

Rabbit And Small Animal Rescue Newsletter

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Texas Rabbit Rescue

By Maxine A.

On March 6, 2019, the SPCA of Texas and the Kaufman County Sheriff's Office removed 452 rabbits from a property in Kaufman County, Texas. The rabbits were transported to the SPCA of Texas' Russell E. Dealey Animal Rescue Center for medical evaluation and placement on a case-by-case basis. The SPCA had seized animals from this same property back in July 2013.

The SPCA of Texas first visited the property on March 4, 2019, in response to a tip indicating that a welfare check on the animals was warranted. On March 4, the SPCA of Texas' investigator spoke with the owner and discussed bringing the animals' conditions into compliance with Texas Health & Safety Code. The investigator returned to the property on Wednesday, March 6, and witnessed that the conditions had not improved. At that time, the owner agreed to surrender the animals to the SPCA of Texas

The rabbits were being housed in crates in a large barn-like structure covered with tarp and other materials. Some areas of the barn contained as many as four crates stacked on top of one another. The crates were covered in feces, hair, dirt and debris, and the rabbits had little access to food or water. Most of the crates contained multiple rabbits, including numerous litters of juvenile rabbits. At least 100 of the rabbits were pregnant. Two deceased rabbits were found on the property.

The rabbits had obvious medical conditions ranging from overgrown nails and hair loss to missing ears, missing eyes, wounds, matted fur, and injured limbs. Many were later discovered to have coccidia, ear mites, and syphilis.

The SPCA of Texas sought help from rabbit rescues and shelters across the country. The House Rabbit Society emergency rescue committee coordinated with many groups, including the Bunderground Railroad, to transport the rabbits to safe foster homes. The HRS of Maryland, DC, and Northern VA took in 27 of the Texas rabbits – 16 babies and 11 adults. The HRS provided them with an Emergency Rescue Grant to assist with the ongoing medical expenses of caring for the rabbits, as well as spaying and neutering them.

Tauriel (grey), one of Texas rabbits happily bonded to Calvin.

Inside this issue

Feature Article Texas Rabbit Rescue

News Briefs Bunnies and Beer Bunnicula Ball Midwest Bunfest

Volunteer Spotlight Bunny Yoga

Health Corner Cold Weather Prep

Vet Spotlight Dr. Godwin Dr. Jones

Classifieds & Upcoming Events

Continued on p. 9

news briefs

Bunnies and Beer

Stefani M.

Bunny and beer lovers came together at Checkerspot Brewing Company in Baltimore, Maryland in October for a Bunnies, Beer, and Butterflies event. Attendees sampled the array of small-batch beers inspired by nature. The Ten Spot Rye Porter and Saison de Fleur were crowd favorites! A steady stream of brewery visitors were delighted to meet Fernando, Benny, and Bjorn- a trio of brothers who ran all over the laps of their visitors. Kids and adults alike got to sit in with the babies and our wonderful volunteers taught them more about bunnies and their quirky personalities. A small silent auction featured local artisans as well as donations to suit anyone- dog owners, coffee drinkers, or brewing enthusiasts.



Bunnicula Ball

Stefani M.

The 2nd annual Bunnicula Ball was a spooktacular success, raising almost \$3000 for the rescue! Costumed revelers were treated to a vegan buffet, a zombie bunny cake, and beverages including a slushy cocktail. Bunny lovers traded stories about their pets, fostering experiences, and other interests as they competed in a halloween trivia competition to see who had the most knowledge of halloween films! The live music was the most popular addition to this year's party lineup, as everyone in attendance stopped what they were doing to listen to Crown Cobra's performance of surf inspired music. The good vibrations lasted throughout the evening as the party wound down with a silent auction and announcement of the costume contest winners! There was stiff competition in the auction for the Kessler Haunted Bunny Cottage and in the best costume category. But everyone went home with a bag of bunny themed swag including a Friends of Rabbits beer glass, stickers, and candy. We look forward to seeing everyone next year for this annual event!



Midwest Bunfest in October-the Ultimate Rabbit Road Trip

Kristin L.

Amanda B., Chris H. and I represented Friends of Rabbits at MidWest Bunfest on 18-19 October, in Columbus, Ohio. We made more than \$1000 for the bunnies! Our bestsellers were the black prism t-shirts and sweatshirts. Several people told us they had waited a whole year to buy one, and a few even stopped by to reserve a shirt (or three!) before the event.

