The Method and Magic of Bonding Rabbits

By Amy S.

You may have read the article about bunny matches in the last Friends of Rabbits (FoR) newsletter (see E-Haremmy: Bunny Speed Dating). Perhaps you’ve heard people talk about how adorable and heartwarming it is to watch bunny friends snuggle together. So you decide to give it a try and bring your bunny to a match. She appears to be getting along quite well with one of the foster rabbits, and you would like to adopt him as a friend for your little girl. The next common - and advisable - step is to leave your bunny with an experienced and skilled FoR member to bond the two rabbits. Susan Wong, aka the “Bunny Whisperer,” shares her initial experience:

Back in 1993, I acquired my first rabbit, Speckles, through a co-worker, and after learning about spraying, neutering, and litter box training, I thought Speckles wanted a friend. So I went over to the Montgomery County Animal Shelter and adopted a girl whom I named Snowflake. Most of my advice about rabbits came from books since there was not much of a web presence about rabbits or from friends with cats and dogs. Little did I know that you couldn’t just throw two rabbits together and expect them to get along. Now starts my journey in understanding how to bond rabbits.

The key, Susan emphasizes, is neutral territory and a low-stress environment. After initially meeting in neutral territory, like the FoR matches, bunnies typically settle down from their initial reactions by the end of the day. Susan watches and listens to the new pairs through the night to make sure fights do not break out. Once they get past that first night, she explains, the bonding process is generally uneventful. She usually keeps the
rabbits at her place for about a week to bond before they go back to their home together. Sometimes, particularly when there is some aggression, it can take longer (it once took Susan 4 weeks to bond a particularly aggressive pair). Her house provides a large space in which to bond rabbits. She generally starts the rabbits in a smaller pen area upstairs, but once they are clearly getting along, they can be moved to a slightly bigger space in the basement. She does not separate them during the entire process unless there are concerns about fighting or aggression.

In other circumstances, especially if the rabbits did not meet at a match and their compatibility is less certain, some experts suggest housing them in separate areas (possibly next to one another so that they get used to each other’s scent) and bringing them on “dates” each day. At first, these dates should be kept short, gradually increasing the time they spend together. It is generally recommended to keep them in a confined space (for example, an x-pen or bathtub) during these dates to force them to get used to one another’s presence and interact. Always stay present – or chaperone the date – and be ready to intervene in case aggression occurs. In these circumstances, it may take quite a bit longer than when Susan oversees the bonding, sometimes up to several months.

Although generally a low-stress environment where they feel calm and safe together is ideal, you can also use shared stress to your advantage when bonding rabbits. Forcing the rabbits to face a stressful situation together can accelerate the process. For many, this could be the stress of a car ride together in the same carrier. A car ride can even be simulated by putting a carrier on top of a running washing machine. There are also non-stressful ways to encourage interaction and bonding, such as the “banana trick.” Smear some banana, which most rabbits love, on one rabbit’s head. The second rabbit will lick it off, and the first rabbit will think they are being groomed, an act that indicates acceptance and affection.

Thus far, we’ve discussed bonding two rabbits. However, more than two rabbits can be bonded. Susan does not change her approach to bonding, except providing more space when there are four or more rabbits. She has successfully bonded up to six rabbits!

In the end, you will have two (or more) bunnies that are truly attached to one another in a bond that should not be broken. In fact, the emotional bond is generally so strong that if a rabbit loses his/her partner, there is likely to be a period of grieving. In the meantime, however, you will have happy bunnies who always have the company of a close companion. And yes, it really is adorable and heartwarming to see them snuggle together.

Sources and Additional Resources

Bunnyhugga [http://www.bunnyhugga.com/a-to-z/rabbit-behaviour/bonding.html]
House Rabbit Society [http://www.rabbit.org/journal/4-4/tough-bonding.html]
Volunteer Orientation

By Meredith P.

New and old volunteers came together for an informative and entertaining afternoon.

