the majority of each tooth is buried inside the bones of the jaws. The small amount of tooth that is exposed above the gum-line is called the crown, and the portion of tooth below the gum-line is called the root. The edges of the molars meet at a slight angle and the jaw moves from side to side to crush the food.

Hay is the single most important component of your rabbit's diet, not just because of the necessary fiber it contains, but also because it requires a great deal of chewing. It is important to offer your rabbit a daily variety of hays. Different hays have different textures, and different hay textures require different chewing mechanisms to help keep those ever-growing teeth worn down naturally. Limit the amount of pellets that you feed your rabbit to help encourage him to eat more hay rather than filling up on the less fibrous food.

You should contact your rabbit savvy vet immediately if your rabbit exhibits any of the following signs of dental disease:

- 1) Decreased appetite, weight loss
- 2) Saliva or food build-up under chin, near lips, or on the inside of the front legs
- 3) Reluctance to eat hard foods like hay
- 4) Stinky Breath
- 5) Lump on the outer cheek, under the eye
- 6) Lump under lower jaws (lumps start small, but can get very large)
- 7) Discharge from cheek or chin/lower jaw area
- 8) Incisors that are uneven (gently lift upper lip to check incisors).

If uneven incisors are present, there is a very good chance that the cheek teeth are abnormal as well.

Remember that your rabbit may show NO SIGNS AT ALL!!!! Rabbits are prey animals and they tend to hide their illnesses, so they may not exhibit any outward signs of distress. This underscores the importance of yearly wellness checks with a rabbit-savvy veterinarian to detect dental issues early. The sooner dental problems are recognized, the better, because things will only get worse as time goes on, and overgrown teeth often lead to abscesses and chronic pain. Many dental issues can be managed with the help of a veterinarian who is experienced with performing rabbit tooth trims. It is important to find a doctor who has rabbit experience; veterinarians who lack sufficient training and experience may misdiagnose problems or just not treat the problem as aggressively as is needed for the best outcome. You can locate a rabbit veterinarian with dental training by searching online at the Association for Exotic Mammal Veterinarians, www.aemv.org or contacting Friends of Rabbits (FoR) for a referral. A full dental examination requires a general anesthetic or heavy sedation, and should include x-rays of the skull. This is the only way for the vet to ensure that he/she has seen and examined every bit of the teeth, tongue, lips, cheeks and gums.

Facial abscesses are the most common form of rabbit dental disease. Because they are serious and often difficult to treat, it's important to consult with an experienced rabbit veterinarian. Rabbit abscesses are unlike those that form in cats and dogs - they do not rupture on their own and drain infrequently. Instead, they tend to puncture the bone of the rabbit, often requiring surgical treatment.

The most common cause of tooth root abscesses in rabbits is tooth elongation. This is a chronic and common condition because rabbit teeth grow continuously -- at the rate of nearly one-half an inch every month. The cheek teeth can then become spiked and erode, or gradually wear into the soft tissue near the teeth, allowing abscess-causing bacteria to enter into the gums. Tissue damage can also lead to the formation of an abscess.

Treatment for an abscess can usually be done on an outpatient basis, unless the rabbit has large abscesses or wounds which may get infected. Some animals may require long-term pain therapy and management, consisting of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for inflammation control and to help reduce pain. (Needle aspiration can be used to help drain excessive fluids.)

Fractures are serious injuries that can lead to other problems, including damage to root vessels and nerves (and resulting in abnormal tooth growth) as well as abscesses. Incisors may fracture during a fall or when a rabbit sustains some other head injury. When teeth are overgrown, they are more prone to fracture. In addition, a tooth may fracture during improper dental treatment. It should be noted that most disease of the incisors is secondary to disease of the molars.

Malocclusion is a fancy name for "misaligned teeth." Examples in humans are overbites and underbites and we often correct it with braces in severe cases. In rabbit malocclusion the bun's upper and lower teeth are misaligned so that the normal process of chewing does not wear down the rabbit's teeth. Malocclusion is much more serious in a rabbit as it can lead to jaw infections and/or weight loss from the bun not being able to eat properly. When they are misaligned the teeth cannot wear away naturally so they just keep growing. The top incisors grow inwards towards the mouth and the bottom ones grow outwards like elephant tusks. This is painful and serious as it may prevent your rabbit from eating.



Photo: Beck B.

Malocclusion (underbite) in a dwarf rabbit can be managed by regular tooth trims.

Malocclusion in rabbits is either inherited (hereditary) or acquired. Inherited malocclusion is more likely to happen with dwarf breeds of rabbits. They have been bred with small heads so the rabbit's teeth may not sit correctly in their small jaw. "Certain breeds of rabbit are prone to serious health issues caused by human interference in rabbit genetics, the most common of which is dental disease in dwarf and lop eared breeds..." (bunnyhugga.com). Acquired malocclusion happens when the teeth are not ground down over time, or an accident, or even excessive pulling on the wire of their cage, changes the alignment of the incisors.

Rabbit malocclusion is not a condition that you can just ignore. If left untreated, it can be extremely dangerous for your bunny as it can prevent him from eating. Even 1-2 days of not eating is serious. If you suspect that your rabbit's teeth are misaligned, contact your vet immediately. If you have a bun with malocclusion, you'll have to pay close attention to her teeth and mouth, provide lots of things to chew on in addition to her hay (apple branches, chew sticks etc.) and watch her weight carefully. In severe cases, surgery to remove the teeth may be an option but this is an extreme measure. When cheek teeth are not wearing evenly, they can form spurs or spikes that can lacerate the rabbit's tongue, cheeks, and other soft mouth tissue. As a rabbit tries to avoid use of a particular tooth, abnormal pressure is put on other teeth and the uneven wear becomes even greater. In addition, an abscess may form in the soft tissue.

