

Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue, Inc.

# Safe Haven Scoop

## Inside this issue:

Welcome Spring	1
Latest Rescues	2-3
Educational Corner	4
Adoption Updates	5-7
Did you know?	8
Bunny Biscuits	9
A Tribute	10
Shopping	11

## Questions about care?

Do you have questions about caring for your rabbit? Zoom call help available for nail trims, grooming, litter-box training, bonding, etc.

Please contact us via our [Contact form](#) if you have care question (*no medical questions, we are not vets*).

No charge.

By Karen Augustynowicz, Director

## Welcome, Spring!

I hope you will find this newsletter entertaining and educational. I want to thank everyone who contributed their stories and write-ups. For it is our adopters, volunteers and friends who write with love about their bunnies, share their experiences and what they have learned who make this newsletter a fun, entertaining read.

The past winter months have been challenging trying to help as many people as possible as they found themselves struggling to care for their rabbits due to changing circumstances. We saw a huge increase in owner surrender requests and rabbits being released.

Like everyone else, we found the Zoom platform to be a valuable asset in helping others when we could not do it in person. Lessons about nail trimming and grooming helped many learn to get those nails shortened. Long calls about bonding helped soothe a few nerves for those working through the process.

Remember, we are always here, regardless of where you may have obtained your rabbit, to help with care issues. Please remember we are not vets, so any medical questions/issues should be directed to your vet.

**RHDV2**—Please be sure you are keeping up with the spread of this highly contagious rabbit disease. We are keeping an up-to-date [map](#) on our facebook page and wanted to bring the [information](#) on the HRS site to your attention.

As always, we welcome update stories and/or pictures from you! If you have photos to share or questions you would like to see answered in an upcoming newsletter, just [email](#) them to us!

Stay Safe & Keep your bunnies safe,

With sincere thanks,  
Karen Augustynowicz, Director



## ***Max Factor—Mother Nature's Twist***

*By Gail Petersen, Safe Haven Officer & Foster Parent*



In April, Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue took in two rabbits surrendered by their owner. A mother and son, the bonded pair of Netherland Dwarf rabbits became too much for the family to manage along with their other pets and responsibilities.

Netherland Dwarf rabbits, when bred, can be born with various genetic disorders. So called “peanuts” are too small at birth to survive; “hippos” are malformed and do not live; and “faders” fail to eat solid food and last only a few weeks.

“Max Factor” is a recessive defect named after “Max,” a Netherland Dwarf buck known to sire kits with this defect. Max Factor babies are born with bent and deformed hind

legs and their eyes are often open at birth, as though their eyelids were nonfunctional. They may also have other defects of varying severity.

Max Factors frequently die within days, however some do live. If they live, they are usually blind, have mobility problems, and struggle through life with physical defects and weak immune systems.

### **Enter Rocky and Ginger**

Mother Nature can deliver some tough blows. But it is how you handle what you get in life that makes you special. Rocky is a Max Factor rabbit. His mom, Ginger, was born with significant, painful malformations of her spine. In both cases, the result of overbreeding.

It sounds terribly sad. But life is good for Rocky and Ginger because they have tremendous will, fortitude and good attitudes.

Rocky’s back legs are folded up and not used for hopping. But he sure can scoot around his house and indoor yard. He gets to his food and water with no problem and pulls himself up on the haybox (created using a dish drainer and a cut out box) for a good munch of his favorite mix of timothy and oat hay. He is active, playful and loves his mom.



Ginger’s spine curls like an “s” just beyond the neck instead of being flat. It also rotates to one side making it difficult to jump or hop very quickly. She manages by moving a bit slower and sitting on comfortable piles of hay, warm blankets or towels. She is constantly grooming Rocky and the two of them sit together quite happily throughout the day and night. Ginger has a warm and sweet personality and is happy for a pet and content being picked up.