A successful volunteer orientation meeting was held on July 25th and was attended by several dozen people. Volunteers had a chance to get to know each other and many of the Friends of Rabbits coordinators over a delicious spread of light snacks and frosty beverages. Presentations from Susan Wong, Pam Hurley, Mara Hurwit, Alexandra Deckert, Melissa R’Kingsley, and Beck Burgess allowed volunteers to first learn about the history and mission of FoR, then hear details about multiple areas in which help is needed. Short-term volunteers are needed to assist with adoption and fundraising events, transporting rabbits, and helping with rabbit care at foster homes. Some opportunities are one-time events, requiring a couple of hours volunteering at an event, other opportunities can be scheduled at recurring times, such as assisting at foster homes, in particular, at Susan’s and Pam’s homes where dozens of adoptable rabbits are housed. Chores include cleaning litter bins, changing out hay, washing vegetables, and socializing with the foster rabbits; these would be an excellent way to get younger rabbit-lovers involved. Children and teens are welcome to join our volunteer community.

Longer-term volunteer positions are available in addition to the short-term volunteer and junior volunteer positions detailed above. In particular, we seek volunteers to fill 3 critical coordinator positions: Housing and Rabbit Care Coordinator, Adoption Event Coordinator (MD), Adoption Event Coordinator (VA). Assistant coordinator positions are also needed to work with existing coordinators and are as follows: Assistant Fundraising Coordinators (Bunny Spa Days, E-fundraising, Bunny Glamour Shots Sessions); Assistant Communications Coordinators (Social Media, E-communications). For more information, contact Susan at volunteer@friendsofrabbits.org

There are also plenty of things that can be done from home in your spare time, examples include: writing and editing newsletter articles, assembling general rabbit information packets, organizing adoption goodie bags, maintaining records/data and graphic design/merchandise design. Please contact Susan at volunteer@friendsofrabbits.org for more information.

Thank you to all the coordinators and volunteers who came out and a special thank you to John and Bonnie Pontzer for hosting a lovely afternoon at their home!

Vegging Out in Ellicott City

By Beck B.

What goes together better than veggies and bunnies?

FoR took to the streets of the VegOut! Festival on a perfect sunny summer day to educate veggie lovers about the possibility of a bringing furry vegetarian friend into their lives. The festival, sponsored by The Humane League and Bmore Vegan, was held in lovely downtown Ellicott City on Saturday June 6th and featured plant-based/vegan food and lifestyle options from local merchants and eateries around the area. At the FoR table, passersby could view information about rabbits as companion animals that are especially conducive to the vegetarian and vegan lifestyle.

(Foto) Wendy and Craig raising rabbit awareness in true FoR style Photo: Alex D.
Attendees were given maps and punch cards to have participating establishments and charities mark cards for visiting. Attendees with full punch cards at the end of the festival entered a contest to win an absolutely enormous high-end prize basket containing over $1100 worth of goodies from local vendors. This was an all day event, so the FoR Volunteer Coordinator kept the tables staffed with volunteers all day long. Big thanks to Alex, Susan, Craig and Wendy for making this event a great success in raising awareness about Friends of Rabbits, rabbits as friends, and veg-friendly living.

FoR will be participating in the DC Veg Fest (near Nationals Park on First St. SE) on Saturday October 3rd. Go to http://dcvegfest.com/ for more information.

Coverage of Friends of Rabbits in National Media.

By Beck B.

FoR deservedly received some national news attention this summer.

Rabbit rescue is getting more press lately as people begin to realize the wonderful companion a rabbit can be, with the right care. Rabbits are decidedly different in needs and personality than cats and dogs, the top two pets in the U.S. These differences often lead to their surrender (or worse yet, release) when ill-advised people realize that they can’t (or don’t want to) care for their rabbit’s needs. This was the topic tackled in an article in the July/August issue of All Animals, the Humane Society’s (HSUS) magazine. The article, titled “Some Bunny Loves You” featured quotes from an interview with FoR treasurer and board member, Alexandra Deckert. As a widely-circulated publication, hopefully this article, with its expert tips on rabbit diet, grooming, housing, and socialization will help to educate the public about the proper care of rabbit companions, enabling them to live happy, healthy lives letting their unique personalities shine. As many of us know, once a rabbit steals your heart, they never let it go.