Midwest Bunfest is one of the largest gatherings in the U.S. so the three of us had a lot of fun both on and off the sales floor. Amanda attended a talk by veterinarians on rabbit health, and I spent some serious money on rabbit-themed merchandise. Chris was surprised by the conga line going past and took a few pictures while wondering if she could join in. We also got to admire a lot of beautiful and funny rabbits on the convention floor.



Small Pet Select stood out among the vendors.

Besides sponsoring "Hoppy Hour" for rabbits and their human companions at night, SPS personnel led the conga line. They also passed out free tote bags and pins. Company spokesrabbit Belinda made an appearance in her Belindamobile.

Bunfest sponsor Ohio House Rabbit Rescue opened its house sanctuary for tours the day after the event. Their facility was amazing—the group bought a house several years ago, so they have two full floors of rabbit pens plus a gift shop!

Thanks to Deva for all his help both with packing all the merchandise and being tech support during the trip.



Ohio House Rabbit Adoption center – right: one of two floors of adoptable rabbit pens inside the Adoption Center.

volunteer spotlight

How Bunny Yoga Became Poopular with Friends of Rabbits

By Shari K.

It all started with a Google search. The passion I have for rabbits coupled with my love for my Sunday morning yoga class compelled me to enter the words "BUNNY YOGA" into the search engine one rainy weekend. My intent? I wanted to purchase a small bunny figurine sitting cross legged with head bowed and paws pressed together. On my computer screen, instead of a list of eBay ceramic figurines, up popped a video of a yoga event which had taken place a few months prior to my search. Bandaids for Bunnies, a rabbit rescue group in British Columbia, Canada had partnered up with a local gym (Sunberry Fitness) for a fundraiser, but this was no ordinary yoga class. This was a yoga class WITH rabbits romping around and interacting with the participants. That was the birth of my idea. If Bandaids for Bunnies could do this, why couldn't Friends of Rabbits (FoR)? Images of Florida Whites performing zoomies between the legs of participants in Warrior 2 position settled in my brain. I pictured Flemish Giants sprawled out on mats and periscoping Holland Lops staring down into the faces of yoga enthusiasts in Shavasana pose.

That was back in April 2016. I was receiving information about fundraising activities from FoR, but I was not an active member at the time. Shannon and Colt Meraw, my inspirational yoga instructors, had a dedicated following and I was certain that, if I could convince this power couple to donate their time, it would be what I needed to launch my proposal to the FoR board members. I nervously approached Shannon with my plan at the end of the class. "Yes," this animal lover said without hesitation. "Let's make this happen." I knew that persuading the board would not be as easy. Fund-raising events are complicated and require many detail-oriented volunteers to make them successful. I sent an email to the board and a response immediately appeared in my inbox with phrases like, "neat idea for raising awareness" and "maybe formulate something in the near future." That could have been the end of it. Near-future ideas usually fall by the wayside, but I was fueled with determination. Truth be told, I've had many great light-bulb moments

throughout my life that never came to fruition. Somehow, this was different and worth the effort to venture out of my introverted little bubble. Undoubtedly, this would be a wildly successful FoR fund raising event and it was up to me to turn notion into reality.

A year passed without any talk or action. Goat yoga became a thing in the news and made my bunny yoga dream nag at me all the more. Face-to face interactions are always the best route when strategizing, so when I received an invitation to the first FoR baby bunny shower in May 2017, I





Instructors Shannon and Colt grab some snuggle time with Netherland Dwarf bunny, Cooper, after an event at the VHC (above).

Participants are always intent on mastering yoga poses but have to be careful not to step on a bunny (left).

All Photos: Shari K.

attended the event with the goal of winning support. Amid the cute madness of baby rabbits and extraordinary vegan buffet, I managed to steal a few minutes of time from board member, hostess, and events guru, Mara H. She seemed interested, even intrigued and agreed to think on it. We agreed that finding someone willing to donate a space would be our primary roadblock. In the end, it was Mara who got my blip of an idea over the finish line. She brought Nora, her Flemish Giant, to an acupuncture treatment at the Veterinary Holistic Center (VHC) and noticed a large room used for dog training classes. She asked Dr. Jordan Kocen, the owner of the Springfield, Virginia facility, if he would help us out by providing the space and he agreed. All of a sudden, bunny yoga was coming to the DMV. We locked down a date and just one week after tickets went on sale, I received a text from Mara that bunny yoga had sold out, even before she had a chance to fully advertise the event.

