

# THE *Rabbit Advocate*

WINTER 2003



## **A Honey for your Bunny:**

*A Word from Our President, Mary Huey*

When is two better than one? With rabbits! Life becomes a whole lot more interesting for two rabbits when a neutered male and spayed female are housed together. No more lonely days! There is another rabbit with whom to run and play, groom, follow, cuddle, and hang out with. A shy rabbit may gain confidence from an outgoing rabbit. An inactive rabbit will have a reason to exercise now that he has a friend. A grumpy rabbit may mellow out and become more friendly. Overall contentment may add to the life span of both rabbits.

The rabbits aren't the only ones to benefit from the pairing. You as the caretaker also will be rewarded. Little Bun Bun is no longer alone when

you leave for work or play. Less guilt! Pleasure is doubled as you watch play and grooming behaviors between the bonded pair. More laughter and fun! Your work load remains almost the same whether you have one or two rabbits. A win-win situation!

Who would have guessed that there is so much to be gained by bringing home a second rabbit? Anyone who has ever successfully bonded their rabbit to another! Please read our featured articles in this issue to learn the best way to successfully bring another rabbit into your lives.

When you're ready to arrange a date for your rabbit, the Rabbit Advocates would be more than happy to help.

Then, along with your rabbit, enjoy the new relationship!

### **Rabbit Advocates Board of Directors**

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## **CELEBRATE RABBIT AWARENESS DAYS, APRIL 12 - 13**

The Rabbit Advocates' big educational and adoption event, our fifth annual Rabbit Awareness Days, will be held on April 12 and 13. This year we are increasing our public exposure by taking the event to the Portland Expo Center where we'll be participating in the Pet and Companion Fair.

Our program promises to be an exciting one. The show stealers, as always, will be those wonderful adoptable rabbits. If you're ready for a bunny to steal your heart, or if you're thinking about a companion for a rabbit you already love, this is the place to be.

We'll have lots of educational material available and knowledgeable volunteers on hand to answer your rabbit care questions. You're welcome to bring your rabbit (in a carrier, please!) for a hands-on lesson in nail clipping. Learn some simple techniques to check your rabbit's health. Get the latest tips on making your home rabbit-friendly.

Need a bag of hay or an exercise pen for your rabbit? Looking for a gift for a rabbit lover? You'll find this, and more, for sale at our booth.



*Esther resides in the Small Animal room at the Oregon Humane Society. Rabbit Advocate volunteers work with local shelters to help buns like Esther find new homes.*

**Check our website,  
[www.adoptarabbit.org](http://www.adoptarabbit.org) for latest  
information on event location and  
details. Mark your calendar and come  
on down!**

**Got a rabbit  
question?**

**Call our  
HELP-LINE**

**503-617-1625**

# Bunny Love: Rabbits Know Best

by Kem Sypher

Bunny love can be a beautiful thing, but this was a romance I never believed would happen. Elvira and Fritz are now a happily bonded, if unlikely, pair and their story is worth telling because, despite our best intentions, it proves rabbits will choose their own mates.

When I brought Elvira home from the Oregon Humane Society two years ago she had been badly abused and was recovering from a near-fatal rabbit fight. Highly traumatized and trusting no one, she would growl, lunge and bite anyone who even remotely smelled like another rabbit. I had adopted Elvira as a companion for my elderly father, and despite her behavioral shortcomings, he quickly fell in love with her and lavished her with much-needed attention. She took up residence in my father's bedroom and slowly became more trustful of humans. Other rabbits, however, were a different story, and her hostility toward them convinced me she would remain a single rabbit.

Elvira was not my only rabbit. In the dinette next to my kitchen lived Daphne,



Photo: Kem Sypher

*Above: Fritz and Elvira relaxing in the living room. Below: Fritz grooming Elvira.*

who in mid-summer lost her beloved partner, Bailey. Daphne, now alone, began showing signs of depression. Her activity diminished along with her appetite and I began to worry that she, too, would become ill if I didn't find another companion for her soon.

One day in late summer, while on volunteer duty at the shelter, I met an adorable little Polish spotted dwarf that looked very much like Bailey. When I reach into the cage he began to insistently lick my hand. I decided this gentle little rabbit would be the perfect mate for Daphne and wasted no time in adopting him.