All Animals (Right) is a publication of the Humane Society of the United States, showcasing their work combating animal cruelty and creating a more humane world for all. For more information on the humane society’s work, visit humanesociety.org

The HSUS web page also features information on rabbit care and rescue humanesociety.org/rabbits

Answers

1. The Rabbits of Rhosgobel
2. Night of the Lepus (1972)
3. (c) amoxicillin (Amoxil), it usually is fatal
4. (c) amoxicillin (Amoxil), it usually is fatal

The handsome furry volunteer at the VegOut event.

Susan and Orin at the VegOut Friends of Rabbits table

Photo: Alex D.

Photo: Melissa R.
FoR National Coverage (continued)

In the age of viral videos, FoR has hopped on the bandwagon with Bunny Speed Dating video on People.com. With footage of FoR’s own Susan Wong, the video describes the introduction process lovingly called Bunny Speed Dating (covered in the Summer 2015 newsletter). These events, held several times a month at FoR foster homes (often at Susan’s), help identify a good match for your companion rabbit with any number the adoptable FoR rabbits. After a suitable match is identified, the bonding process, or ‘bunnymoon’ commences (see Feature story, page 1).

The video can be viewed at http://www.people.com/people/videos/0,,20913173,00.html

Summer Spa Days: Keeping Bunnies Cool

By Beck B.

On a scorching July afternoon in Virginia, hair flew.

On Sunday July 19th, rabbits and their humans flocked to the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria’s Vola Lawson Shelter for a cool new look. Over 10 volunteers were prepped and ready to brush, clip and clean about two dozen clients for a great cause. Aileen, the rabbit masseuse was on hand for imparting a deep relaxation on clients. The Bunny Spa supported the shelter rabbits both financially, but also physically- with all the volunteer help, a few shelter rabbits could be primped in the hopes that a fresh look might increase their adoptability. FoR volunteers Patty and Josephine were also on-hand selling rabbit supplies, such as Busy Bunny willow toys, tents and mats, grooming supplies, hay, Carefresh bedding, and Oxbow products. This event also unveiled the new FoR t-shirt design, a rabbit-style homage to Pink Floyd’s seminal record Dark Side of the Moon. The event was a great success and a lot of fun, thanks to the organizing efforts of Mara, FoR’s Fundraising Coordinator. The rabbits seemed to enjoy themselves, too.
The Summer of Bunny Love

This summer, Friends of Rabbits held several adoption days at foster homes, most frequently at Susan’s house in Columbia, MD. These events allowed potential adopters to come and meet the adoptable rabbits in the FoR foster network. Nearly 30 rabbits were adopted out this summer, often being bonded to new companions.

Whether looking for a single bun for the first time, or for a mate for your existing rabbit companion, potential adopters can look through adoptable rabbits through our Petfinder site. This is easily be reached through our website http://www.friendsofrabbits.org/ under the side menu item: “Our Rabbits” > “Adoptable rabbits.” Once the Adoption Application is approved, contact can be made with our adoption team at adopt@friendsofrabbits.org to schedule a meeting with a particular rabbit (or rabbits) at an upcoming adoption event. As of Sept. 1, we have 60 rabbits in the foster system waiting for their new best friend.

Bunny Personals

**ARNIE**
Young, energetic male seeks loving human for permanent relationship. My current interests include exploring my big exercise room and racing up and down the stairs. I am approximately 4-5 months old and still growing, but am very tidy. I would do best in a home where I have lots of time to run around and interact. I like to be groomed, so would make a fine companion for the right lucky bunny.

**SILVER**
Elegant older lady with sparkling silver coat seeks gentle, loving human in a forever home. I enjoy being petted, and I don’t mind being picked up and held, as long as you are gentle with me. I’m used to living with dogs, so the barking is not new to me.

**NITA**
Young, attractive and active lady seeks a patient owner in a loving forever home. I’m a little cage aggressive, but I’m slowly learning to trust humans and just need plenty of space to run and interact. I am looking for a human who can provide me with the stability, love, and attention that I deserve. I have a tremendous capacity to trust and love you, but you must be patient and give me the time and space to adjust to my new surroundings.

