

All Ears in Sacramento

Number 12
Summer 2001

Inside this Issue:

A Lone Rabbit in a Cat's World	1
Introducing Cats & Rabbits	2
Rabbits Available for Adoption	3
T-Shirts and Totes	3
Finding Hay When the Sun Shines	4
Recent Adoptions	5
Sacramento Visits National	6
Love on Loan	7
Upcoming Events	7
Keep in Touch!	8
Volunteer Opportunities	8

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A Lone Rabbit in a Cat's World Or, How One Bunny Tamed a Houseful of Felines

Once upon a time there was a house where many cats resided. They had come to live there by different circumstances — one was the sole survivor of a litter that the people tried to save after the kittens were abandoned by their mother, many were rescued from a life of running wild on the grounds of the prison where the man of the house worked, and several more just showed up on the porch and said, “I have heard of nice people who live here that will care for and feed me and have a big red ‘S’ on their foreheads. I think I will stay here.” Soon, there were eight indoor cats, plus one other cat that had indoor/outdoor privileges and three more cats who lived outside but visited regularly at the dinner hour. Life was good.

Then one day a small, furry creature was seen running past the front window, followed closely by a teenage boy with a large fishing net. It was soon discovered that the furry creature was a rabbit and it had outsmarted and outrun the boy. The adventures of trying to capture this wily and wascally wabbit went on for three days before the critter was finally cornered between a fence and a hot tub. Once captured, it was placed in a cat carrier (where else are you going to put it in a house full of cats?) and brought into the house, much to the horror of the cat residents who already lived there.

The next day the rabbit was provided with a home of its own in the form of a large, fully stocked cage. Throughout the day, the cats checked out the new member of the family. (It

is thought that the cats were saying, “Man, what happened to your tail?” and the rabbit was asking, “Dudes! What happened to your ears?”). At first, there was a little hissing from the cats and thumping from the rabbit, but this passed quickly.

In the evening, the rabbit was allowed to



*Zeus the cat and Moe the bunny
check each other out*

have an exercise period in the kitchen. What happened next told the cats what the tone of this relationship was going to be. When the rabbit was set down on the kitchen floor, it promptly hopped over to the cats' litter box and proceeded to show everyone what its proper use was. Needless to say, this was quite startling to the human who was watching all this as he never expected anything of this sort to happen. It also helped to show the cats that it is OK to share, as they have since done with the rabbit's

continued on page 2

litter boxes during the rare emergency.

It wasn't long before the cats and the rabbit truly began to enjoy each other's company. There were the occasional confrontations, such as the first time the 15-pound cat was where the rabbit wanted to go. The cat wouldn't move, so the rabbit put its head under the cat's backside and proceeded to flip the cat into the air. (The cat lets the rabbit go wherever it wants to now.) Then there are the times that the cats will reach into the rabbit's area trying to steal carrot tops, and are rebuffed quite soundly by

the rabbit (rabbits can be quite possessive).

The rabbit in this house does not go in the backyard because of dogs who live there (that's another story), but is allowed in the front yard in an exercise pen. This has resulted in introductions to a number of neighborhood cats, not to mention squirrels, birds, and assorted children. The rabbit has established who is dominant here, too. Several of the neighborhood cats have cautiously crept up to the pens, unsure of what type of creature is in there (not a lot of city cats have seen a rabbit). Often, they're sent into a panicked retreat at the first loud thump of the rabbit's back feet. It isn't long, though, before the cats realize that this new creature is no threat and they happily spend their afternoons "guarding" their new friend from outside the pen.

But all of the small problems seem to be worthwhile to the humans when they find one or two cats lying on the floor with the rabbit, and cats and rabbit are all cleaning each other. In fact, things have gone so well that the people now foster other rabbits for the House Rabbit Society. This means there is an endless stream of new long-eared companions for the cats to get used to. Everyone grieves when the people come back from an Adoption Day without one of their friends, but they are happy when a new foster joins the household (that is, of course, after the get-acquainted period).

Despite several changes of rabbits through the house as adoptions happen and new fosters are taken in, it has always been a successful introduction between the cats and rabbits. The cats will fight among themselves and the rabbits will fight among themselves, but there never seems to be a fight between the cats and the rabbits. And so the moral of the story is quite simple: Don't be afraid to get a rabbit if you already have a cat (or the other way around, if the rabbit came first). Everything will be just fine and everyone will soon realize that the rabbit is the boss.