As the day approached, excitement grew but this was new territory for everyone involved. We had to figure out how many rabbits to bring and which ones would be best at such an event. We needed rabbit wranglers (i.e., volunteers who would intervene if bunnies scuffled and clean up after those with less than perfect litter box habits). The list of supplies seemed endless: time-out pens for misbehaving bunnies, hay, water bowls, snacks for humans and FoR logo t-shirt to sell. I hardly slept the night before the event. Had we thought of everything? What would we do if no rabbits used the litter boxes or if they fought or, even worse, bit a human? My confidence waned. What if the first fund-raising event I have ever helped organize turned out to be a disaster and everyone demanded their money back?

On March 24, 2018, nearly two years after I viewed the British Columbia video, FoR's first bunny yoga fund-raising event was held and did not disappoint. The rabbit attendees were an assortment of FoR foster bunnies and those owned by volunteers. Eager participants arrived for pre-class rabbit mingling. Introductions were made, door prizes given out and then the magic began. What unfolded before me was more than a yoga class - it was a show. I watched in awe as curious rabbits emerged from carriers, free to roam anywhere in the vast arena before them. Some preferred to observe from the safety of their carriers while others wanted to interact with as many humans as possible. Similar to co-workers gathering in a break room, some rabbits wanted to congregate in litter boxes with newfound furry friends. Many chose to lounge on the mat of one lucky human for the entire hour. The more athletic rabbits took advantage of the human obstacle course given to them - darting between the legs of participants in standing poses and hopping on top of folks in seated or laid out positions. I was afraid of missing something fabulous or adorable so tried not to focus my attention too much on one area of the room. Intuitive yoga instructors. Shannon and Colt, knew exactly how to tweak guidance for this very unusual situation. "Step or jump back but be careful there is not a bunny behind you." "Sit in a comfortable seated position and take a rabbit into your lap if you'd like." In a flash it was over and grinning participants were saying goodbye to their new bunny buddies.



Blackberry, a sweet Chinchilla rabbit, chose her human partner to showcase a new pose called "down dog over happy rabbit" (above).

"Hey, why is everybody sleeping?" asks appropriately-named Peekaboo (below).



In total, FoR has held six bunny yoga fund-raising events at VHC and Rise Well-Being Center in Reston, Virginia in 2018/19 and raised about \$5,000. Perhaps more important than the money has been the opportunity to give rabbits a venue to shine and show people that they are beautiful, charismatic, inquisitive,

silly, cute, lovable creatures. The cherry on top is that bunny yoga has resulted in a few adoptions.

Maybe the bunny yoga novelty has worn off for some but not for me. My favorite part is watching human participants, intent on the yoga progression when a small, furry creature appears before them, begging for affection. Yoga is forgotten, replaced by a bunny snuggling.

There are two lessons I have learned as a result of this experience. Lesson one: It is impossible to predict how a rabbit will behave at bunny yoga. The shyest rabbits at home can become social butterflies and the bunnies who thrive on activity will sometimes hide in a corner. Lesson two: If you have a great idea, then be relentlessly proactive. If producing a rabbit-themed talent show sounds like something you can pull off, go for it.

As for the bunny yoga figurine I searched for at the beginning of all of this? I did get one and it sits on my dresser as a daily reminder that one of my hare-brained schemes was actually a success.

Because of the generosity of the following people, 100% of the money raised at the FoR bunny yoga fund-raising events has gone towards the health and welfare of our homeless rabbits:

Dr. Jordan Kocen, Owner, Veterinary Holistic Center, Shannon Meraw, Yoga Instructor Colt Meraw, Yoga Instructor Lisa Goodwin, Founder, Rise Well-Being Center Marsha Childress, Program Director, Rise Well-Being Center



(above) Sweet Papaya was very content to relax with her new human friend.

(right) There is always time for a selfie at bunny yoga. Blinky (brown) was a little camera shy but Flemish Giant, Nora (gray), was delighted to comply.



