

# All Ears in Sacramento



Number 24  
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## The Mystery of Mr. Bunny

*Foster rabbit has no ears, but plenty of spirit*

What a gorgeous evening it was. The sun was preparing to set while a light breeze rustled the leaves of the perfectly green trees that lined my street. Sacramento temperatures were below normal that day, making my evening walk more pleasurable than the usual triple-digit days of summer. I was enjoying the third of my many future one-mile trips around Crosswood Circle, a community I now call home. Near the end of my stroll, I could see a furry white creature close to the sidewalk upon which I was about to tread. Being a cat lover, I was excited at the thought that it might be a friendly kitty waiting for a passerby to give away some free ear rubs. But wait a minute! That's not a cat. Could it be – a rabbit?

There he was sitting in a green patch of grass, almost oblivious to the world. And there I was unable to figure it out. Why would a

bunny be out here? And more importantly, where were his ears?

I bent down to get a closer look. There were two little stubs close to his head where his ears once were. It appeared that someone had simply cut them off. I couldn't tell if the wounds were fresh. I didn't know if he was in pain or in need of a vet. How could he survive? Horrible thoughts instantly plagued my mind. Could someone actually just cut off a rabbit's ears? I knew nothing about rabbits. I wanted to touch him. I wanted to pick him up. I wanted to help him. But I didn't know what to do. I didn't know if rabbits would bite or fight when afraid. I had no devices to capture him. I felt helpless, just like that little earless bunny.

My sleep that night was restless. I tossed and turned worrying about my little earless

friend. The idea that someone could just cut off a rabbit's ears haunted me. So, when the sun came up, I searched the Internet for help and that is how I met Susan King, one of the Sacramento HRS volunteers.

I told her about the earless bunny and my concerns about abuse. In our first conversation, Susan told me a lot I never knew about rabbits, and she suggested I offer my new friend some romaine lettuce should I see



## Mr. Bunny continued from page 1

him that night on my walk. So, near sundown I set out on my stroll with a new agenda. I wasn't walking to enjoy the evening, I wasn't feeling the breeze in the air, and I didn't really care how hot or cool it was. Armed with romaine lettuce and a digital camera, I was on a mission to find the earless bunny.

I immediately walked back to the spot where I first saw him. My fingers were crossed. What if he wasn't there? What if I couldn't find him? What if someone else had taken him? What if...I didn't even want to think about it. What luck! There he was in the same spot I left him. "Were you here all night, you sweet little thing?" I took five pictures while he nibbled on the lettuce. He is all white with deep red eyes. The little stubs on his ears moved while I talked to him. He could hear me, that was for sure. He was a beautiful bunny, even without his ears. I talked to him, and he approached me slowly, but not close enough to touch him or get a good look. I promised him I'd be back with help.

I e-mailed my pictures to Susan. It was hard to tell, but it looked as if the stubs that were once ears were open and fresh wounds. Susan met me that night with an inventory of rabbit

equipment guaranteed to entice and capture. And we succeeded!

Susan is definitely the bunny expert. She handled him well. She was able to pick him up and confirm his gender. She inspected his ears, and thank goodness there were no open wounds. She assembled a comfortable bunny area in my second bedroom where "Mr. Bunny" would call home for awhile. She had litter boxes, timothy hay, pellets, dandelion greens, a plastic tablecloth, a little mat, bowls, a dog pen, cardboard boxes, and toys. (Toys? Do bunnies really play with toys?) She gave me lots of instruction on caring for Mr. Bunny: what to feed him, what not to feed him, how to pet him, how to clean his cage and litter boxes, watering instructions, and basic rabbit behavior. I was overwhelmed but up for the challenge. I had a new buddy, er..., bunny.

Two mornings later, Mr. Bunny went to the vet. He was neutered and got a clean bill of health. The vet was puzzled by the missing ears but surmised, in her professional opinion, that the ears had been surgically removed. The cuts were too clean, and the wounds were well healed. The mystery expands. Were his ears destroyed in a fight and had to be removed? Were they cancerous and had to be cut off? Was he a research rabbit at a local medical school and a student was practicing amputation? Who knows?!