Disclaimer: No cats or rabbits were injured in the research for this article. All events mentioned occurred naturally and were not staged.

— Mike Palmer

Introducing Cats and Rabbits: A Three-Step Guide

If you're going to introduce a cat and a rabbit, remember to start small. Yes, felines and lagomorphs can be great friends – but as with any pairing, some matches take longer than others.

Step One: First-time Introductions. Regardless of who is new to the household (bunny or cat), start by putting the rabbit in her cage and letting the cat come up on his own terms. The cage shouldn't have any openings big enough for curious kitty paws to reach through, and should be big enough for the rabbit to hop around in (it's important that the cat see the rabbit actively hopping around, so he can get used to her movements and observe her antics). Give the rabbit a box or other covered place to retreat to inside the cage, if she feels threatened in any way. As the two get used to each other's smells, you should see them relax around each other. For a while, continue these "safe" meetings. If the cat clearly shows little or no interest in the rabbit, or if the cat doesn't take on the ears-laid-back appearance of a predator, you may be ready to move on to Step Two.

Step Two: Supervised Introductions. Once you're fairly sure that Kitty isn't planning on eating your rabbit, you can try an out-of-cage introduction. Make sure both the cat's and the rabbit's nails are trimmed! Even if they're bound to be good friends, your cat might swat your bunny out of curiosity. Keep a water bottle handy just in case the cat gets overly excited, but try not to interfere too much. (If you have to use the water bottle more than once or twice in a span of a few minutes, you're probably moving too fast. Go back to the cage introductions for a while, and then try it again.)

Step Three: Building Trust, and Beyond. You'll know that things are going to be okay when your rabbit hops away and your cat doesn't chase. Most cats have no problem peacefully co-existing with house rabbits; others become true "buddies" with their bunny friends, and you'll soon find them grooming each other and napping peacefully together in the living room.

However, please remember one important point: Keeping the cat and the bunny inside is one thing; if you take them outdoors, you could be facing a different situation altogether. (The cat may begin to feel predatory, and the rabbit may feel more vulnerable.) Don't ever leave your bunny outdoors unsupervised!

For more information on this subject, read HRS Educator Amy Shapiro's article on *Cats and Rabbits*, located on the web at www.rabbit.org/journal/2-11/cats-and-rabbits.html, or check out the video "Introducing Rabbits To Each Other and Other Companion Animals" by Drollery Press (available for \$23.95 through the National HRS web site, or can be borrowed from the SHRS at no charge).

Rabbits Available for Adoption

see page 7 for adoption event details



Zorro is a young boy who loves to be petted. He is very friendly, extremely curious about everything, and too busy to be held for long!



Radar is a young Californian. She is big but gentle and would love to have her own family to dote on her.



Paige is a sweet & affectionate mini rex girl.



Beatrix is a fun-loving, easy-going bunny who loves to spend time with her human friends.



Sophie is a beautiful 7 lb. girl who can be quite a character. She may be afraid of dogs and needs time to adjust to new places.



Spencer is a special needs bunny with a delightful personality. He was born in March 2001 with a severe leg deformity which resulted in the amputation of his right rear leg. He is currently learning how to get around as best he can, and will be available for adoption in the next few months.



Paloma is a beautiful large Dutch bunny, who is spunky and smart. A real delight for experienced bunny parents!



Buffy is a sweet, young Californian girl who has perfect litterbox habits. She is shy and learning to love hay and human attention.



Fiver is a black, brown and white spotted rex bunny. He is friendly, energetic, curious and very playful.

PHOTO NOT AVAILABLE

Jonathan is a sweet American Fuzzy Lop (angora) who was rescued after running under a car. He will be available this fall.