Amelie, a Hotot rabbit, was one of the more social bunnies, hopping from one mat to another.



Max (left) and mom, Wonder, hadn't seen each other since they were separately adopted, but they instantly recognized each other, turning bunny yoga into a family reunion.



Ready Your Rabbits – Winter is Coming

By Chris O.

We've reached the end of the year, which means preparing for busy holidays and long frosty days all at once. But, from your rabbit's perspective, the hustle and bustle does not have to be the end of their world. There are many things that you should keep consistent in your bunny's living space, playtime, and diet during the winter. On the other hand, there are a few extra considerations that will help you make winter a wonderful time of the year for him or her.

We can start with the consistencies: rabbit(s) need lots of space to rest, play, and relieve themselves. So, if you make winter modifications, don't sacrifice space for winterization. In addition, your bunnies should maintain a nutrient-rich diet with a wide variety of rabbit-friendly foods. However, you can expect them to increase the amount they eat during the holiday season – just like us! For rabbits, however, this comes from instinct during nature's most scarce season, so be well-stocked in the bunny food department! And, especially during the cold season, thoroughly dry your bunnies' feet and coats if they ever get wet.

Remember that rabbits tolerate the cold better than the heat. So, if you are cuddling together under your favorite blanket, you should maintain a hop-away route so that they can politely excuse themselves to cool down. Also remember that all types of fireplaces give off a ton of heat. This starts to become too much for your bunny if the area gets over 80 degrees. If your rabbit is timid around strangers, then play with them in a dedicated, separated play-space before holiday guests arrive. Leave your bunny or bunnies with food, water, and toys to enjoy their own party.



Winter is coming. So, hop online and read about readying your rabbits.

Good hiding areas are essential for your rabbits when many guests arrive, but also relieve boredom. Friends of Rabbits sells discounted accessories like the one shown.

vet spotlight

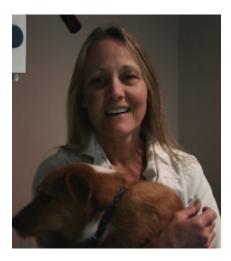
Need a Maryland Veterinarian?

By Wendy W.

When we make recommendations for veterinarians at Friends of Rabbits, so many of them are in DC or Northern Virginia. There seemed to be a real need to identify bun-savvy vets on the Maryland side.

So let me introduce you to two who are happy to see your rabbits.

Familiar Face



In Laytonsville, a scenic 25-minute drive from the Rescue House in Columbia, we find Dr. Claire Godwin. Dr. Godwin has many years of experience, having opened Laytonsville Veterinary Practice in 1988.

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Dr. Godwin says she has known Susan Wong for over 20 years! In recent visits to Laytonsville with bunnies from our Intake Room, she has been kind, supportive, gentle, and understanding – with both the bunnies and the humans! Her team is friendly and caring. They also always thank us for what we do for rescued rabbits.

A recent visit required some tough decisions, including phone calls to Susan. Dr. Godwin gave firm but carefully-considered advice, was patient while we conferred, and sent us on our way with a hug.

Laytonsville Veterinary Practice is located at 5910 Sundown Road, Laytonsville, MD 20882 and their phone number is 301-948-0158

New Friend



Years ago our family had a Corgi and took her to the neighborhood veterinary clinic. There is where we first met Dr. Dina Jones.

Imagine my surprise when I was researching the availability of rabbit-savvy vets and tripped across Dr. Jones again, now located at the Triadelphia Veterinary Clinic in Howard County! An owner of Netherland Dwarfs herself, Dr.Jones has a special interest in more exotic pets as rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, and hamsters.

Though I have not yet had the opportunity to take a Friends of Rabbits bunny to Dr. Jones since "finding" her, she will be on our list of options going forward. I have no doubt she will care for our – and your – bunnies as she would her own.

<u>Triadelphia Veterinary Clinic</u> is located at 3900 Ten Oaks Road, Glenelg, MD 21737. The phone number is 443-535-9257.

TEXAS RABBIT RESCUE Continued from p. 1

The SPCA of Texas and The Bunny Burrow Rabbit Rescue of Texas also received Emergency Rescue Grants from HRS. The Bunny Burrow took in 21 of the confiscated rabbits.