Arranged marriages are not always happy ones. After taking one sniff at little Fritz, Daphne launched an all-out attack on the poor bewildered newcomer. Quickly separating them, I was forced to rethink my not-so-carefully thought out plans. I put him in a cage next to Daphne's living space and hoped she would warm up to him. Days turned into weeks and Daphne's hatred for Fritz only intensified.

I began to put Fritz out in the living room where he could run, play and most importantly, be away from Daphne. One day while he was playing I realized I couldn't find him. My search eventually led me upstairs where, to my very great surprise, I found Fritz and Elvira nose-to-nose at the wire fencing that blocked the entrance to my father's bedroom. Fearing an imminent attack by Elvira I prepared to grab Fritz from harm's way. But to my utter amazement, no attack occurred. Instead, the two sat at the fence, sniffing and checking each other out. After several minutes, they turned from each other and went their own ways. I couldn't believe what I had just seen! The formerly aggressive Elvira had suddenly become passive and mellow. Could it be these two just might be meant for each other? The next day when I placed Fritz in the



Photo: Kem Sypher

## ***Volunteer Spotlight: Valerie Madison***

*By C. Nolan Huizenga*

“I’m an animal person, a lost farm girl living in the city.” That’s Rabbit Advocate Valerie Madison describing herself. From childhood on a cattle farm in eastern Oregon, through studying animal science in college, to sharing her home with 17 rabbits, Valerie has always loved and cared for animals. She finds rabbits perfect companions because they’re so quiet, and as a bonus her flower beds “love the pellets.”

Five years ago at a vet’s office, Valerie encountered a very large man cuddling several very tiny bunnies. She offered to take one of the babies once it was weaned. That turned out to be Cappy (short for Cappuccino), her first rabbit. When Valerie went to the Oregon Humane Society to find Cappy a partner, she met both Happy (bunny number two) and Mary Huey, who introduced her to the Rabbit Advocates. Valerie gradually became more committed to the group. Although she “always preferred animals to people,” Valerie clearly enjoys the RA camaraderie. She improves the lives of countless animals



Photo: C. Nolan Huizenga

*Rabbit Advocate and Oregon Humane Society Volunteer, Valerie Madison with an OHS rabbit.*

through fostering rabbits, fundraising for the Rabbit Advocates, writing for this newsletter and volunteering at the Oregon Humane Society, POPPA (Pet Over Population Prevention Advocates) and the Portland Zoo. She is inspired by the goal of getting all the available rabbits into good homes. Valerie has fostered many rabbits with special medical or psychological needs. She feels strongly that no rabbit should be euthanized because of some misunderstood personality quirk. “We all have one of those!” she says with a smile.

living room to play he promptly ran upstairs to visit with Elvira. Again, the two sat nose-to-nose for quite some time before finally parting. They were obviously interested in each other. After several days I decided the time had come to take the fence down. What happened next could only be described as a picture-perfect pet meet. I left them

***“Highly  
traumatized and  
trusting no one,  
she would growl,  
lunge and bite  
anyone who even  
remotely smelled  
like another  
rabbit”***

together for half an hour and when I finally separated them, they were sitting beside each other as if they had been together for months.

Over time, Elvira became the dominant rabbit, and Fritz is her little shadow, following her everywhere. The two now lay together and groom each other constantly, very much in love. Elvira has become more relaxed and no longer snaps at humans.

Daphne seems to be the rabbit that will remain single. Her appetite has returned and she is more active again. It seems she does not want a replacement for Bailey, so I make sure she gets plenty of attention from the humans in the household. By allowing my rabbits to choose their own companions, I now have a happy rabbit household.

## ***Medical Assistance Fund for Foster and Rescue Rabbits***

When a volunteer opens her home to a foster rabbit, she assumes responsibility for the rabbit’s health and well-being while working towards placing him in a

permanent loving home. Sometimes the rabbit may have a health problem that requires costly veterinary care. That’s why the Rabbit Advocates have established a medical assistance fund.

Although the program has just begun, we’ve already helped foster parents pay for procedures like spay surgery, surgical removal of polyps, and dental work for a maloccluded rabbit.

Please consider making a tax deductible donation to the Rabbit Advocates medical assistance fund. 100% of designated donations will be used to restore the health of needy rabbits.