Traumatic injury and changes in jaw formation are two additional causes of rabbit dental disease. Bunny parents should do everything possible to ensure their rabbits' safety against such trauma. But even seemingly small "injuries" can occur, and they have the potential for changing jaw formation and negatively affecting teeth alignment. For example, a caged rabbit who pulls or chews on the metal enclosure can suffer damage because the action can change teeth alignment, and even a slight change can have a significant impact. Providing more play and runaround time may reduce the rabbit's frustration at being caged and stop the behavior.

Loss of bone density is a dental disease that can develop as a rabbit ages. When this happens in the already-delicate bones of the rabbit skull, the teeth can become looser in their sockets and this can cause uneven wear. Rabbit teeth do not have true roots, but the bases of the teeth can become infected when the teeth are loose, as bacteria from the mouth travel downwards along the gumline. Swelling almost anywhere along the lower jaw or upper bones of the mouth can signal an infection that requires antibiotic treatment at a minimum and possibly even surgery. If you have an elderly bun with any signs of dental disease, ask your veterinarian to do a complete oral exam including head radiographs to detect the extent of the problem and the appropriate course of treatment.

Author's note: I can attest that owning a bun with rabbit malocclusion is manageable. My rabbit, Thumpbelina, has an abscess and malocclusion, which is a chronic condition. She will require monthly molar/incisor trims and antibiotics for the rest of her life. I need to be extra vigilant about her teeth and mouth care, but I feel that it's a small price to pay for her continued health and happiness. I am happy to report that since her hospitalization in August, she has been doing fine as long as we are vigilant in monitoring her condition.



Photo: Maxine K.

Thumpbelina (pictured) is living proof that a dental issue can be managed with proper care. She was admitted to Stahl Exotic Animal Veterinary Services (SEAVS) in Fairfax, VA in August after she stopped eating and drinking. At first assumed to be GI Stasis, the root cause was a dental abscess due to malocclusion. She had refused to eat or drink because of discomfort, which led to GI Stasis and dehydration. Dr. Emily Nielsen, found a huge abscess on Thumpbelina's lower jaw that required surgery. Her infection was already quite advanced by the time she was examined. With tooth trims and increased dietary fiber Thumpbelina can be comfortable and have a good quality of life. But tooth problems cannot be ignored – they will not get better on their own. The best approach is early diagnosis and careful monitoring. She is happy and healthy despite her bad teeth.

classifieds

Homes Wanted

These rabbits will receive free nail trims and a week of free pet sitting in 2017! (a \$200 value)



Princess Puff



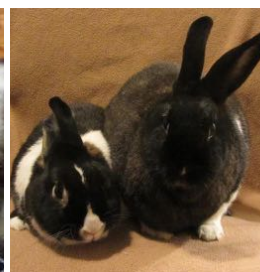
Paris



Jacob, Louie & Taj



Henry Kissinger



Dante & Two Socks



Helen



Chloe & Maddie



Phoebe & Page



Chrissy & Stanley

Help Wanted

Veggie Pick-Up/Delivery (Columbia or Laurel, MD) – Once a month or more often, sign-up to pick-up veggies from one of our sponsored local markets, sort and deliver to help feed the 30-50 rabbits at the sanctuary or the 12-18 rabbits in Laurel. If you can't commit to a set schedule, sign-up to be a back-up on days when our scheduled volunteers can't make it.

Bookkeeping (online) – If you have the internet, a computer and about 4 hours per week, then you can volunteer from home. We need help switching to Quickbooks Online and doing monthly bookkeeping and bank reconciliations. If you don't know anything about accounting or bookkeeping or QB, but are willing to learn, then we can teach you! Put this on your resume and own it.

Videographer – With your own equipment or FOR provided equipment, visit foster homes, adoption events and other events to shoot clips for Petfinder profiles, our website, social media and maybe more....

Easter Campaigners (Online/Local) – Help us get the word out to people not to buy bunnies as Easter gifts.

Groomers (various locations, MD and VA) – Sign up to help groom rabbits at the adoption events or pick day or two each month to come by the bunny sanctuary in Columbia to comb and clip nails. Experts to beginners welcome. We can teach you how to trim nails so you never have to sweat it again!

Tuesday/Wednesday Vet Transports (Columbia, MD) – Our spay and neuter appointments are critical to our mission. We need drivers in the to pick-up rabbits from the Columbia sanctuary and drop-off between 8am and 9:30am at the vet clinic 15 minutes away from the sanctuary. We also need help picking up in the evening. Pick-up time is between 5:30 and 7pm. Carriers are provided.

Special Event Planners (MD, VA, DC) – Spa Days, Glamour Shots, Silent Auctions, Brews for Bunnies, VegFest, TAFE, Bunfests and more! Our events time after time have been a success and we have been asked to do more but we need more volunteers in order to do that.

We also seek volunteers to help with the new **Online Foster Sponsorship and Virtual adoption programs!**

Adoption Counselor (in-person/online) – Help us educate prospective adopters, process their applications by conducting phone interviews, calling references, helping with home visits (virtual or in-person) and finalizing adoptions. We had 170 adoptions in 2016 and are on pace to adopt out well over 200 this year. Each adoption takes time to make sure the adopter and rabbit are set-up for success and a lifetime of happiness. Help be a part of the team that makes that happen.

Adoption Event Coordinators (MD, VA, DC) – Help us by scheduling special events and adoption events at Bark!, PetValu, Pet Supplies Plus and Petco. Contact fosterers to bring rabbits, set up and break down events. Pet bunnies and educate the community about rabbits! It's fun!

Come join the fun and help us make 2017 an even more buntastic year for the rabbits!

Contact us at info@friendsofrabbits.org to learn more!