**CARLITTA**
I am a young, active female and express myself through my ears. I am seeking my forever home. I tend to be shy at first, but please don’t let that turn you off. Once I am comfortable with you, I welcome petting. I love treats, and I will come running for them. Won’t you come running to me, too?

**THUMPERTON**
I am a snuggler, comfortable being pet when held; however, I love to explore. I love hopping across my human friends, and need open space to roam. Cages make me anxious! I’d make a great companion to another rabbit or a human who has time to spend with me. I have excellent litterbox habits and don’t really like chewing- I’d much rather socialize!

**SAMMIE**
I’m a young man with an even temperament and I’ve been told I have very soft and strokable fur. I was found as a stray, but I am finally enjoying the comforts of indoor living. I’d love to finally have a place to call my own. Could you be the one to show me what true love is?

Meet Carl, Brey, Obie (left to right) and the rest of the new arrivals on the Fall dating scene at www.friendsofrabbits.org
Oh baby!

Two litters of baby bunnies are threatening cuteness overload amongst FoR volunteers and fosterers.

In early August, a litter of 6 baby rabbits were born at the Montgomery County shelter. Friends of Rabbits was contacted immediately to take in the fragile newborns and their mother, as the shelter has neither the resources nor the specialty to handle rabbit litters. The network of FoR volunteers was enlisted in an attempt to find a safe foster home for 7 rabbits until they could be adopted into loving forever homes. Luckily, the cuteness of baby rabbits is hard to resist, and a kind volunteer opened her home to these 7.

Again, 3 days later, a pregnant mother that was taken in from the Montgomery County shelter gave birth to 8 adorable baby bunnies. These 8 will be in need of foster homes once they are weaned from their mother. They will be weaned by Oct 1 so we will be in need of additional foster homes willing to foster a pair or more.

Please contact fostering@friendsofrabbits.org if you’d like to house these sweet rabbits while they await their new human companions. FoR now has two litters of babies who will be in need of foster homes in about 16-18 weeks at which point, they will be spayed/neutered.

If you want to support our work rescuing rabbits from shelters and our spay/neuter campaign, please consider a donation on our website or by check.

To follow the baby rabbits’ progress:

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Rabbits/118547468200761

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Product alert- Carefresh w/ Baking Soda

By Maxine K.

The makers of Carefresh have stopped producing the baking soda version of their Odor Stop bedding products. The decision was made in January 2015 and effected immediately. However, it will take some time for all existing inventory to be removed from distribution warehouses and retail shelves, so consumers may still find the product in some stores. Carefresh products will continue to display the Odor Stop icon, as odor control has always been a hallmark of their premium bedding, but the “Baking Soda Formula” notation and ingredient has been removed.

Please note: The following statements about baking soda and rabbit health in this section specifically refer to baking soda itself and have not been substantiated for the Carefresh product. We do recommend that baking soda itself not be used around rabbits.

-Pamela Hurley, Toxicologist, FoR Board Member

Baking soda is a “miracle cure” for cleaning and absorbing odors in the human world. But for rabbits, baking soda can be dangerous, even deadly. Rabbits ingesting or inhaling baking soda can lead to a host of internal issues, including stomach rupture and respiratory damage.

Baking soda is used as an emetic to induce vomiting in emergency situations. Unlike humans, rabbits cannot vomit. Ingesting baking soda can lead to a life-threatening condition known as gastrointestinal dilation in which the stomach or intestines rupture. GI dilation is very painful for the rabbit and blocks blood flow to essential organs. If the stomach wall stretches too far, it will rupture. Call your vet immediately if you suspect that your rabbit has ingested baking soda.

Respiratory distress is another potential danger. If the baking soda is accidentally inhaled, the rabbit may experience respiratory irritation or pneumonia. Therefore, baking soda should never be added to a rabbit’s bedding or litter. There are a number of alternatives to adding baking soda to litter to help absorb smells. Litters made from oat, alfalfa, recycled paper products, wood, bark or citrus based products all absorb odors well and are safe to use. Oat and alfalfa litters should be used with caution as they can cause bloating if too much is ingested. Switch to another product if your rabbit likes to snack.
**Twinkie’s Triumph**

*By Shayna A.*

Twinkie, now Buddy, is a true example of how the right care and love can heal even a serious injury. This spunky dwarf rabbit arrived at the local shelter with a leg so badly broken, that the only solution was amputation. The injury, most likely from a bad fall, could have easily stopped Twinkie, but his spirit shined throughout his ordeal.