*(Continues next page)*

## ***Max Factor—Mother Nature's Twist***

***By Gail Petersen, Safe Haven Officer & Foster Parent*** (continued from previous page)

### **The Future**

Ginger will be spayed to keep her healthy and stop any possible future breeding. She now has a large indoor area that allows her flat space to move more and strengthen her back muscles.

Rocky is slowly being cleaned of fur matts and receives butt baths as needed since he drags his back legs. He may need pain medication at some point. For now, he seems quite comfortable.

It is unlikely Rocky and Ginger will be adopted due to their physical issues. They will be included with the other safe and loved sanctuary rabbits at Safe Haven.

**To sponsor Rocky and Ginger, check out the Safe Haven's [Sanctuary page](#).**





## ***Educational Corner***

*by Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator*



Just like us bunnies can get bored and tired of the same ‘ole things, the same ‘ole routine, and the same ‘ole environment. And just like us a change of pace can do a world of good for their mental and physical health. Providing gentle and enriching stimulation should be part of your bunny’s care just like providing food and water is.



Bunnies can get bored if they are not provided enough space, do not receive enough attention, or do not have enough interest within their environment.



Excessively chewing or rattling pen bars, destroying items in their pen that they shouldn’t, displaying aggression or depression, over grooming themselves or another, and even overeating can be indications you have a bored bunny.

Bunnies are curious and intelligent little balls of fur that love to explore and seek out new stimuli. It doesn’t take much to create something new for your bunny to engage with. It could be a new toy, a different pen set up, or time visiting another bunny proofed room. Bunnies love to toss, nudge, and push around items. They find it thrilling to crawl thru or behind an area. New smells are intriguing. They enjoy chewing and digging although we humans want to quell that behavior it’s natural for a bunny to want to do and best to provide something for them to do so with so they don’t seek out what they shouldn’t.

When something new is introduced, bunnies are often cautious in their approach. Their ears will bend forward, their bodies stretch, they get low to the ground, and it’s one step at a time assessing safety. To reassure your bunny get down on the ground with them, at their level, and explore with them.



Enriching items don’t have to cost a lot either. An empty toilet paper roll stuffed with hay, some cardboard boxes with entry and exit ways cut out and joined together with connecting tunnels made with cardboard concrete forms (bought from Home Depot or Lowes), a box turned on its’ side with some old towels placed within for digging and tunneling, or a paper bag with crumpled up packing paper are easy to make and costs pennies if that. Set out a few plastic cups with a treat hidden underneath one of them for your bunny to find or cut out holes in an empty oatmeal container and place a few small treats in it for your bunny to roll around to get her reward. Even sitting with your bunny feeding strand by strand of hay is fun for them.



As with all toys inspect and monitor them frequently for your bunny’s safety. If you are not the creative type toys can be purchased on various bunny approved store front sites.

Just like us every bunny is unique. Some will like to explore, others will enjoy that new toy, and some don’t mind hanging out taking it all in but always offer up new and enriching sources for your bunny because you never know what will pique their interest and when.



**Herman - Adopted Oct. 3, 2020— Story contributed by Nicholas Bush**

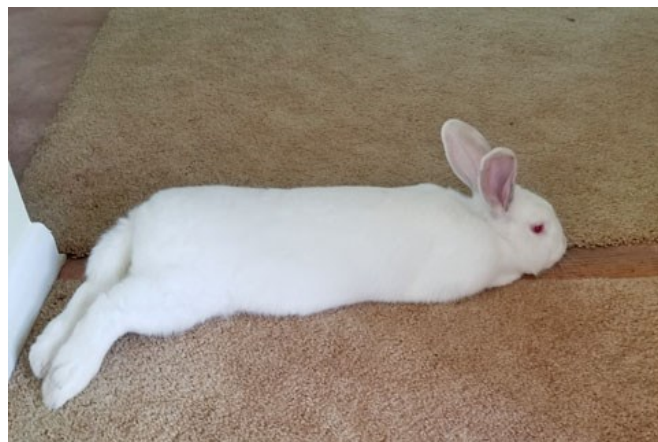
The furriest new member of our family, Herman the rabbit, has been with us for about 7 months. These last 7 months have been full of many joys and a few surprises as we have gotten to know Herman and he us.