Animal confiscations are carried out when someone is "severely abusing or neglecting animals or when they are raising animals for illegal sport such as pit bull fighting." Confiscation is often a long, complicated process that leaves the rescued animals in limbo for a period of time between confiscation and arrival in rescue. An investigation must be conducted and a decision made as to whether it is okay to let the people in guestion keep the animals or whether the animals need to be removed. Often what happens first is the people are warned, then given the opportunity to improve the care they provide.

Temporary spay/neuter clinics are often set up following a major confiscation because there are too many animals for any one veterinary clinic to handle. Veterinarians and vet techs are asked to volunteer their time to provide spays, neuters, and basic health exams in almost assembly line style.

What Constitutes Animal Hoarding?

The Texas rabbit confiscation is a prime example of animal hoarding, abuse, and neglect. The Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium (HARP) defines animal hoarding based on the following criteria:

- Having more than the typical number of companion animals.
- Failing to provide even minimal standards of nutrition, sanitation, shelter, and veterinary care, with this neglect often resulting in illness and death from starvation, spread of infectious disease, and untreated injury or medical condition.
- Denial of the inability to provide this minimum care and the impact of that failure on the animals, the household, and human occupants of the dwelling.
- Persistence, despite this failure, in accumulating and controlling animals.

Animal hoarders can be of any age, gender, race, or ethnic group. The elderly may be at greater risk due to their own deteriorating health and isolation from family and friends. The reasons for animal hoarding are not clearly understood,

but it is thought to share some similarities with object hoarding, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), anxiety, and depression. The one thing that all hoarders have in common is "a failure to grasp the severity of their situation".

What is the Difference Between Animal Hoarding and Rescuing?

"Animal hoarding is not about animal sheltering, rescue, or sanctuary, and should not be confused with these legitimate efforts to help animals. It IS about satisfying a human need to accumulate animals and control them, and this need supersedes the needs of the animals involved." (https://vet.tufts.edu/hoarding/about/) Hoarding may start out as a genuinely benevolent mission to save animals, but the needs of the animals are eventually lost to the person's need for control. Some hoarders act as individuals, but other times they may represent themselves as animal rescue organizations. A legitimate rescue such as Friends of Rabbits (FoR) puts the animals' needs first, recognizes when their ability to provide adequate care is exceeded and takes the necessary steps to provide proper care. These steps include temporarily stopping intakes, focusing on adoptions, recruiting volunteers, or increasing resources. Legitimate rescues and shelters also encourage visitors, volunteers, and transparency. Some sanctuary organizations even publish codes of ethics.

Is Animal Hoarding a Crime?

Tauriel (gray), a 10 lb rabbit, bonded with her

giant pal, Calvin (brown)



Failure to provide proper care for animals is a crime in every state. Illinois and Hawaii explicitly mention animal hoarding in their cruelty statutes. Unfortunately, because these laws were written back in the 1800s to prevent the overworking of livestock, they may not be relevant to companion animals.

The <u>USDA</u>, which regulates commercial animal dealers, defines animal suffering as "any condition that causes pain or distress." Examples include animals with serious medical conditions that are not receiving adequate veterinary care; animals exposed to temperature extremes without adequate shelter or bedding; animals without adequate food or water; and animals held in enclosures that are filthy, such as those of the confiscated Texas rabbits. "Animals do not need to be in jeopardy of dying to be in a state of suffering" (AC Policy No. 8, May 8, 2001).

Animal hoarders suffer from a variety of mental health and behavioral issues that preclude them from providing proper care for companion animals, but they are rarely found incompetent to stand trial. Although the "intent" to harm may be lacking, most hoarding cases are characterized by a series of deliberate choices made by the hoarder (e.g., continuing to acquire more animals, refusing to seek help, failure to obtain proper medical care, failure to spay-neuter, etc.) that led to animal suffering and neglect. Hoarders can receive jail time if convicted, but prosecuting such cases can be extremely challenging, so thorough preparation is advisable. The Animal Legal Defense Fund has staff attorneys available to consult with prosecutors about how to approach any case of animal abuse. The website also provides sample legal pleadings and briefs.