Photo: Anita Winkler

## EVENTS

*The Rabbit Advocates meet at the Oregon Humane Society, 1067 NE Columbia Boulevard, Portland, Oregon, on the third Sunday of every month (except April & December) from 4:00 - 6:00 PM. The public is welcome! See below for meeting topics.*

**February 16**

***A rabbit in the house: bunny proofing, litter box training.***

**March 16**

***Advanced topic in rabbit health care: veterinarian Keith Sierbinski, DVM on rabbit eyes, mouth and thro***

**APRIL 12 & 13  
SPECIAL EVENT**

**9:30- 5:00**

**RABBIT AWARENESS DAYS**

***Visit our booth at the Pet & Companion Fair, Portland Expo Center. Educational displays, and adoptable rabbits. Grooming, health care demos. Let our volunteers assist you with the fine points of living with a house rabbit.***

**May 18**

***Common rabbit diseases, common meds, how to medicate, meds to avoid.***

**June 15**

***Ready for the Summer outdoor exercise setups, fly strike, heat exhaustion, other seasonal issues.***

***Check our website, [www.adoptarabbit.org](http://www.adoptarabbit.org), for schedules.***

# Keeping Bunny Healthy

## Monthly Preventative Health Check

by Valerie Madison

To keep your rabbit healthy, an annual veterinary exam is very important. But there's lots a bunny parent should do in between vet exams. A year in the life of your rabbit is equivalent to about 10 years of your life. Monitor your rabbit daily and know his habits and behavior. If you notice that your rabbit is not eating, drinking, urinating and/or defecating; if he seems listless; if you notice a distended abdomen, loss of balance, loud tooth grinding or a hunched posture, visit your rabbit vet immediately!

As preventative health care, a home check up can be performed every 4-6 weeks. A good time to do this is when you trim your rabbit's nails.

**Mouth/teeth** - the gums should be a healthy pink color; be aware of drooling, lumps on the jaw, abnormal tooth growth or oral odor.

**Nose** - note any discharge and check the inside of each foreleg for evidence of nose wiping.

**Ears** - look inside for dark debris; check for abnormal odor;

**Eyes** - be aware of any discharge or clouding of the cornea.

**Fur/skin** - feel the body all over for unusual lumps or scabs; notice any "flea dirt", dry flaky skin or hair loss.

**Feet/toes/nails** - trim nails carefully to prevent bleeding; note any sores or abscesses.

**Anal area** - wet, dirty fur and skin can attract flies—if eggs or maggots are seen, go immediately to your rabbit veterinarian.

It is also important (and easy!) to monitor the **feces and urine** when you clean the litterbox. A healthy bunny produces large moist poops—small irregular feces or diarrhea require medical attention. Cecotrophs (soft brown droppings shaped like a miniature bunch

of grapes) are normal and are usually ingested. Rabbit urine varies in color and is sometimes red. Your rabbit veterinarian can determine if this color change is due to plant pigments in the diet or blood.

Preventative health care also includes unlimited feeding of grass hay, regular grooming, proper diet (see the Fall issue of *The Rabbit Advocate*), and a safe and secure habitat and exercise area. You can help your bunny live a long and happy life by taking note of any changes in her physical condition or behavior and visiting your rabbit veterinarian at the first sign of anything unusual.

## Fun and Affordable Bunny Toys

by Lara Blanck-Weiss

A bored rabbit is a naughty rabbit. An unstimulated bunny may be destructive, overweight, or depressed. You know your bunny best; watch the way he likes to play and the ways he gets into trouble, then try to duplicate those activities in safe ways. Is he a chewer, a digger, a climber? Does he throw his food bowl? No two bunnies play the same way, so what works for one bun may bore another. Before you dig into your wallet to buy a fancy toy, look around the house. The perfect toy may be as close as your recycling bin!