One of the greatest things is how much he has captured our hearts. Herman is our first rabbit and even though we did a lot of research prior to adopting him, we were not prepared for how much he would bounce his way into our affections. We always get excited to let him out of his pen in the morning and when we get back from being out. He is always waiting at the door for us and jumps out before it is fully opened.

Herman is generally very well behaved, using his litterbox, loving getting pets, not biting etc. but he can be mischievous. Bunny proofing his area was our first priority and we kept a close eye on him to see what kind of trouble he would get in to. After a few months, we thought we had him figured out and everything accounted for but one day he decided to start chewing the carpet. This was a bit frustrating since he hadn't really touched the carpet for several months but we

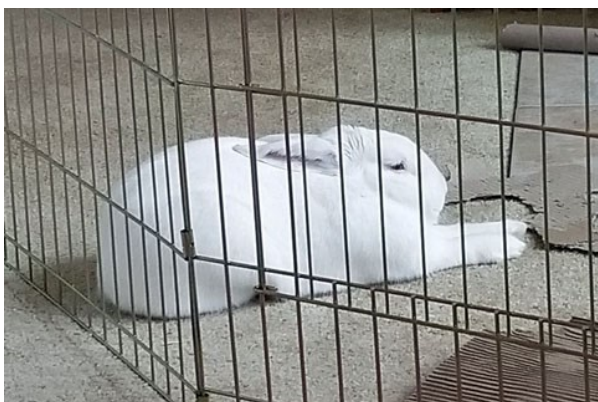
had to realize he is a rabbit and rabbits like to chew. We quickly forgave him and provided even more cardboard for him, which he really loves ripping up into tiny shreds.

Despite his urges to chew things, Herman has many redeeming qualities. As mentioned, he loves getting petted. Sometimes he will snuggle down next to us on the floor and roll over on his side. Once you start petting him at this point he will push his head under your hand if you dare to stop. He also likes exploring but is very timid. He has access to a tile hallway from his main area and he often makes the ef-



fort to embark on a voyage down the hallway but will scurry back at the smallest sound.

If you are thinking about a pet rabbit then you are in for a great experience and many surprises. They bring a lot of joy and a new dynamic to the family they join. Our experience with Herman has been very exciting and fun. He is a great little guy and despite some frustrations he more than makes up for them with all his other great qualities.



## Ruby Roux (formerly Addison) - Adopted Sept. 19, 2020- Story contributed by Nina Reams

The story of how our family adopted Ruby Roux (Addison) was a journey that we did not expect! Last year we tragically lost one of our rabbits, Biscuit from complications from GI stasis. Her companion rabbit, Noodle was left alone and missing his snuggle bunny. We were heartbroken and lost on how to move forward. I posted online to the "New Jersey Bunny Parents" group asking for some advice and came across Astrid who was fostering "Addison" at the time. We immediately fell in love with her pictures and how much she looked similar to our Noodle! We knew that it was meant to be and that we had to meet her! I was confident that I could handle bonding them since I have done so twice before successfully, so we did everything we needed to do to get ready for them to meet for a "speed date."