Animal hoarding is a complex issue that encompasses a variety of mental health, animal welfare and public safety concerns. Hoarding of any type poses significant health risks to both occupants and nearby residents. Early intervention is the key to preventing the suffering caused by animal hoarding, but potential hoarders must be approached with empathy and compassion rather than judgement. Close friends and family are often the first to notice the change from loving animals to hoarding them, but they often lack the knowledge and understanding to effectively intervene. Public awareness and education of animal hoarding can help family members and authorities to intervene before a case becomes extreme.

Noel, the Giving Tuesday Spokesbunny – Ready for a Home!

By Beck B.

Noel is a sweet bunny who was abandoned on our front porch, turning us from volunteers to fosterers overnight. We were devastated when we found out his inner ear infection was not responding to the antibiotics and would need a surgical procedure, or it could become an abscess. Thanks to Friends of Rabbits and Dr. Claire Godwin (see page 5), he had the surgery promptly the Monday after Thanksgiving and spent the weeks leading up to the holidays in a collar (aka cone of shame), getting ear drops and oral antibiotics. Our most cherished gift this season was the news that his ear surgery was a <u>great success</u>— his inner ear looks clear and healthy— and he's ready to find his forever home.



The many charming looks of Noel.



The queen bunny of our house is not a fan of him, but we sure are! He is extremely sweet and so much fun to hang out with and watch for hours. He loves getting pets, lounging, and exploring. He fears nothing, not even wood floors!

Find out more about him on Petfinder!



bunny personals *by Sharon H.*



Beatrice-Ann

I'm Beatrice Ann-straight up. My ears are straight-straight up. I'm calm and great-straight up. Don't hesitate- straight up. Adopt!

Turnip

My binkies are the best in town. They're the highest, the fasted of all around. I binky from the earth, up to the moon. At any time, and twice at noon!

Bella

My name is Bella. I'm doing well-a. I want to be bonded with a girl or fella. I'll make a good partner for a lonely bun. My friendship skills score a hundred and one.





Friends of Rabbits Columbia Supply Store

Open Daily

If you need information or assistance, please contact info@friendsofrabbits.org



Address: 10706 Vista Rd, Columbia, MD

We carry all your bunny needs!

Standlee Timothy Hay and Orchard Grasshalf and full bales

Binky Bunny Willow Toys & Tents

Oxbow food, treats & hay

We can accept purchases made with credit/debit cards, personal checks, and cash.Payments can be made through PayPal to <u>donations@friendsofrabbits.org</u>. (If you choose to pay with PayPal, please list which item(s) you purchased in the description.)



more bunny personals

Adoption Day at Columbia HQ

2nd Sunday of the month- email info@friendsofrabbits.org for more info and to schedule a particular rabbit for 'bunny speed dates.'

Upcoming dates: 2/9, 3/8, 4/12

FoR Grooming and Adoption Days!

4th Sunday of the month

At these Adoption Days, Friends of Rabbits in Columbia also offers grooming services and nail trims: Please email info@friendsofrabbits.org to schedule an appointment! Walk-ins are welcome, but have the possibility of a long wait time. Nail trim only \$12, Grooming (brushing, scent gland cleaning, etc) is an additional \$12.50 per hour, extra charge may apply for matting or shaving. All fees are per rabbit. Nail trims done on a walk-in basis have a possibility of a long wait. Avoid a wait by making appointments far in advance!

Upcoming dates: 1/26, 2/23, 3/22, 4/26

Events at **PET SUPPLIES PLUS**

Every Saturday 11AM – 12 PM – Adoption Event, featuring New Rabbit of the Week and a short Q & A. <u>11054 Lee Highway</u> <u>Fairfax, VA</u> call Pet Supplies Plus to confirm (703) 359-2659

Adoption events at pet

3rd Saturday of the month 12-3pm Adoption event at PetValu Kingstowne Pet Valu in the Hilltop Shopping Center (Wegmans), 7875A Heneska Loop, Alexandria, VA 22315



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Divinity and Tranquility

Hello there, how do you do? We're the F-O-R cool rappin' crew. We're gonna rap it up. We're gonna rap it down. When **we** rap there's no frown around.



Rook and Bailey

We hope you've had a ton of fun. We rapped for you, and now we're done.

Just one more thing, we've got to say.

Adopt a bun or two todayyyyyyyy!