After Friends of Rabbits rescued him from the shelter, surgery and follow-up care was arranged. Following his amputation, Twinkie healed rather quickly and made a great recovery. With the danger to his health and well-being averted, the next step was to find his forever home.

At this time, Alex of FoR set up a Go Fund Me page to help cover the cost of Twinkie’s medical procedure and care. This page contained a link to the FoR webpage that gave more info on him. The fundraiser page was shared on several social platforms in an effort to reach the goal and to find him a loving forever home for him to continue to heal and thrive.

While recovering in foster care, Twinkie found his forever home with a loving family, looking to rescue a rabbit, after they found him on the web. Buddy is now thriving in his new forever home and has since gained a new bunny friend named Amber to keep him company. The family says that Buddy loves to copy what Amber does and he gains confidence in his abilities after successfully imitating her. He loves peaches and munching on blueberries, cilantro, and barley treats. Mornings are when he is most active and has a whole room at his disposal to hop, binky, and flop at his leisure. He loves to run from one end to the other, stopping to do spins midway sometimes.

With the love and care of his new family and his new companion, Amber, Buddy has really recovered quite well and is enjoying quality living in his new home.

Buddy has really triumphed after he was given a fighting chance and lots of love. He has come a long way since his rescue from the shelter and has had many people rooting for him.

*Way to go Buddy!*

Editor’s Note: Help is still needed to cover the cost of the amputation and spay that helped shape Twinkie’s new life. If you’d like to contribute, please visit the Go Fund Me page at [http://www.gofundme.com/xqqr9q](http://www.gofundme.com/xqqr9q)
Brews for Bunnies

By Chris O.

Beers in hand, bunnies in sight, and flying caramel candies set the vibe for the Friends of Rabbits fundraiser held at Jailbreak Brewing Company in Laurel, MD. Dubbed ‘Brews FoR Bunnies,’ the event on Wednesday, August 26, rallied rabbit-rescuers by the droves to congregate for a jam-packed night of craft brewery tours, trivia, and a silent auction. Friends of Rabbit volunteers—clad in the new FoR t-shirt—hosted this casual and memorable event that yielded nearly $2,000 for FoR’s rescue and adoption operations.

Enthusiasts came from a variety of Maryland towns, as well as the District of Columbia and a few locations in Virginia. A T&J’s Waffles food truck awaited their arrival, with the aroma of a home-cooked meal. Inside, guests hopped right over to the bar to sate their palate with one of Jailbreak’s flavorful craft beers. The FoR logo debuted on custom-made pint glasses that commemorated the event, which auspiciously coincided with this year’s release of the Carrot-cake Conspiracy ale. Everyone who purchased a ticket for the event got to take one home. As tokens of a great time and a testament to great art by graphic designer Bryan Baltz, the pint glasses match the uniqueness of the event.

There were three bunnies that graced our presence, one who was content to rest despite the buzzing crowd. Children got to spend time inside the rabbits’ spacious pens and onlookers aww’d and oo’d. Most importantly, interested guests engaged in meaningful conversations about rabbit care with FoR volunteers. The setting was casual and abundantly welcoming.

Many individuals and organizations donated items for a silent auction, which generated funds to keep rescued rabbits nourished, nurtured, and comfortably housed. Ceramics represented the majority of the auction items, including a pair of coffee mugs titled, ‘Bunny Orgy,’ that showed a polite, yet expressive, rabbit romp.

Around 8pm, Dirk Kingsley initiated the first round of trivia with his deep voice and understated sense of humor. Hurwitt tossed candies to patrons and kept the atmosphere light and energetic. Participants picked their brains to find answers to bunny-themed questions, ranging from proper care for pets to popular rabbits in film and literature. Alex, the adoption/fostering coordinator, collected the scribbled answers and helped tally the points for the team. The trio under the team name ‘Bunnypocalypse’ took home first place. You may want to have a try at the trivia questions (found on the next page).