When "Addison" met Noodle it overall went well without any issues. We had their pens set up right next to each other to start the bonding process and were patient to give "Addison" now named Ruby Roux to get comfortable. After a week we decided to try out another "bonding" session and continued to do so every few days and kept it brief. For the most part, they ignored each other which generally is a good sign. As time progressed they started to edge closer to each other but had to be quickly separated after ending up circling each other and ripping out some fur. I even got bit a few times from breaking them up! However, after about another month we noticed improvements and did longer bonding sessions and would add some treats for them to have. Overall things were going well until one night we were doing a bonding session and there was a fight that broke out after Ruby got spooked from Noodle coming behind her. I usually can separate them pretty easily, but they circled each other so quickly and tightly it was difficult to get them apart. I threw a blanket over Noodle and was able to separate them. We were devastated and felt horrible that we couldn't break them up fast enough. Ruby unfortunately even had her eyelid cut and she needed an emergency vet trip and was prescribed antibiotics eye drops. Luckily she did not need stitches and healed very well.



We felt defeated and didn't know how to move forward. We could see that Noodle and Ruby showed interest in each other through their pens, and we knew there was still hope. I must preface to say that it never crossed our mind to give up Ruby. She was family and we would make this work no matter what! We started from scratch and gave a full month for Ruby to heal and for them to work through this incident. We started slow and made progress every day. I noticed they did their best sharing treats so it was a perfect opportunity for them to bond. Then one day it just clicked and Ruby allowed Noodle to groom her and then shortly after she would groom him. Knowing them today you would never know it took months for them to fully bond. They are literally inseparable and cuddle all day and love sharing food together! Ruby is such a sweet girl who loves treats, cuddling, playing with her toys and her favorite place to hide is inside paper bags!





**Ruby Roux (formerly Addison) - Adopted Sept. 19, 2020 -**  
**Story contributed by Nina Reams (continued from previous page)**

It is important to know that bonding is not an easy process and every bunny is different! Just because I have bonded bunnies before with limited issues doesn't mean this one would be an easy one as I learned. It is important to be patient and calm throughout the process.

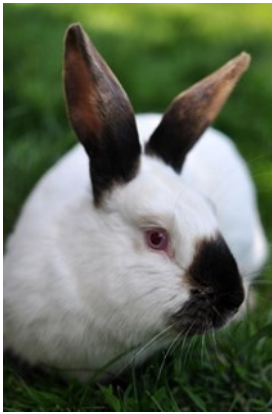


I want to thank Safe Haven rescue for matching us with the perfect fit who makes our family complete!



## Did You Know?

By Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator



*Did You Know* the California Rabbit breed carries a special gene referred to as gene C also known as the ‘Himalayan’ gene? This gene gives the breed it’s distinguishing feature of blackened fur on its’ ears, nose, feet, and tail on what would otherwise be an albino rabbit (all white fur and pink eyes).

Californians are a cross between Himalayan (similar look but adults only reach a maximum weight of no more than 5 pounds and the dark coloring can be black, blue, chocolate, or lilac), Standard Chinchilla, and New Zealand breeds. Officially recognized in 1939 the breed was created in California in the 1920s and treated as livestock. Adults weigh between 8 to 11 pounds.

What’s unique about the C gene is that it is temperature sensitive. The gene makes melanin as a response to cooler temperatures pigmenting the rabbit’s fur on their ears, nose, feet, and tail black. Those parts of the body’s fur darken because those parts hold less heat and to help keep the extremities warm in cooler temperatures the dark fur absorbs more light thus more warmth to those areas of the body. The pigmentation is apparent when the environmental temperature is below 78 degrees (f). When the temperature rises above 86 degrees (f) the pigmentation becomes inactive and the dark coloring fades.

**Our own case study:** We became interested in the above reasoning when one of our rescues showed this unique quality of changing colors. Interestingly, this rabbit is always indoors, of course, and not subjected to a wide range of temperatures, but her ears definitely change colors! Check out the pictures of “Lily” with white ears; then black ears, then back to white ears, and again to black. That was a new one for me!



May 2020,  
in foster  
care, after  
weaning  
babies.  
From white  
to gray, back  
to white just  
before adop-  
tion.



Adopted, July 2020  
ears white;

Lily today on left with  
new friend and black  
ears!





## *Homemade Bunny Biscuits*

*By Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator*

Several people have asked where we purchased the “Begging Bunny Biscuits” sold at our 2019 Bunanza event as they were a favorite with their buns, but could not be found on-line. Our own Linda Torlay actually had made them all herself in her kitchen and shipped them up to us from Florida! Since they were such a hit, I asked Linda for the recipe she used and she graciously provided the original recipe she used and her tips for adjustments.

Note from Linda: “The original recipe is based on one I found in House Rabbit Society (below & [link](#)). I did not use the honey called for and varied the wet ingredients. It was hard to say exactly how much wet ingredients I used because I added what felt right to get enough of a wet consistency to hold the mix together but not so much that it was saturated or overloaded with sugar.

As long as you stick with equal amounts of pellets and oats you just add enough moist ingredients to hold it together and have fun varying those ingredients. For someone who doesn't have a food processor to break down the veggies/fruits unsweetened baby food would work”.

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### *Brenda's Homemade Bunny Biscuits Jul 10, 2011 – Originally posted on rabbit.org*

This recipe came to us from our friends “North of the Border”. Brenda Plaxton, the kitchen whiz who invented it, lives on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia, Canada. Brenda originally created these treats for her own buns, Finnegan, Fiona, and Satchmo (her border collie, Brodie, rather likes the biscuits, too!). Brenda shared her own recipe with another Salt Spring Island rabbit lover, Libby Hughes-Klokeid, who then sent it to us. Remember, these are treats, so give them sparingly.

- 1 small carrot, pureed
- 1/2 banana, mashed until really creamy
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1/4 cup rabbit pellets, ground finely in a coffee grinder
- 1/4 cup whole wheat flour

Mix pureed carrot, banana and honey in a medium bowl. Add pellet powder and whole wheat flour. Mix until blended. Knead in your hands for 1-2 minutes. Roll out the “dough” in 1/8- to 1/4-inch thick layers between sheets of plastic wrap. Cut into small cookies (about 3/4 inch across). Place cut shapes onto a parchment paper covered cookie sheet.

Bake at 325 degrees for about 30 minutes (check to make sure they are not browning too much). Turn off the heat and let the cookies sit in the warm oven for an hour or so.

Brenda adds: Next time, I am going to try finely ground rolled oats in place of the flour. I am sure that lots of other changes could be made, and these would still work. For example you could replace the carrot with apple or pear.

***Kirsten Macintyre***

*Have fun baking!*

## *A Tribute to Hope—Forever in our Hearts*

*By Karen Augustynowicz*

Just as the pandemic was beginning, you will remember our bringing in a bunny I named 'Hope' on January 4th, 2020. Hope came to us with a huge mammary tumor and we did everything possible to help her through what we knew would be too short a time.

You will find Hope's full story [here](#). Despite all she had been through, Hope was one of the sweetest, most gentle bunnies I ever had the privilege to have known. I am comforted by the fact that I got to see her happy and comfortable. I will always mostly remember her gorgeous big brown eyes that were always seeming to beg for "just one more treat". Of course, she always did get extras.



Sadly, on February 16th, 2021, Hope joined the Angels to make her way across Rainbow Bridge. Her brave battle with cancer had come to an end. She touched the hearts of everyone she met and of those who heard her story.

Rest in peace, sweet angel. You are greatly missed.

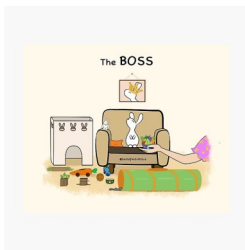


## *Need a Spring Pick-Me-Up?*

Visit our new found friends at:



You will find tons of items - All with Bunny designs (of course) and all Adorable!



## *Or.....Check out our On-line Store!*



Many of the items are handmade or created just to help the bunnies of Safe Haven. Just in time to help you find that unique present or buy a special gift for yourself.

*All proceeds go directly toward caring for our foster & sanctuary bunnies!*

*[Go to Store!](#)*