I guess the good news is animal abuse could be ruled out in this situation. But it is still hard to believe that someone would go to the expense of surgically removing the ears and then dumping this poor little bunny to fend for himself. It still does not make sense. He remains a mystery.

Mr. Bunny has been in my foster care for almost two weeks now. He is a wonderful rabbit. He loves scratches on his back, especially near his shoulder blades. He loves having his little ear-stubs rubbed. He kisses me on my nose. He begs when I enter his room. He uses his litter pans. He climbs on the cardboard boxes. He races around his room. He loves being petted. He is so irresistible that it

*Mr. Bunny has adapted well to his situation and is looking for a loving home.*



# Rabbits Available for Adoption



**Buster** is an affectionate dwarf Dutch boy. He needs twice-monthly teeth-trimming.



**Enuff** is an adult lop. Skittish at first, he soon will be kissing your hands. He needs his teeth trimmed every other month.



**Boo** is a year old New Zealand boy. He likes to explore and is always busy.



**Sweetie and Little Bigwig** are a bonded brother and sister. They are friendly to people, dogs and cats.



**Cream** is a 2-year-old Florida White boy. He is very mellow and likes sitting on laps.



**Vickie** is a big, beautiful bunny who has excellent litterbox skills and is being leash trained.



**Fiona, Felicia and Finnegan** (two girls and one boy) are friendly, playful siblings. They want to be adopted as a trio.



**Mr. Bunny** loves attention and to be petted. He enjoys playing with toys. He is being litter trained. The vet thinks his ears were surgically removed earlier in his life.



**Tidbit** has good litterbox habits and enjoys being handled. He needs his teeth trimmed occasionally.



**Gwen** (white rex) and **Mindy Lopper** (black lop) are a bonded pair of girls looking for a loving home.



**Sarah and Sam** are a sweet, gentle bonded pair of mini rexes. Both are about 3 years old.



**Quincy** is a 2 year old boy who loves to sit on laps and has excellent litterbox habits.



**Tallulah Belle** is a mellow and affectionate young adult female Dutch.

is hard not to want to hug him. He has a personality! I have learned such much from Mr. Bunny. There are foods he likes and foods he doesn't. And yes, bunnies do play with toys! Mr. Bunny loves tossing his toys up in the air or hiding them under his belly. My job is to try to get them away from him. We enjoy our tug-of-war. I can't tell who is spoiling who.

Mr. Bunny would love a home he can call his own where he can play and run and get fresh air and feel safe. He's curious about my three cats but not fond of living under the same roof with them. He loves attention and needs a loving person to give it. He would make a great addition to a devoted bunny home.