T-Shirts and Totes

SHRS t-shirts are back with a new front design featuring delightful illustrations by SHRS member Shannon Hawkins (see below), and accompanied by canvas totebags as well! The t-shirts are available in natural and navy, and the totes (measuring 19 x 14.5 x 5 inches) are natural with navy straps and bottom gusset. Come by our monthly clinics to see them in person, or use the handy form (right) to order by mail. T-shirts: \$15 (natural available in sizes L, XL; navy available in M, L, XL, XXL) Totebags: \$25



Name: _____

Phone: () _____

Address: _____

ITEM	COLOR	SIZE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
shipping & handling*:				
total:				

Please mail completed form with check or money order (payable to Sacramento House Rabbit Society) to:

Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 13371,
Sacramento, CA 95813-0371

*SAVE on shipping & handling charges when buying in quantity!

1-3 items ordered is \$4.00 s&h 4-6 items ordered is \$8.00 s&h, etc.

allow 2-3 weeks for delivery

Finding Hay When the Sun Shines

QUICK QUIZ: What's the most important part of your rabbit's daily diet?

If you answered "vegetables" or "pellets," you're not alone – a large percentage of bunny owners feed these foods almost exclusively (and it's not hard to figure out why, either, since rabbits love them!).

However, the most important part of your rabbit's diet should really be hay. For rabbits, hay is practically Mother Nature's perfect food. It's got the perfect mix of nutrients and just the right number of calories, and best of all, it supplies much-needed fiber to your rabbit's body, to keep things moving along and help avoid dreaded blockages. Your rabbit should be getting unlimited amounts of hay through-

Pasha (top) and Vi (below) enjoy some delectable oat hay.



out the day. In fact, some people even use it as litterbox liner (don't worry; Bunny will figure out what's for eating and what's for bathroom purposes).

Hay is also relatively inexpensive, easy to store (it doesn't have to be kept in an airtight container – a corner of your garage or an extra, clean garbage can is fine), and it lasts a long time. The toughest part is figuring out what kind to buy! Here's a quick-reference guide to what's out there.

Timothy Hay: The Sacramento HRS's first choice for bunnies. Timothy blades are wide and range in color from soft green to brown/green to gray. It has "cattails" mixed in. Calcium and calorie levels are perfect for rabbits. The bad news is that it's not grown locally, and has to be imported from either Oregon or Nevada – and both states had terrible crops this spring, so it's hard to find. Most local stores we called said that they wouldn't be getting any more good batches in until early September.

Alfalfa Hay: A favorite with most rabbits, but not nearly as healthy as Timothy hay for full-grown rabbits. Alfalfa is made up of stalks of flat yellow-green or lime-green leaves and is often more brittle than Timothy. Although it's perfect for horses, its high calcium levels can contribute to "bladder sludge" (white, yogurt-like output) in your rabbit's urine. It's also very high in calories, and lower in fiber than other kinds of hay.

Clover Hay: You'll almost never find a full bale of clover hay in the Sacramento area, but you may find bales that have clover mixed in (see our list of local hay suppliers on page 5). Clover hay, like alfalfa, is tasty but high in calcium. Feed sparingly, or as a special treat.

Oat Hay: Oat hay is an excellent source of fiber and is relatively low in calcium. This is a great choice for rabbits who are prone to G.I. stasis, but it's low in nutrients, so don't limit your bunny's feed to only this type. Depending on the season, its appearance

can vary, but usually it consists of large, hollow stalks with flat blades and visible oats.

It's about the same color as straw.

Grass Hay: Also called "meadow grass." This is a great, healthy choice for older rabbits with urinary tract problems. Some rabbits – particularly those who are used to eating tasty alfalfa – will turn their nose up at grass hay at first. But if you continue to offer the grass hay and you ration the pellets, the bunny will eventually eat the grass hay and decide it's not so bad after all. (You can mix alfalfa or a tastier hay in with the grass hay until the rabbit starts to eat the grass hay.)

Where to Buy Hay for Your Rabbits:

Local Suppliers

These local suppliers carry a variety of hays by the bale, year-round. Smaller quantities may be available upon request. Depending on the type of hay, bales typically cost between \$7–\$11, and one bale will feed two rabbits for up to four months. Please call to find out what's in stock; the types of hays listed were only what was on hand when we called in late July, and is subject to change. Local Timothy may not be of the best quality until later this fall – if it's a lousy mix, you might prefer to buy another type of hay until the "good stuff" becomes available.

Baker Brothers, Lodi

Alfalfa, Oat/Wheat/Barley, Timothy mix.
(209) 369-4848

Bradshaw Feed and Pet Supply, Sacramento

Alfalfa, Grass, Oat. (916) 369-8225

Hospenthal Hay Service, Elk Grove

Alfalfa, Alfalfa/Grass, Alfalfa/Clover.
(916) 684-3400

River Valley Feed and Pet Supply, Rio Linda

Alfalfa, Alfalfa/Rye, Rye, and Oat.
(916) 991-0077

Sheldon Feed, Elk Grove

Alfalfa, Grass, and Oat. (916) 686-6400

QUICK TIP

Alfalfa hay may not be good for your rabbit to eat all the time, but it's a great treat every once in a while. Try stuffing a clean, old tube sock with a handful of alfalfa hay and giving it to your rabbit to play with. You can cut the top of the sock lengthwise and tie it to the inside top of your rabbit's cage – some bunnies will bat at it like a punching bag, and nibble a hole in the bottom to get at the good stuff inside!

Singing Springs Feed Store, Pilot Hill

Alfalfa, Oat/Wheat/Barley. (530) 885-2077

Western Feed and Pet Supply, Orangevale

Alfalfa, Grass. (916) 988-1011

Mail Order

These companies sell premium hay that is top-notch quality. It's more expensive, but your rabbits are guaranteed to love it. If you have a particularly finicky rabbit, you may want to splurge. We've never met a rabbit who didn't love this stuff.

American Pet Diner

HC 62, Box 186, Eureka, NV 89316.

(800) 656-2691.

Web site, www.americanpetdiner.com.

Oxbow Pet Products

29012 Mill Rd., Murdock, NE 68407.

(800) 249-0366.

Web site, www.oxbowhay.com.

–Kirsten Macintyre

Many thanks to Debra Doerfler of the San Diego House Rabbit Society for the information contained in this article, and to April Galligan and Susan King of the Sacramento House Rabbit Society for helping to make phone calls and inquiries to local hay suppliers.

Recent Adoptions

Sonora and **Jaime** were adopted by the Zokaie family

Ruby was adopted by the Benincasa family

Forrester was adopted by Lynne Barron

Kona was adopted by Tammy Glines

Cindy was adopted by Tera Burton

Spot was adopted by Stacey Brown

Bonnie was adopted by John and Phyllis Moist as a companion for their bunny Hoagie

Star was adopted by Linda Thomas as a friend for her bunny Percy

Darjeling was adopted by the Keller family

Gizmo was adopted by The Roberts family

Kasta was adopted by the Bueller family

Sacramento Visits National!

One of many adoptable rabbits at the National HRS headquarters in Richmond.



*Back row, l-r:
Jill Johnson,
Susan King,
Glenda Muschetto,
Jan Gasber and
Kimberly Wheatfill
Front row, l-r:
Anne Miller,
Brandon Chee and
Ayako Imai*

On a recent July Saturday morning, Brandon Chee, Jan Gasber, Jill Johnson, Susan King, Anne Miller, Glenda Muschetto, and Kimberly Wheatfill of the Sacramento House Rabbit Society met at the Fair Oaks Petco. No, this wasn't

for another Adoption Day — this was our field trip to the “big city” to visit the new National HRS headquarters. We piled into three cars and took off for Davis, where we picked up fellow member Ayako Imai before continuing on to Richmond.

Anne Miller's car led the caravan, since she had already made the trip before, and we found the offices with no problems (go, Anne!). The building is as charming as it looks in the pictures on the National HRS web site (www.rabbit.org). We were greeted at the front door by volunteer Janice Tunder. After the introductions, Janice offered to lead us on a tour, but everyone had to spend time in the gift shop first. So many wonderful bunny items in one place! Kimberly had brought several bags full of her wonderful handmade “Princess Thumper” blankets, and we also brought donations of our chapter's t-shirts and other items to donate to the shop.

After everyone made piles of stuff to pay for later, we got our tour through the rest of the center. In addition to the adoptable rabbits, there were bunnies being boarded. Some of us had brought toys and wicker baskets for the adoptable bunnies, so they seemed pretty happy to see us.

Still, our visit was far from being all fun and games and shopping. When we discovered that Janice was the only volunteer working that day, we realized what a big job she was facing. We quickly traded our purses and cameras for rubber gloves and cleaning supplies. We spent the next few hours cleaning the adoption habitats, which was very reminiscent of our days at the SPCA in the summer of 1999, when we were caring for the Fair Oaks bunnies. Jan noticed that several bunnies were in need of nail trims and brushing, so she asked for the clippers and brushes. As we were cleaning, we also discovered two rabbits that were not well. It was so fortunate that Ayako came with us, as she is a veterinarian. She took the sick rabbits into the examination room while the rest of us kept busy cleaning, feeding and playing with the others. (Kimberly and Glenda had brought greens and carrots, and Anne found several empty paper towel rolls and made stuffed hay toys with them.) We are all hoping that the two sick bunnies are feeling better by now.

After we finished our “chores,” we gathered back at the gift shop to look around a little more and make sure we hadn't missed anything. After taking group pictures, we made our purchases, thanked Janice for the tour, loaded up the cars and headed back to Sacramento, tired but happy. We also stopped for a late lunch in Vacaville – it was really fun to sit and visit with each other. We swapped bunny stories and discussed how we all care for our own bunnies. It's always great to get new ideas on how to make cleaning easier, new toys, etc. There was no shopping at the factory stores, though, as the cars were already full from the HRS headquarters gift shop.

Since our visit, Jan and Kimberly have made plans to volunteer once a month at the center. Other volunteers would also be welcome (and very needed!). I'm sure that Jan and Kimberly would love additional company to carpool with, and I know the bunnies would love the extra attention. I just hope that the National HRS doesn't restock the gift shop with anything new and irresistible!

– Susan King

Drop us a line! We welcome your submissions to All Ears in Sacramento. If you have story ideas, photos, illustrations, or article topics, send them to the address on page 7. We can't return items, so please do not send originals.

Love on Loan

On July 31, the SHRS made a "Love on Loan" visit to Mercy-McMahon Terrace, a seniors' home in Sacramento. Little Kasta, a tiny girl rabbit who had been surrendered to the Sacramento SPCA, accompanied SHRS member Barbara Koenigsmark to the seniors' residence for a first-time visit. Although it was her first foray into the world of public relations, Kasta proved to be a wonderful ambassador, snuggling and cuddling with the residents for two hours. Kasta brought smiles to the faces of all who held or saw her, and they were happy to have her there to see them.

Although the SHRS has brought bunnies into classrooms in the past, this is the first time that we have had the opportunity to work with seniors. Kasta made a very positive impression on the residents and staff alike, and we have been invited to return for monthly visits. Many thanks to Mercy-McMahon Terrace and to the Sacramento SPCA for working with us on this fun project.

By the way, Kasta's sweet demeanor and unlimited patience also won her a permanent home. Although she had to go back to the shelter that afternoon, she was picked up again by Barbara on August 5, formally entering the SHRS foster program. Eight days later, she stole the hearts of the Bueller family, and she now lives with them in Shingle Springs.

– Barbara Koenigsmark



Kasta delights Madeline Stewart, a Mercy-McMahon Terrace resident.

Upcoming Events

Adoption and Information Clinics

Are you thinking about adding a bunny to your household? Or are you just looking to learn more about the one you've already got? Regardless of whether you've had a rabbit for years or if you're new to the joys of rabbit companionship, you'll have a great time at our monthly Adoption and Information Clinics. Come ask us questions about bunny behavior, care, grooming, nutrition, or anything else you can think of. We have free printed information on a variety of topics, and, of course, we also have our fabulous fosters on hand, waiting for just the right family to come along! The adoption donation is \$50 (\$75 for two), and includes a copy of *The House Rabbit Handbook*.

If you already have a bunny, you're welcome to bring him or her to the Clinic in a secure carrier. Our experienced "rabbit wranglers" can trim your rabbit's nails for a \$5 donation. We've recently added a new service as well – de-tangling matted bunny fur. If your rabbit has stubborn knots that you just can't get out, call our bunny line in advance (916-863-9690) and make arrangements to bring him to the Clinic for a makeover. We have clippers, combs, and lots of patience. Donations of \$10 per hour are appreciated!