- Cardboard boxes (provide at least two entry points)
- Hay-packed toilet paper rolls
- Willow branch, ring or circle
- Oatmeal box (empty)
- Empty plastic food containers (clean)
- Stuffed animal
- Slinkies
- Baby toys: hard plastic (not teething) toys like rattles and keys

- Old bunch of keys for throwing
- Dragon grass doormat
- Telephone book or newspaper secured under a table or chair to provide something to pull at
- Old magazines, cereal/tissue boxes and junk mail to tear up
- Part of an old sheet or towel
- Timothy hay cubes
- Little plastic trucks (about 5-6" high)
- Pile of (clean) unmatched socks and other 'throw away' clothing
- Pillows in a pile in a corner
- Unused Downey fabricsoft dispenser filled with pellets or hay
- Plain paper bag, on its side
- Large cardboard concrete forms from the hardware store. These tubes resemble a burrow and Bun will love to dig in, sleep in and run through them.
- Wicker basket (untreated)
- Plain, untreated, woven-straw paper-plate holders
- Lazy cat lodge or other cardboard cat condo (cardboard box with ramps and windows)
- Plastic Little Tykes gym
- Kitty condos, tubes, tunnels, and trees
- Untreated sea grass mats
- Stairs to charge up and down
- Cat toys: Batta balls and other cat toys that roll or can be tossed
- Dried out pinecones
- Jungle gym type toys
- Whisk broom (straw)
- Things to jump up on (they like high places)
- Plastic or metal cookie cutters, two tied together with white cotton twine
- Untreated wood, twigs and logs that

have been aged for at least 3 months or untreated pine wood blocks. Apple tree branches can be eaten fresh off the tree. *Avoid:* cherry, peach, apricot, plum and redwood, which are poisonous.

- Anything that is partially immobile, yet is flexible enough to move when hit, is fun.
- Hanging parrot toys (made of hard plastic), hanging baby toys (a mobile is best!), or slinkies which have been hung on the top of the cage.

## **Outdoor Toys**

Outdoor play areas should be secure on all sides, including top and bottom (rabbits can dig), and protected from sun and rain.

- Garden chairs with towels draped over them
- Wooden tunnel (wooden ramps and 'bridges' are a welcome addition)
- Large litter trays or plastic storage boxes filled with soil, sand or peat for digging
- Child's plastic bucket and spade
- Small plastic flowerpot to pick up and toss
- Football or beach ball to nudge and roll
- Large upturned plant pots to hop up on
- Potted edible plants (e.g. lavender or parsley) to nibble on
- A clay pipe to run through
- A log or tree stump to jump on or over
- Large flat stones to climb on and smaller ones for sniffing and chinning

## **Products and Services for Rabbits and Their People**

### **Create Your Own Rabbit Habitat**

**Surprise bunny with a big space he can call his own! Create a lightweight freestanding pen of any size with wire pen panels. Each panel is 30 x 30 inches (1 x 2 inch gauge wire). Panels can easily be attached together.**

**Only \$8 per panel, \$11.00 for panel with a 12 x 12 inch door.**

**Pens created from these wire panels are not recommended for outdoor use, except for supervised sessions of exercise.**

**Contact Valerie Madison: e-mail, [ovine22@yahoo.com](mailto:ovine22@yahoo.com) or call 503-617-1625 & leave a message for Valerie.**

### **Wichita Feed and Hardware**

**Visit us for your rabbit supplies: grass hay (bag or bale), pellets, water bottles, nail clippers and more! We also carry hardware, garden supplies, tools and hard to find items.**

**6089 SE Johnson Creek Blvd., Portland**

**503-775-6767**

### **Katherine Keller, FEP, RM**

**Flower Essences and Reiki for Animals and their Owners**

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**503-234-0256 or [orcas@belizemail.net](mailto:orcas@belizemail.net)**

## KUDOS

### **Business Supporter**

Anonymous: In  
Appreciation of Mary  
Huey  
Anonymous

### **Rabbit Benefactor**

Leann Bleakney  
Karen Di Milia: In  
Memory of Willy,  
Joelle & Bailey  
Lorraine Gilbert  
Mary Huey: In Memory  
of Amber  
Arlene MacMonagle: In  
Memory of Penny  
Valerie Madison

### **Rabbit Rescuer**

Chris Arends: In  
Memory of Easter,  
Emma & Lilac  
Jeana Sted: In Memory  
of USA & Consuela  
Mary Thompson: In  
Memory of Kumu  
Anita Winkler: In  
Appreciation of Raleigh  
Hills Vet Clinic

### **Rabbit Sponsors**

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of Bunster  
Jennifer Hepler  
Kathy Kromm: In  
Memory of T.J. Flopp  
Dan & Kendal McDonald  
Kem Sypher: In Memory  
of Bailey  
Patty Toccalino: In  
Memory of Alex  
Joan Wikler

### **Rabbit Friends**

Carole & Steve Arends:  
In Memory of  
Cinnamon  
Allyn Bowers  
Susan Boyd  
Charlene DeLuca  
Joel & Theresa Ferguson  
Kathy Fitzgerald: In  
Appreciation of Barbara  
Ray  
Alison Heckman: In  
Memory of Holly,  
Appreciation of Mopsy  
Debra Hentz  
Lynne Kuchenreuther  
Karin Maczko: In  
Appreciation of Mary  
Huey  
Laurence Malony  
Susan Mentley  
Wendy & Jeff Nicholson:  
In Memory of Tuscany  
& Olive  
Robert Nisbet  
Emily Stuparyk

# Continuing Education Rabbit Bonding Q & A

by Shelley Cooper Hanel,  
Education Committee

## **How do I choose the right partner for my rabbit? Should we pick a male or female?**

First, make sure both rabbits are altered and fully recovered from their surgeries. Male and female bonds are usually the easiest. Bonding with 2 females sometimes can work; 2 males usually do not. Rabbits prefer to choose their own partners, so try not to impose your preferences on your rabbit.

## **How do you introduce rabbits?**

Place the rabbits in separate cages in sight of each other. Let them get used to the presence of another rabbit for several days before actually allowing them to interact. Introduce them in a small neutral area (where neither rabbit has been before) where you can easily reach them and separate them if necessary. A bathtub is a good suggestion – never a cage!

Always use a great deal of caution—have a towel handy to separate them if they fight.

Some techniques used to help the bonding process:

- put both bunnies in a box and take them for a 15-30 minute car ride
- use T-Touch or flower essences to calm them
- place them side by side, petting them and giving treats
- apply a tiny amount of peanut butter or jam on their noses to initiate grooming



## **What kinds of behaviors are normal when rabbits meet?**

Knowing basic bunny language is very helpful. Recognizing positive behavior and encouraging it will only help the bonding process. This includes all relaxed stances – resting, stretching, flopping, grooming and eating/drinking. Mounting is also positive as long as the one being mounted is not squealing or attacking the other. Be careful that the mounter does not mount the head of the other bunny – a serious injury can occur.

Be aware of signs of aggression: tail up, ears back, growling, boxing, circling, chasing and biting. If aggression does occur, stop them and place them side by side. Talk to them gently and pet them—and remember to breathe! Stay calm because these little creatures can always sense your nervousness. When you separate them from one another make sure you put them where they can still see each other, preferably next to one another in different pens. By preventing a major fight, you will help the bonding process.

## **How much time will it take for the rabbits to bond? How do I know if it is safe to house them together?**

The average length of time is a few weeks, but some will bond in an afternoon while some take many months.

Continue to put them together on a daily basis. When you feel it is safe, give them more space and extend their time together, but continue to supervise them closely. It is safe to house your rabbits together when they no longer show signs of aggression. Be patient and persistent—your bunnies will thank you!

*www.rabbit.org & www.adoptarabbit.org are websites with a lot of helpful information.*

## WISH LIST

### Donations for Garage Sale

(please call and describe them: we cannot take large upholstered furniture or mattresses)  
Timothy & alfalfa pellets  
Plastic cereal containers for pellets  
Sheet linoleum or vinyl flooring scraps (large, clean)  
Pen panels or puppy exercise pens  
Food & water bowls (heavy ceramic)  
Digital thermometer  
Papaya tablets  
Timothy hay  
Litter pans (clean)  
Animal heating pads  
Grooming equip.(new)  
Toys  
Gift cards for pet supply stores (for foster parents who need supplies)  
Pet carriers (good condition)  
Live traps (good condition)  
Plastic syringes

### OFFICE SUPPLIES

Postage stamps  
Business card stock  
Computer labels  
Big mailing envelopes 9 x 12 or larger  
Business size white envelopes  
Printer paper  
Poster board  
Eraser board with easel  
Erasable markers  
Overhead projector  
Folding tables, chairs  
Digital camera  
Plastic holders for displaying business cards, handouts

### Office Equipment

either new or fairly new in good working order:  
Computer (1998 or newer)  
Copier, scanner, printer  
Current copies of software such as MS Office, Publisher (Excel, Access); Adobe Photoshop, Acrobat, PageMaker, Accounting software