— Lynn Keller

## Recent Adoptions

**Duchess** was adopted by Suzanne Belko as a friend for her bunnies Humperdink and Petey

**Oscar** was adopted by Mark Wiest

**Buddy** was adopted by Valerie Letch

# CRISIS IN GALT:

## *Rescue Groups Scramble to Come to the Aid of 500 Rabbits in Need*

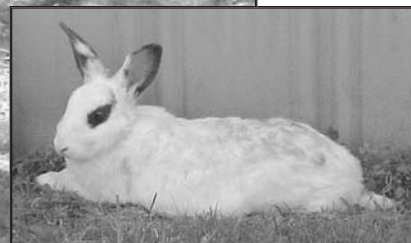
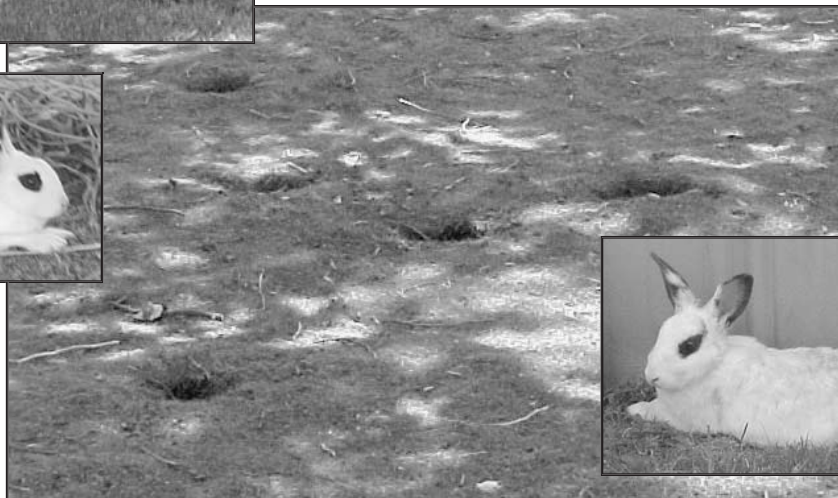
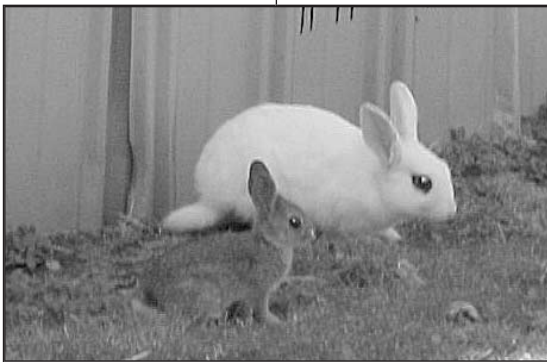
In the little town of Galt, about 30 miles south of Sacramento, there's a place where domestic bunnies run free. Unfortunately, what was once a "cute" situation has grown out of hand, causing an uproar in a small community and sending animal welfare groups scrambling. This is easily the biggest crisis situation the SHRS has faced in about five years.

The scene is Galt Mobile Estates, a mobile home park off of North Lincoln Boulevard. Several years ago, the locals say, a resident moved and left behind a pair of pet rabbits. The bunnies – unaltered, of course – were turned loose, and soon bred. The babies grew up and had babies, and so on. For a long time, the locals were charmed by the cute baby rabbits, many of which were friendly and approachable. Many well-meaning residents fed them,

though the rabbits' living conditions were less than ideal: there was no adequate water supply, no veterinary care, and some were hit by cars in the area or killed by predators or

by disease. As their number grew – by spring 2004, residents estimated that there were more than 500 rabbits – the bunnies began to cause great trouble for the park's human residents as well. The bunnies ate the residents' landscaping; chewed through outdoor cords, wires and hoses; and excrement was everywhere you looked. Some residents had to put in fences around their homes (to the tune of \$1,000 and more) just to keep the rabbits out. Others, at their wits' end, debated whether the rabbits could be removed with the use of a stun gun.

Finally, a visitor to the park registered a complaint with the SSPCA about the situation. Officers drove out to survey the scene and quickly agreed that something must be done. SSPCA Officer Katie Peralta, who has worked with SHRS on several previous large-scale rescues, called our hotline in late May to alert us and ask for our help. Though SSPCA officials initially planned to round up all of the bunnies in one trip, and a date was set for June 19, it soon became clear that there wasn't enough room at the shelter for 500 bunnies, and most would have to be euthanized. The plan was abandoned while the SSPCA and SHRS worked together to research other solutions.



*The Galt bunnies are friendly and well-liked by many of the mobile home park residents. However, there is concern about the property damage they cause and their unchecked population growth.*

Unfortunately, there were no easy outs. SHRS volunteers traveled to the site on their own to survey the area, speak with the park's management, take pictures, and offer cage donations and supplies. Our members also contacted sanctuaries, shelters, rescue groups and vets to try to get assistance with the roundup and possibly secure on-site spays and neuters, health checks, and placement.

There were many dashed hopes along the way. Local newspapers and two television news stations covered the story, but no one stepped forward with new offers of assistance. A few sanctuaries offered to lend a hand, but the conditions at most properties were deemed unacceptable by HRS standards and not in the best interest of the rabbits. Several of the parks' residents expressed interest in capturing their favorite rabbits, spaying and neutering them and keeping them as indoor pets – but another disappointment came when the management at the mobile home park announced that this would not be allowed.