Jailbreak Brewing Company’s Founder and COO,
Kasey Turner, personally led tours for the night’s ticket holders. He had even hired a magician to weave through the crowd and perform magic tricks. The idea came to him as he was thinking of the age-old rabbit-in-a-hat trick.

By the night’s end, it was clear that Brews FoR Bunnies had been a major success. The funds raised provide direct benefits to the lives of rescued and adopted rabbits, from shelter, nutrition, and grooming to education and outreach. The event owed its success to the FoR volunteers, the Jailbreak crew, and the many guests that showed their love for beer and bunnies. It was a masterful execution of a concept that began with Maureen O’Prey, who caught the thought as soon as Turner mentioned the upcoming seasonal beers. “She thought it would be perfect to promote Friends of Rabbits along with the launch of the carrot cake beer,” Turner said. “I couldn’t have agreed more.”

There was no end to the festive imagination, and fundraising coordinator Mara drummed up the ideas for the auction and trivia events, as well as the very title, ‘Brews FoR Bunnies.’ With the support of groups such as Bark! Pet Supply and Baltimore Beer Babes, there was a tremendous output in generating awareness and enthusiasm for the fundraiser. There were even promotions in The Capital Gazette of Annapolis.

Many of the FoR folks agreed that the casual milieu contributed to the warm conversations and no-pressure fundraising activities. It was a delightful addition to the wide array of work that FoR already does within the community. So keep your ears attuned—whether lopped or not—for the next chance to participate in the merriment. **HUGE thanks to Jailbreak brewing for hosting a hopping night!**

Friends of Rabbits would like to express our sincere thanks for the generous donations for our Brews FoR Bunnies Silent Auction and prizes:

- **Bark!**
  - Buns, Beds, and Beyond
  - Darwin & Co. Pottery
- Barb Mallon, Psychic Medium
- Jeffrey L. Rhody, DVM, Lakeside Veterinary Center
- Elsie the Rex
- Diamondback Tavern
- Snow Cafe
- Betty Jane’s Sweet Delights (Bobbie Pontzer)
- Gilda’s Salon
- Venus Theatre
- The Wine Bin
- Terrapin Adventures
- Spa Anisa
- Napoleon Bunnyparte
- Alex Deckert
- Maureen O’Prey
- Mara & Sam
- Wendy Woods
- Amy Sussman
- Robin Siegel
- Connie Tjoumas
- Gail Newcomb

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**Test your rabbit knowledge (answers on page 4)**

1. What kind of rabbits appeared in The Hobbit movie?
2. How soon after giving birth can a female rabbit get pregnant again?  
   (a) 15 minutes, (b) 24 hours, (c) 1 week, (d) 1 month.
3. In what American horror movie do thousands of carnivorous, killer rabbits invade a small town in Arizona?
4. Which of these medications should never be given to a rabbit?  
   (a) meloxicam (Metacam), (b) enrofloxacin (Baytril), (c) amoxicillin (Amoxil), (d) simethicone (Phazyme)?
...we have a little something for the humans, too!

The all-new Friends of Rabbits t-shirt

$25 for regular Ts and
womens T’s

$27 for long sleeve T’s

$32 for Hoodies

orders can be placed online, via the
contact information above, or in
person at any of our upcoming events!
(see next page for Fall 2015 listing)
Join us for Upcoming Events

Sept 26th- Adoption event at the Burke, VA Petco.
Oct 3rd - Friends of Rabbits at DC Veg Fest.
October 10th- Bark! Kentlands Joint Adoption event with Small Angels Rescue, inc.
October date TBA- Adoption event at the Burke, VA Petco
November 8th- Adoption Event at Bark! Kentlands store. 12-3 PM.
December 5th- Adoption Event at Bark! Kentlands store. 12-3 PM.
Bunny Glamour Shots/Holiday Cards- just in time for the holidays- stay tuned for announcements!

More in-store adoption events and bunny speed dating forthcoming- contact adoptions@friendsofrabbits.org to join our mailing list or to inquire about upcoming adoption events.