September 8
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

October 13
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Elk Grove PetCo
7715 Laguna Blvd

November 10
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Arden PetCo
1878 Arden Way

December 8
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue

Bring your bunny to any Clinic for a \$5 nail trim – no appointment necessary!



America's Family Pet Expo

September 21
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

September 22
9:00 am – 7:00 pm

September 23
9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Cal Expo, 1600 Exposition Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95815

For the fourth year in a row, SHRS will participate in this three-day pet extravaganza. This wonderful event showcases all kinds of animals, from dogs and cats to iguanas and pigs. Our booth will feature free information and premiums for sale (see page 3 for details), and our volunteers will be on the lecture circuit, giving talks about bunny behavior and care. Stop by and visit us (and our foster rabbits!) or call our hotline if you'd like to help volunteer at this fun event. Patron admission is \$8 for adults, parking is \$6 per vehicle.

All Ears in Sacramento is published quarterly by the Sacramento House Rabbit Society, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.

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KMMacintyre@yahoo.com

Website:
www.allearsac.org



Sacramento House Rabbit Society
 P.O. Box 13371
 Sacramento, CA 95813-0371

membership
 expiration date



Not a Member?

Sacramento House Rabbit Society depends on donations to keep running. Please fill out the form below to keep receiving *All Ears in Sacramento*, and to support local rabbits in need!

Keep in Touch!

Time to renew your membership? New to the House Rabbit Society? The annual membership to the House Rabbit Society is \$18. This includes a subscription to the quarterly *House Rabbit Journal*. The annual membership fee for the Sacramento Chapter, which includes the quarterly *All Ears in Sacramento*, is \$15. The House Rabbit Society is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. All membership fees are tax-deductible and go towards care expenses for the rabbits and for providing educational materials, such as these newsletters.

- Please sign me up for the National Membership, \$18
- Please sign me up for the Sacramento Membership, \$15
- Please sign me up for both for \$30
- I have enclosed an additional donation of \$ _____
- I would like to volunteer with SHRS (see choices to the right)

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

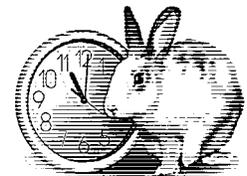
email address: _____

Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:
 Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 13371, Sacramento, CA 95813-0371

Volunteer!

Would you like to help local rabbits and bunny-lovers? We could use volunteers in the following areas:

- Public Events (staffing education tables)
- Fundraising Events
- Distributing Literature
- Working with Shelters
- Transporting rabbits to the National Headquarters in Richmond
- Fostering



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

SACRAMENTO HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

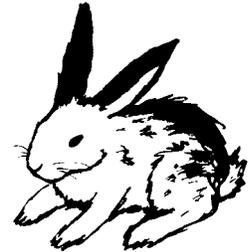
Potluck Picnic

11am - 2 pm

Saturday, September 29, 2001

Ancil Hoffman Park

6700 Tarshes Drive, Carmichael



This fun, free event is open to all SHRS members and house rabbit enthusiasts in the Sacramento area. Even if you've never attended one of our events before, come join us at the picnic to share pictures and stories about your family pet. There will be games, a raffle, free information about rabbits and lots of fun activities for all. Children are welcome, but please leave your bunnies at home.

Please bring a dish to share with 6 to 8 of your fellow bunny lovers.

If your last name starts with:

A-F: bring a salad

G-L: bring a main dish

M-R: bring a vegetable dish

S-W: bring a dessert

Plates, plasticware, cups and napkins will be provided. Bring your own chairs, blankets and canned drinks (bottles are not allowed in the park)

RSVP

Kimberly Wheatfill (916) 941-8091

or Bunnymom@prodigy.net

Photo Contest!

Bring your best bunny photos to compete in the following categories:

1. Cutest couple
2. Big Bunnies
3. Mischief moments
4. Bunny friends

Include your name, phone number, rabbit's name and category of choice. Bring to the picnic or mail by September 19 to:

HRS Photo contest c/o MAID FOR PETS
P.O. Box 7603
Citrus Heights, CA 95610



Directions to Ancil Hoffman Park:

From Hwy 50, exit Watt Avenue North

Turn right on Fair Oaks

Turn right on Van Alstine (this street deadends to California)

Turn left on California

Turn right on Tarshes Drive

There is a \$4.00 parking fee