In early August, SSPCA staff and rounded up about 20 rabbits. Most looked like hotot mixes (white rabbits with black rings around the eyes and other black markings) and were very friendly. These rabbits were taken back to the shelter in Sacramento and put up for adoption. Back in Galt, about 12 of the mobile home park residents purchased Have-a-Heart traps (traps that will not hurt the rabbits) and made an agreement with the SSPCA to try to capture more rabbits – the bunnies would be cared for on-site until the SSPCA made more room at their Sacramento facility and could transport more. However, for now, there is no more space at the shelter, and the residents have stopped trying to capture rabbits. (They report that they can easily catch 20-25 rabbits in a day or two!)

There are currently 68 of the Galt rabbits available for adoption at the SSPCA. A special adoption day is planned for Saturday, September 18 (see sidebar). SHRS plans to assist that weekend if possible.

The good news is that for right now, the SSPCA does not plan to euthanize any of the rabbits. The plan is to keep trying to capture and trying to place more. Unfortunately, back



in Galt, the rabbit population continues to explode and there is no true end in sight.

SHRS and the SSPCA continue to look for solutions, as both organizations are in it for the long haul. We have a core group of volunteers who assist, but we definitely need more help. We can use any of the following:

- Assistance with the daily care and socialization of the rabbits (including cleaning the cages, feeding, grooming, nail trims, etc.) at the SSPCA
- Donations of Timothy hay, toys, hay baskets, newspaper, or other supplies
- Monetary donations to purchase supplies

If you are over the age of 18 and have experience working with rabbits (or if you don't, but are willing to be trained by SSPCA staff and SHRS volunteers), your help can make a difference! Call the SHRS hotline at (916) 863-9690 or the SSPCA main number (916) 383-PETS for more information. We'll keep you posted in the next few issues of *All Ears in Sacramento*.

— Kirsten Macintyre and  
Margaret-Rose Batterman

## SPECIAL ADOPTION DAY

The SSPCA will hold an adoption day for the Galt bunnies and other surrendered rabbits.

Saturday,  
September 18  
11:00 AM  
Sacramento SPCA  
6201 Florin-Perkins Rd.  
Sacramento, CA 95828  
(916) 383-PETS

# Our First Special-Needs “Poster Bunny” Finds a Home

This is a story about another bunny who was in need of extra love. Duchess, a young female rabbit, came into the El Dorado Animal Control about a year ago. She was neglected, abused and finally abandoned by her owners. Although we’ll never know exactly what happened to Duchess as a baby, it is most likely that she was kept in an extremely small cage and got very little exercise. As a result, her front legs never strengthened properly, and at some point in her young life, she suffered a break in her back leg below the knee. When she came into the HRS fostering system, she was also suffering from a bacterial infection in her GI system, caused by severe malnourishment.

*After a rough start in life, things are looking up for Duchess!*

But even despite her bleak start in life, Duchess entered our foster program and proved herself to be a delightful, happy bunny. Once her leg healed, she learned to run and jumps like any fully-abled rabbit (even if there is a noticeable little “duck waddle” to her hop!). A veterinarian spayed her and treated the bacterial infection. However, some medical issues remained, and will stay with her for life. She lacks bladder control and urinates on her

blankets, resulting in the need for twice-daily “butt baths” to prevent urine scald.

Duchess was one of the happiest, well-adjusted foster rabbits I’ve ever had, and her adorable face pulled at my heartstrings. She became quite friendly with my other rabbits, and would allow me to bundle her in a towel and lay her in bed next to me and sleep for several hours. I could feel that she appreciated finally being in a home where she was loved and well-cared for. But still, as much as I loved her, caring for her as a foster was taxing; I have many other rabbits to care for, and this little girl needed a home of her own.

I wondered if anyone would ever adopt her. It takes a special person to adopt a special-needs pet – how would we ever find someone who was a good match for Duchess?

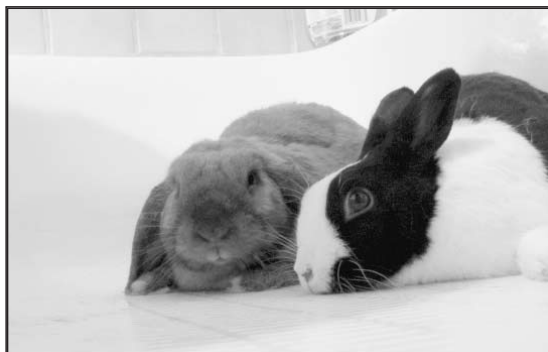
We decided to try a new tactic for reaching out – a “special needs” section of the SHRS web site. Duchess was the first rabbit to be featured. And sure enough, through the site, we found our angel. Suzanne Balko read Duchess’ story and her heart was touched. Suzanne, who has two bonded male rabbits, wanted to provide a good life for this very special foster girl. I took Duchess to Suzanne’s home and she was hooked the minute they laid eyes on each other. And there was an added bonus to choosing this home: Because Duchess is so friendly, Suzanne was willing to try bonding her with her two boy rabbits, Petey and Humperdink. The trio is still a work in progress but Suzanne has shown patience and dedication. And Humperdink has taken to Duchess especially well.

A special-needs rabbit is a great commitment – of time, patience, and sometimes money. But the rewards are so worth it when you see the look of love and appreciation in the face of a rabbit like Duchess. We hope that Duchess will be the first of many success stories from our new special needs web page.

— Kimberly Wheatfill



*Duchess and Humperdink spend some quality bathtub time*



# 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. We do offer nail trims for a \$5 donation, but please call our hotline at least 48 hours in advance to set an appointment time (so we'll be sure to have someone available for you!). Please also bring your own, sterilized clippers. Grooming and de-matting services are also available outside of Clinic hours, but by appointment only. Call our hotline for more information.

**September 11**  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Arden PetCo  
1878 Arden Way

**October 9**  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Folsom PetCo  
855 E. Bidwell Street

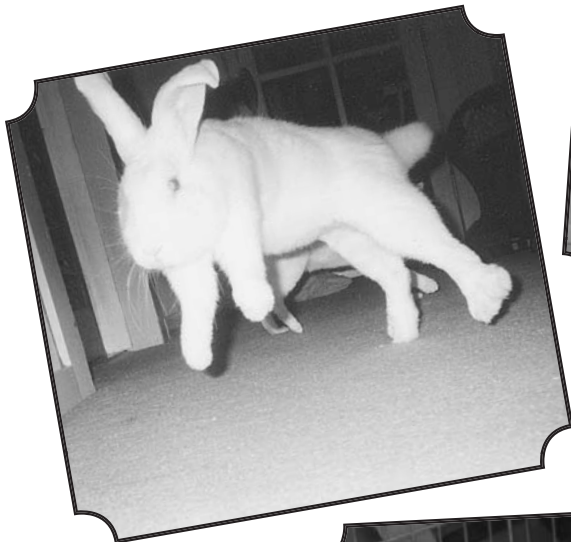
**November 13**  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Arden PetCo  
1878 Arden Way

**December 11**  
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Fair Oaks PetCo  
8840 Madison Avenue

## Fun Photos!



Ziggy is one happy house rabbit! He is playing with his kitty friend (either that or he has 8 legs...)



Oscar (recently adopted by Mark Wiest) enjoys hanging out in the bunny cottage.



Anne Destefano's foster bunny Boo does a thorough check for bunny treats.

**Drop us a line!**  
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 below. We can't return items, so please do not send originals.

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

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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! *SHRS does not sell or share our member's information with any other organizations or companies.*

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

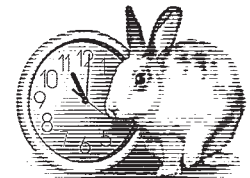
email address: \_\_\_\_\_

*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**