



Safe Haven Rabbit Rescue, Inc.

Safe Haven Scoop

By Karen Augustynowicz, President

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Foster Homes Needed!

Do you have room for just one more bunny? Foster home care is always needed as our "Adoptables" wait for their forever home.

Please contact us via our [Volunteer form](#) if you are interested in fostering. All needed supplies are provided.

Fall Activities

If you consider September the start of fall, Safe Haven started fall with 6 rescues—all on the same day! Mid-August we learned about a family who found themselves with two litters, two parents and another bunny of their own. When Kathleen C. went to scope out the situation, she found Momma and 7 babies all in a very small cage. Daddy (now Connor) had been removed from the group and we took him in on that day, August 18th. Since the owners refused to take extra cages offered to them, we needed to bring all the females in to avoid the inevitable multiple litters that would come along. So we welcomed, Megan, Missy, Ashley, Carly, Faye, and also Heidi from another desperate situation all on Sept. 6th! If you are looking for a youngster, any of these bunnies would make a wonderful addition to your family! Note: Missy was just adopted, but all others are still available. See pictures on [Page 8](#).



About that same time, I received an email from a family in Flemington who offered to foster a bunny. Perfect timing! Their teenage daughter had expressed interest and since the whole family would be involved, we welcomed Ms. Madeleine Eichorn, her Mom Catherine Eubank and the whole family as our newest foster family on Oct. 3rd! Missy became their first foster bunny and within just 3 weeks was adopted and in her new home! So, Ashley is now their new foster bunny. I also want to thank Astrid Hesse who is fostering Connor and Kathleen Carini who is fostering Faye and Carly. *Thank you all!*

As always, I hope you will find this newsletter both educational and a fun read. This edition does not include adoption update stories, mainly because I did not ask, but I will remember to do that for the Spring newsletter! We always welcome update stories and/or pictures from you! Or, if you have questions you would like to see answered in an up-coming newsletter, just [email](#) them to us!

Let's hope for an easy winter weather-wise and many, many binkies from our furry friends! Enjoy, *Karen A.*



And [Twitter](#)



Recent Event Photos. . .

Bun-nanza! Held October 18, 2015



Our visitors found lots of educational hand-outs, posters and volunteers to answer their questions. Topics included feeding and nutritional needs, health concerns, bunny-proofing tips, rabbits and children, proper indoor habitats, safe toys and general facts owners need to know. Fourteen rabbits came for nail trims and a few others just to visit! **Many more photos on our [website](#).**

Bun-nanza 2015—Photo Contest

With over 67 entries, our visitors had a lot of fun trying to decide who should WIN! They were all so CUTE! So many to select from! But, after all the votes were tallied our WINNERS were:

Attitude: 1st Place – Woolie Bear (Jacqui Crown, Easton, PA); 2nd Place - Otto (Eva Toye, Pittstown, NJ)

Chow Time!: 1st Place – Hunnybunny (Sarah Hulick); 2nd Place – Sunshine (Susan, Basking Ridge, NJ)

Favorite Activity: 1st Place – Owen (Bob & Judy Congilio, Blairstown, NJ); 2nd Place – Baxter (Wendy Milligan, Bridgewater, NJ)



Recent Event Photos. . .

6th Annual Bike for the Buns! Held June 20th, 2015

Each year, on the Saturday before Father's Day, we've been holding our *Bike for the Buns!* Event at Bull's Island Recreation Area near Stockton, NJ. And, once again, this year we were blessed with a great weather! It rained all around us that day, but not at the park! This year we changed our routes due to repairs on the trail and everyone seemed to **love** the new routes! After taking their 10 or 20 mile ride along the river, our participants, volunteers, and members of the Delaware Valley Bike patrol enjoyed a robust picnic of hotdogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, salads, chips, watermelon and more! All done as a fundraiser for the Bunnies!

Here are just a few photos from the day. [Click here](#) to visit the Bike for the Buns website for more!



Be sure to reserve June 18th, 2016 for our next Bike for the Buns!

We'd love to see you there!





Ask the Vet . . .

Question: *I'm told head tilt is not a disease itself but a symptom of other medical problems. What medical problems might cause head tilt and how do you begin to look for the cause of it?*

Deborah Adelsohn, DVM at Community Animal Hospital in Morris Plains, NJ replied:

Head tilt in rabbits is a scary, complex, and often frustrating condition. Head tilt can be brought on by a number of conditions and determining the true cause can often be difficult.