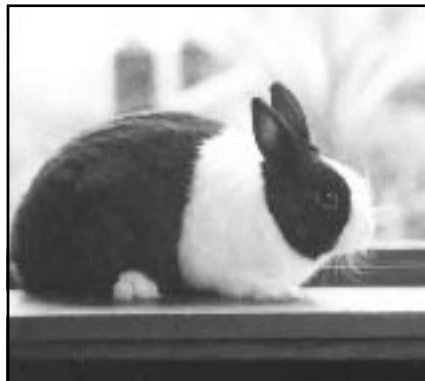
# Adopt a Fabulous Foster Rabbit



**Honey and Bunny (left)** are a couple of lovely, healthy, bonded Hotot bunz. Honey is the girl and has the darker “mascara” and Bunny is the boy. Adorable, active, and playful - endless entertainment! They’re fine with nice cats and love each other very much.

**Contact:** [ehartmann33@yahoo.com](mailto:ehartmann33@yahoo.com)

**Harley (right)** A tiny bundle of fun! This one year old neutered Dutch male is full of energy and loves to run at full speed and jump for joy. He is looking for an quiet indoor home where he will have lots of room to play. Harley has a sweet, outgoing personality and a mischievous sense of humor. **Contact:** [ztgst@aol.com](mailto:ztgst@aol.com)



**Daphne (left)** wants to be the Princess (and only rabbit) of your house! She is very sweet and loves all the attention you can give her. She wants to live indoors and have lots of space to run and jump.

**Contact:** [ovine22@yahoo.com](mailto:ovine22@yahoo.com)



Think big! **Leilani (right)** is a quite large two year old female. She’s lovely with silky smooth fur and very light gray nose and ears. She is gentle and shy and very clean. Lei needs plenty of space - no cage but pen ok. She enjoys playing in an outdoor pen and likes tunnels and boxes. When she’s happy, she tosses her ears and binkies around. **Contact:** [mitjw@attbi.com](mailto:mitjw@attbi.com)



Like his namesake, **Vincent Van Gogh (left)**, who himself had but one ear, this little fellow knows greater glory post-pruning. Born into a stressful, crowded home, his mother chewed off half his up-right ear, but he suffers no ill effects and the resulting look is one that sums up his robust personality: quizzical and rambunctious. He’s a jokester who will tug at your heart, when he pulls on your pant leg to get your attention and then run away. **Contact:** [bleakney@teleport.com](mailto:bleakney@teleport.com)



## ***More Fabulous Foster Rabbits Available for Adoption***



*Vinney and Toohey (left)* are a beautiful sister and brother who are looking for a loving family who will provide them with a lot of indoor space to run and exercise every day. They were rescued from a bad situation as babies. They enjoy being petted, but (like most bunnies) prefer to not be picked up. They really have fun running around the house and consider themselves very fun bunnies.

**Contact:** [ovine22@yahoo.com](mailto:ovine22@yahoo.com)

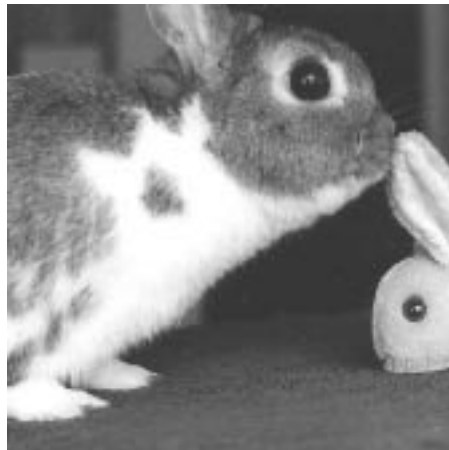


*Shepperd's Dell bunnies (above).* There are rabbits available from the Shepperd's Dell rescue. All are small and sweet.

**Contact:** [rabbit8@hevanet.com](mailto:rabbit8@hevanet.com)

*Walter (right).* A little dwarf with a big personality. Walter is a neutered male, about 3 years old. He is looking for a quiet indoor home where he will have lots of freedom to explore. Very good litter box habits. He is very independent, likes petting but only on his terms, probably wants to be an only rabbit! Not suitable for kids.

**Contact:** [ztgst@aol.com](mailto:ztgst@aol.com)



Rabbit Advocates  
PO Box 14235  
Portland OR 97293-0235

***RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED***