

All Ears in Sacramento

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The Trouble with Teenagers: BunBun's Story

A house rabbit's "teenage" phase can be a trying time for his human caretakers. Typical behavior can include chewing, nipping, bossiness, moodiness, and darting around like his tail's on fire for no apparent reason. While these antics are cute, sometimes just watching the energy burst is enough to make you want to go to sleep. Here is one member's story about her bunny's teenage growth spurt.

BunBun is geriatric now and maybe a little slower at age eight, but she's still almost as sassy as she was as a teenager. Just recently, as BunBun's "condo" was being renovated, her headquarters were moved to my hall bathroom temporarily. One weekend as I was cleaning the bathroom and BunBun supervising, she became quite offended when I began wiping at one particular corner; she ran over and pushed my hand away. I shooed her, so then she tried to pull the sponge out of my hand a couple of times. I laughed and shooed her again, so

BunBun responded by biting me on the shin. Needless to say, I stopped cleaning the corner to inspect my wound. I just couldn't be mad though, because BunBun had warned me three times before biting, and I should have known better since the "three warnings system" was one she established as a teenager.

I brought BunBun home as a 15 year old's whim and was positive my mom would give in when faced with the hopping white fuzz ball of adorableness that fit in my cupped hands. I knew that this baby was here to stay when I came home from school a week later, and my mom told me how the baby nestled against her and fell asleep as she went through bills (a stressful task to be sure, and not one that my mother normally enjoyed). BunBun adapted quickly to her new home and soon made it clear who was Miss Boss of the house as she grew. BunBun was quiet and still when she napped, but at all other times moved at Mach 2 throughout the house - up and down the stairs, round and round the house, running circles around her slow humans.

My little brother Joseph and BunBun had a special playmate bond, since BunBun's favorite game was "chase me so I can show how fast I can run." He would oblige and chase her



Joseph snuggles with a calm BunBun.

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Sore Hocks: Treating and Avoiding a Common Ailment

Most of us who live with rabbits are very used to looking for signs of impending illness – little behavioral changes that tell us a bunny is feeling under the weather. However, the summertime brings a whole new range of potential hazards for our long-eared friends. Chief among these is sore hocks, or sore spots on the rabbit's heels, where the fur has rubbed away and the skin is raw.



Red, inflamed hock sores need medical attention. Photo by University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine.

Strangely enough, this condition is particular to domestic rabbits – not wild rabbits. Wild rabbits who roam free tend to run on surfaces (dirt, mud, grass, etc.) that their toenails can sink into, allowing them to literally run on their toes.

But domestic rabbits who live in cages, or even on carpet, hardwood, or other “human” flooring, can't do this. Their weight shifts to their heels. This may never be an issue for some rabbits, but for others, it can result in these painful sore spots, which may need a little assistance from the humans in the house to soothe.

What to Look For

An adult domestic rabbit should have a small, callused area right at the tip of the heel. It's pink and hairless naturally, although it may be covered by a fold of fur. This is normal and nothing to worry about. Sore hocks, on the other hand, are pretty easy to spot. This area is red and inflamed, and may be weeping. Usually, it's the back feet that are affected, but sometimes the front feet are susceptible, too.

A bunny with sore hocks may be favoring one side over the other when he hops (but not always). If both sides are sore, he may not want to hop around much at all. In very severe cases, an untreated sore hock can wear all the way to the bone. It's important to catch

and treat this condition before it gets that far.

If only the fur is gone, don't worry too much – some bunnies form thick calluses on their heels and manage to get around just fine. It's only when the area appears red or sore (or when the rabbit appears uncomfortable) that you need to take action.

How to Treat Sore Hocks

For very minor cases of sore hocks, the quickest and easiest treatment is home application of Bag Balm. Originally formulated for the sore udders of dairy cows, Bag Balm is readily available at your local drugstore or feed store. It comes in a small green tin, is relatively inexpensive, won't



In very severe cases, an untreated sore hock can wear all the way to the bone.

hurt your bunny if he happens to lick some of it off, and feels pretty good on your own sore feet! It has the same consistency as Vaseline, and works quickly to speed the healing process. For minor cases, a 5-7 day application should do the trick.

Another easy home remedy is a cooled tea bag, applied directly to the sore spot (assuming your bunny doesn't mind you holding him for a few minutes!).

If your bunny is experiencing this problem for the first time, if the sore areas appear to be causing distress, or if the problem appears to have progressed beyond the “annoyance” stage by the time you discover it, you should take your rabbit in to be assessed by a qualified, bunny-savvy veterinarian. Your vet may recommend prescription antibiotics or bandaging the wounds, depending on how serious the sores are. The vet can also help you properly assess

Rabbits Available for Adoption



Elderberry is a boy who enjoys exploring his surroundings and being petted.



Margaret is a big bunny who loves attention, veggies, and climbing in your lap for petting!



These young bunnies (2 girls and 1 boy) are friendly, playful siblings.



Peaches & Cream are an apricot French Angora and a Florida White bonded pair. They are very friendly and like sitting on laps.



Meg is an energetic young girl looking for a good home.



Mercedes is a young girl who likes to run, dance, and sit on your lap for a good petting.



Pierre is an energetic and curious young male.

what the most likely cause of the problem could be, and can help you determine how best to avoid reoccurrences in the future.

Causes (and Prevention!) of Sore Hocks

There are numerous causes of sore hocks – wire cage bottoms are a leading culprit, but by no means the only reason. Your bunny should have access to a dry, clean place to hop and sit on at all times. Put a towel or fake sheepskin in his living area for him to rest on. Don't use bathroom or kitchen rugs with plastic or rubber backing; those hold in moisture and don't allow air to circulate properly. If possible, give him a large area – a box or big, low plastic storage bin – of just hay, where he can hop around and rest his feet. Remember, it's important to give him a surface to hop on that's not abrasive or hard. For a bunny who already has sore hocks, even carpet is abrasive and hard.

Be sure you clean his litterbox often, as the

acid in urine-soaked litter material or hay can quickly inflame an open wound. And disinfect the cage thoroughly and often – especially in the summertime.

Sometimes, even with the cleanest cages, a rabbit can still develop sore hocks, due to age or even breed. Rex rabbits are particularly prone to sore hocks, as they have little padding on their feet to begin with. Overweight rabbits also often develop this condition, as do rabbits with long toenails (long nails cause the rabbit to put more weight on the backs of his feet).

While sore hocks are certainly uncomfortable for the rabbit, keep in mind that they're relatively easy to treat and avoid if you catch them early enough. They're not all that uncommon, either! Keep an eye on your rabbit's feet, checking them at least every time you trim his nails – preferably more often. If you make this a part of your regular routine, chances are good that this will never be a serious issue for you or your bunny.

— Kirsten Macintyre

Recent Adoptions

Toy was adopted by Cathy Purell

Oliver was adopted by Nancy Swenson

Bunny was adopted by Lisa Pretto

Tommy Bahama was adopted by Irena Bolstod and family

Max was adopted by Kris Greenough

Jubilee was adopted by Linda Barr as a companion for her bunny

Sam and Sarah were adopted by Laura Johnson and family

Velvet was adopted by Janna Franks

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Rabbit News



Shelter volunteer Crystal (top photo) spends some quality time with Henry, who is still looking for a home.



Murray (right) mugs for the camera. He and his identical brother Freddie are also still looking for loving families.



Marcy (above), a female Holland Lop, and Piper (right), a male English Spot mix, are also available at the Yolo shelter.



Yolo County Shelter Rabbit Adoption Day

With nine rabbits available for adoption, the Yolo County Shelter was full beyond capacity just a few weeks after Easter. Susan King reports on a successful eleventh-hour adoption day put together by SHRS volunteers:

In spite of the short notice and intermittent rain, we had one adoption of a cute four-month-old male Dutch mix. A beautiful and super-friendly rex female had already been adopted on Friday.

Our greatest success story of the day involved a mother and daughter who were at the shelter adopting two baby rats. After talking to HRS volunteer

following day, Margaret met the family at the shelter, and they ended up adopting (instead of fostering) one of the boys. The family also brought along a friend, who fell in love with the other boy rabbit and adopted him!

We also had several visitors interested in our handouts, including several current rabbit owners. We passed out several packets of information on bunny care to them as well.

The final tally included four adoptions and one possible new foster home. This leaves five bunnies in residence at the Yolo shelter.

A huge thank you to Brandon Chee and Anne Destefano for volunteering for the whole day, and a big thank you to Margaret for going back on Sunday and getting the two boy bunnies adopted.

— Susan King

Yolo County Animal Services Shelter is located at 41831 Gibson Road in Woodland, and is open Monday-Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 11am-5pm. Telephone (530) 668-5287, email ycarescue@hotmail.com

Sacramento SPCA Bricks and Tiles Still Available

The Sacramento SPCA's beautiful new facility is in full swing, and if you haven't been there, it is worth the trip! There are still commemorative bricks and tiles available for customization. You can honor a special furry friend and help out other needy animals at the same time. Bricks cost \$50 and give you three lines of text (15 characters per line). Go to www.sspca.org and scroll to "Dedicate a Brick" to order online. Tiles cost \$40, and allow your inner artist to come out! You can customize a 6x6 inch tile at Color Me Mine in Folsom, or use an existing style designed for the SSPCA and add your message to it. For more information, call Color Me Mine at (916) 351-9008.

and Notes



Animal Place Farm Tours

In the fall of 1999, Animal Place in Vacaville agreed to take in 25 of the Fair Oaks bunnies from the Sacramento SPCA. They have given these rabbits a wonderful home, and you are invited to come see them and all the lucky animals who are living out their lives at this sanctuary. Animal Place is now offering **Farm Tours**, which is an afternoon on the farm. The \$10 per person charge gets you a ride on a straw-filled farm truck, a tour of the sanctuary, and a chance to meet (and maybe feed) the animals. Your tour ends with a cold drink and a snack, and the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping a wonderful organization. This tour is for ages 12 and up only, and will be offered on September 13 and September 27 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

You can also experience **Dusk at Animal Place**, which is a special time at the sanctuary. As the sun sets, the animals settle down for the evening. The bunnies are fed, the rescued dogs get to romp, the pigs are given a snack and the birds are locked safely inside. This tour is \$30 per person or \$50 per couple. Wine and appetizers will be served. Adults only; tour offered on July 12 and August 16, from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, call Animal Place at (707) 449-4814 or go to www.animalplace.org.

Another Way to Bathe a Bunny

We received this letter in response to the "Bathing Beauties" article that ran in Issue 17 of *All Ears in Sacramento*:

Enjoy your newsletter and your article about butt bath. Yes, rabbits do not need bath, I agree totally.

Just want to mention an even easier way to do a butt bath: Take a Cool Whip or cottage cheese plastic container, fill 3/4 of the way with water and stick the rabbit's butt into it and use your hand to loosen up the mess. Repeat a few times. When the water is clear, the rabbit is clean. Towel dry.

The rabbit's legs and other areas are not touching the water when such a small container is used. Rabbits tend not to kick around and there is less wetness to dry up.

— Betty Chu

Bunny Checks Now Available

You can now order personalized bank checks with rabbits pre-printed on them – or, if you prefer, you can have your own bunny's picture put on them. A portion of the proceeds go to the animal welfare organization you specify (the National House Rabbit Society is one of the choices!). For more information and to view pictures of the checks, visit <http://www.petchecks.com/bunnies.html> or call (800) 551-7938.

Would you like to see your bunny's story featured in our newsletter?

We welcome your submissions to *All Ears in Sacramento*. If you live in the Sacramento area and have story ideas, photos, illustrations, or article topics, send them to the address on page 3. We can't return items, so please do not send originals.