What do we mean by head tilt? Head tilt, sometimes also referred to as “wry neck” or torticollis, is characterized by a tilting or twisting of the head to one side, sometimes almost upside down. It is a symptom of a problem with the balance and coordination part of the brain or ear, not a specific disease itself. Head tilts can be accompanied by nystagmus, a rapid eye movement back and forth. Dizziness can occur, triggering rolling or loss of balance. Sometimes the ability to blink on the affected side is lost. The onset of symptoms is often sudden and can result in trouble eating and drinking.

Possible causes of head tilt include middle/inner ear infection, parasitic infections, trauma, stroke or neoplasia (cancer).

Middle/inner ear infections are extremely common in rabbits, especially lop eared bunnies. When an infection affects the deeper part of the ear, the vestibular apparatus which controls balance can be damaged, causing head tilt signs. Ruptured tympanic membrane (ear drum), pus, or swelling at the base of the ear canal may raise suspicion of an ear infection, however sometimes a deep ear infection can be present without any external signs. Radiographs (x-rays) of the skull can help visualize the bullae, or middle ear. CT scans provide even more definitive imaging and diagno-

sis, but are still costly.

If an inner/middle ear infection is suspected, a culture of pus may be taken to help select the best antibiotic. Often a broad spectrum antibiotic or combination of antibiotics will be used for prolonged periods. Topical antibiotics (without steroids) may also be helpful. Rabbit pus can be thick, and infections can be difficult to clear, necessitating treatment for an extended time. Surgery to open the bullae (boney part of the middle ear) may help treat the infection. Even once the infection is controlled, sometimes the head tilt may remain.

Parasitic infections, in particular a complicated organism called *Encephalitozoon cuniculi*, may be a cause of head tilt. *E. cuniculi* is a single-celled, microsporidian parasite that can attack a rabbit's nervous system (brain), eyes (cataracts) or kidneys. *E. cuniculi* spores are spread through rabbit urine and via the placenta during pregnancy. Spores can survive in the environment for long periods of time. A large percentage of rabbits have been exposed to this disease yet only a small number of rabbits get head tilts. Diagnosing *E. cuniculi* is not straight forward. A definitive diagnosis of *E. cuniculi* as the cause of a head tilt can only be made via necropsy (autopsy). A blood test can test for *E. cuniculi* antibody titer. However, a high titer only indicates exposure to the organism. It does not prove that the organism is the cause of the head tilt. Conversely, a negative titer indicates either the rabbit has not been exposed or that it has been exposed but there is no immune response. A PCR test has been developed to help determine if a rabbit is shedding the organism in its urine. However, rabbits can shed the parasite intermittently and the test has not been fully validated. Elevated proteins in the rabbit's blood may help in diagnosis. CT scans have also been used to help detect lesions. Overall, it is hard to prove that a head tilt is being caused by an *E. cuniculi* infection.

Frequently, the decision to treat for *E. cuniculi* is based on multiple factors (no sign of ear infection, lack of response to other treatments, a positive or rising titer) and suspicion of infection. Fenbendazole is



Ask the Vet . . . continued

the only treatment that has been shown effective via research in rabbits (Suter, et al, 2001). Side effects can include decreased appetite and bone marrow suppression. Since the blood titer usually remains elevated, there is no way to test and see if the infection has cleared. As with an ear infection, the head tilt may persist even with treatment.

Baylisascaris procyonis is the common raccoon roundworm. This parasite causes trouble when introduced into other species. Rabbits may become infected by grazing contaminated areas or living on contaminated bedding. Once in their system, the parasite can migrate thorough the body and settle in the brain, triggering head tilt or more severe neurologic signs. Treatment can be difficult, and signs may progress and be fatal. Prevention by avoiding access to contaminated bedding/food is best.

Trauma and Stroke are less common causes of head tilt. Trauma may be caused by a fall or accident and usually is suspected based on history and radiographs. Stroke is harder to diagnose and may be based on physical exam and history. In both cases, anti-inflammatories such as meloxicam may be helpful.

Cancer (neoplasia) may be a primary or metastatic (spread) cause of head tilt and other neurologic signs. Radiographs may help identify tumors in other parts of the body. A CT or MRI may be needed to identify lesions in the brain. Treatment is supportive and prognosis is poor.

No matter what the underlying cause, there are supportive treatments that can be helpful for bunnies with head tilt, and we encourage families to give bunnies with head tilt some time to adapt after visiting the vet. Syringe feeding a product such as Oxbow Critical Care can help provide nutrition and hydration. Meclizine, an anti-vertigo medicine, may help some bunnies' dizziness. Motility drugs such as metoclopramide or cisapride may help prevent secondary gi stasis. Ophthalmic

lubricating ointment may help protect the "down eye." Good nursing care with towels and padding can help keep the rabbit comfortable, and assistance with hygiene and cecotrophs may be needed. With patience and support, many rabbits may live happy lives even with head tilts.

A final note on steroids (prednisone, dexamethasone): Some people have suggested treating brain lesions including *E. cuniculi* with steroids to reduce the inflammation. Rabbits are extremely sensitive to the negative effects of steroids, especially immunosuppression. Steroids may worsen any infection in a rabbit's body. The decision to use steroids should be made carefully and with the complete understanding of the possible risks and benefits.

References:

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Krempels, Dana. "Head tilt (torticollis) in rabbits: Don't give up." www.bio.miami.edu/hare/tilt.html 2014.

Suter, C. et al. "Prevention and treatment of *Encephalitozoon cuniculi* in rabbits with fenbendazole." *Veterinary Record* 148, 478-480, 2001.

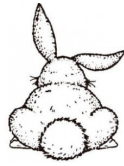
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Educational Corner

by Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator

Litter and Litter Boxes



Using the correct litter and litter box for your bunny is very important. Not only does your bunny use her/his litter box for doing their "business", it is usually filled with hay so she spends time there eating, and it's not surprising to find some bunnies liking to nap there too.

Let's start by talking about the litter box. There are various shapes (rectangular, square, and triangular), sizes, and styles. The best litter boxes to use are the same litter boxes that are used for cats because they are large enough, deep enough, and provide ample room. I have found the rectangular shape to be the best for my bunnies. Triangular boxes look nice but even the large ones do not provide enough room and square boxes are not common. In that rabbits like to "back up" when doing their business, I have found using a litter box with a high back side is ideal; not only to keep droppings and urine in the box, but also to help keep litter in the box when the rabbit kicks out. This type of box looks like an old fashioned sleigh, the front is low allowing the rabbit to hop in comfortably and the sides slope upwards into a high back. I have also seen boxes that have a low front entry with both the sides and back being high and of equal height.

Litter boxes are also made with covers but I do not recommend using the cover because you want to be observant of your bunnies litter box habits, not conceal them, and also because we place hay in the box we want to ensure that the hay has plenty of circulating air around it so it breathes. If you have a pair of bonded bunnies you may want to have more than one litter box in their space or a litter box large enough to accommodate both bunnies at the same time. Bunnies that are older or bunnies with health issues, such as arthritis, do not have the agility of younger buns and need much lower entries as hopping into a box is difficult for them. If needed, cut the front entry down more lowering the entry point and sand the rough edges down so they are smooth. Plastic storage bins can be designed and cut if you are not able to find an appropriate litter box, again just make sure to sand the cut sections smooth thus eliminating sharp edges. Electric hot knives also work well to cut thru plastic.

Plastic storage bins work great when you need an extra large litter box or a litter box with extra high sides. A general good rule to follow is that it is better to have a litter box that is too big than one that is too small. Grates can be placed on top of litter if you have a bunny that likes to dig and throw her litter out of the box. A grate will still allow urine to seep down into the litter but will interfere when your bunny decides to dig. Baking cooling racks work well and come in many different sizes. They are heavy enough and spaced apart well but not so much that they become a hazard that can catch your bunny's feet.

Now let's talk about types of litter. I will break it down into SAFE and UNSAFE litters. Bunny litter needs to be specific and even though you can use a cat's litter box for your bunny many types of cat litter are "clumping" and **clumping cat litter must not be used.**

The recommended and SAFE litter choices for bunnies are paper based litters that are either mulched or formed into pellets. Paper based products should be unscented and free of added dyes. Pine wood bedding pellets are also a good choice. Used as bedding for horses they are kiln dried to remove toxic properties such as oils and tars. Aspen bark chips can also be used however the first two mentioned are the most appropriate for rabbits. In that Aspen bark chips can be used they are better suited for reptiles and much smaller mammals.



Educational Corner

by Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator
(Continued)

If the litter you are using or want to use is not one of the SAFE litter choices noted above then it's best to conclude that it is an UNSAFE choice. Known litters to avoid are all litters used for cats with clumping litters being the most dangerous. Clay, sand, corn cob, wheat, any type of hull based litter, wood shavings (especially pine and cedar), pine needles, peat moss, and anything scented or containing deodorant crystals are all dangerous and hazardous to your bunny's health either because if it is accidentally ingested the probability of it causing a gut blockage is great, it getting into the sinus cavity and causing blockages or irritation, or it emitting gases (phenols) that are known to cause lung and liver damage.

Litterboxes do not smell if they are kept clean and bunnies like to use clean litter boxes. Removing soiled litter, solid droppings, and wet hay needs to be done at least once a day or more, most people simply opt to change out a bunny's litter box entirely about every 24 hours. When the bottom of the litter box begins to show "build up" from dried urine the litter box should be emptied completely and white vinegar can be poured in the box and left to soak to loosen and clean the area. About an inch will do, enough to cover the soiled area, and once the material is loosened clean as you normally would clean anything else then rinse and dry well.

We will talk about training your bunny to use her/his litter box and the difference between marking, accidents, and recognizing health problems in the next newsletter but for now if she is having trouble learning, marking, or has an accident **never EVER punish your bunny**.

This article is written to provide basic information and supported from sources considered reliable. Always consult with a Veterinarian who has knowledge and experience with rabbits regarding your rabbit's health and needs. Questions about litter boxes and litter can always be directed to a Safe Haven volunteer.

November is
ADOPT A SENIOR PET MONTH!

When a person or family considers adopting a pet the animals that have reached their senior years are often overlooked, this too is true for bunnies.

Seniors may not be as spunky, may have a health concern or require special care, and may not be your companion for as long but their need to be loved and cared for is no different than that of a youngster. Their souls are wise, they long for companionship, they love, and they too want to belong and be part of a family. So please, please, please open your heart and give a senior bunny that chance when adopting.

Let's make November
ADOPT A SENIOR BUNNY
month!

Our September 6th Rescues.....

Daddy “Connor”



We
Are
Available
For
Adoption!

Momma “Megan”



“Ashley”



✦
We
Promise
To
Be
Good!

“Carly & Faye”



“Heidi” - no relation



“Missy” - Adopted!



Did You Know?

By Linda Torlay, Safe Haven Educator

Did You Know there is a famous motif depicting Three Hares (Rabbits) that appears throughout history. Its true origin can only be speculated but believed to have originated between the 6th-7th centuries in China during the Sui dynasty and believed to be a symbol associated with Buddhism. The earliest found images were found painted on textiles in cave temples dating back to this period in time.



The motif is of three hares or rabbits positioned in a rotating circle which looks like they are chasing one another. Each rabbit shares an ear with the next rabbit but there are only three ears creating an optical illusion. The connecting three ears create a triangle in the center of the image.

Since its origination the motif has been used many times, in many ways, amongst different cultures. It is noted on ancient Mongolian coins, coats of arms, ancient ceramics and clothes, ancient illuminated manuscripts, jewelry, art, in medieval European churches (France, Germany, England) as architectural ornamental carvings, in stained glass windows, shrines and ossuaries of religious significance, and even as a puzzle and optical illusion dating back to the 1500's.

The Three Hares (Rabbits) motif is clearly important to all the cultures that have used it as it is often placed or used in prominent ways. And even though the motif's origin and meaning are obscure from one culture to the next it is still fascinating and beautiful.

Primary resource:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_hares



As we move into this holiday season, I would like to take a moment to express my *Thanks* to everyone who has supported Safe Haven this year. Whether that be through volunteering, fostering, adopting, participating in our events, sponsoring, or through your donations. For it is only with your support that Safe Haven can help as many bunnies as we do.

Loving a rabbit is often a challenging task. Their needs are many (at least *they* think so). They are demanding of our time and attention—why shouldn't they be? Time rules their world. "*It is 6 pm—where is my Salad!*" " But, those of us who love them would not have it any other way.

When times get tough, either personally or in the world, nothing can make one relax and feel better than watching your bunny happily munching through her hay or begging for a little treat. We should all take their lead to enjoy the simple things, relax and binky whenever you feel like it.

Have a Blessed Holiday Season!

With sincere thanks, Karen Augustynowicz