How to Ease the Teen Months

So you've had Flopsy spayed. She's still digging your carpet, eating your rattan love seat, biting the kids when they reach into her cage, and leaving liquid and solid calling cards all over the house. The first step is to get out your old *House Rabbit Journals* and read the relevant articles on chewing, digging, housetraining, etc. As you read, a few underlying concepts will emerge from the specific suggestions.

1. Redirect. It's much easier to tell a rabbit "Chew this" ("...and this," "...and this,") than to try to convince him not to chew anything. Look for ways that Thumper can indulge his natural inclinations – whether for chewing, digging, mounting, etc. – in ways that don't drive you crazy. Meet him halfway. Remember that from his point of view, he's being a very good bunny. Adolescent rabbits are supposed to chew, dig, mark their territory, and mount everything in sight. It's only our human perspective that puts a negative spin on the situation.
2. Set her up to succeed. Punishment doesn't work very well with rabbits, especially sassy teenage rabbits. Instead, put Flopsy in a situation where her options are limited to doing the right thing – that is, the human version of the right thing, such as digging in her sandbox instead of your carpet. Setting up for success often includes limiting and structuring her physical environment.
3. Be patient. She will outgrow all this mania. Enjoy her exuberance, laugh at her mischievousness, ponder the complexity of the rabbit psyche. Allow yourself to be infected by her joy at being alive and obnoxious and pushy. Once you've seen a rabbit kick up her heels, shake her head, leap straight up in the air and make a 180-degree turn before landing, you'll know you've been initiated into a very select society. And you'll remember why you put up with all the other stuff.

— Excerpted from Amy Shapiro's article, "Rebel With Paws," found at <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/2-9/rebel-with-paws.html>.

Teenage Trouble *continued from page 1*

throughout the house until they both got tired and sprawled out to watch cartoons in front of the TV. I even watched BunBun rehearse her escape routines as she'd tear around the house (one loop around the couch, then under the coffee table and up the stairs). This was right about when BunBun became a little bit more aggressive at telling us what to do. If I was sitting on the floor in front of the hallway, and it blocked her running area, she'd toss her head and run over and give me a nudge on the lower back. If I continued to ignore her, I'd get a harder nudge ... and if I still ignored her, "eek!" She'd give me a bunny-pinch to let me know there there'd be no more disobedience.

I think our family's lack of knowledge about pets other than budgies (let alone specific knowledge about rabbits) contributed to BunBun's unchecked reign in the household. As a youngster, BunBun saw any type of gate or barrier as a personal challenge to be defeated rather than a gentle encouragement to play somewhere else. BunBun had to be distracted from eating the wall and electrical cords (my mom became an expert at adding new electrical plugs to the end of shortened cords). BunBun would be under our feet as soon as she heard the refrigerator door close, and would insist on inspecting our food plates. Sometimes she was aggressive and would grab the plate with her teeth and tug; other times she would cajole us by licking our arms gently and making it clear she loved us very much and she only wanted a small taste.

The teenage BunBun could definitely be a six-pound bully with more attitude than she knew what to do with – but she could also deliver just as much affection. She often doled out drive-by-bunny kisses as she zipped around on whatever new project was holding her interest, and she rarely missed an opportunity to reward a pet on her head with at least one lick. And of course, putting up with every bit of her attitude was worth it just to see this bunny luxuriously stretched out across the hallway snoozing on her back, whiskers twitching as she dreamed, or to see her fall asleep while having her head and ears stroked.

Today BunBun is a bit more patient, and she doesn't run around as fast or as much, and she definitely knows what the word "no" means now, but she still flashes back to show me her teenage rebellious attitude once in a while.

— Olivia Ambrose





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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: _____

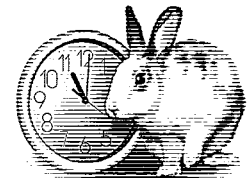
email address: _____

Return with check payable to House Rabbit Society to:
 Sacramento House Rabbit Society, P.O. Box 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

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 shelter rabbits to local adoption days
- Fostering



HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY