

Quarterly News from the
Sacramento House Rabbit Society

All Ears in Sacramento

Number 18
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Suzette, a former HRS foster bunny who lives with her adoptive family in the Sacramento area, was recently diagnosed with a mild case of head tilt.

Living with Head Tilt

Torticollis, or "head tilt," is an unpleasant condition that we hope your rabbit never experiences. Unfortunately, many of our members have seen this in their bunnies; in recent months, we have learned of a few new cases, and we wanted to explain this condition, its causes and treatment, in basic terms to help our members understand what it is.

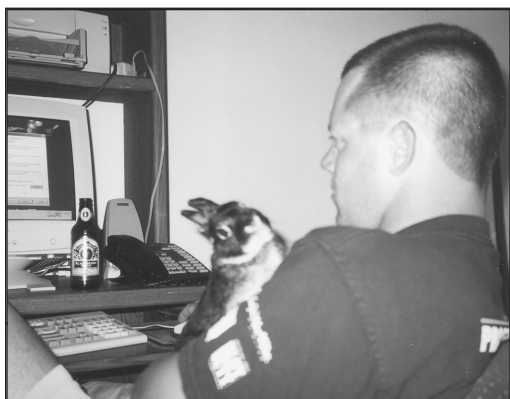
Many bunnies who develop this condition seem to get it overnight. The rabbit's head seems to list to one side, a little at first, but then more and more. If left untreated, the rabbit's head will tilt so much that the bunny will lose his balance and be unable to stand up straight. In extreme cases, the rabbit may begin to roll uncontrollably. It's a traumatic situation, both for the rabbit and his concerned human companions.

One common cause is a middle or inner ear infection, which can be cured with antibiotics. If attempts to clear the infection with antibiotics appear to be failing, the veterinarian may suggest ear surgery to provide drainage, clean out the ear and further determine the cause and extent of the infection. If the head tilt is extreme, a steroid may be prescribed in an attempt to reduce the inflammation and ease the tilt as the rabbit fights off the ear infection.

Another, more serious cause is Encephalitozoon cuniculi (E. cuniculi), which is a protozoal parasite (this means that it lives only within other animals; it can not live or grow outside of its host as bacteria can). Frequently there are signs preceding a head tilt caused by E.cuniculi such as tripping, dragging of feet, or tipping over. These symptoms may appear

Sideways Sam: A Bunny who Conquered Head Tilt

Several years ago, my husband Corey spotted a tiny black and silver dwarf rabbit in a cage at the Sacramento SPCA. He was slated to be euthanized, and when we peered in at him, we could see why – his little head was tipped far to the left, and he could barely look up at us. As we bent down to see him, he tried to sit up to greet us – and he promptly toppled over. Yet he scrambled back to his feet and licked



Corey Macintyre relaxes with Sammy (top) and administers his nighttime antibiotics (below).

my hand through the cage door. His spirit and the twinkle in his eye stole our hearts, and we decided then and there that we'd take him in and give him a fighting chance. "Sideways Sam," as my husband named him, spent the rest of his life teaching us humans about head tilt, rabbit behavior, and the real meaning of tenacity.

We took Sam to the vet and found out quickly that he tested positive for e. cuniculi. The vet told us solemnly that she wasn't sure he'd ever get better, but she sent us home with antibiotics and wished us well. We set little Sam up in a two-story cage with a litterbox, and he instantly took to his new digs. Although our friends were appalled at the state of this one-pound wonder ("Oh! What's wrong with his head?"), Sam never seemed to know anything was wrong or different about him. He moved a little slower than our other bunnies, as though he was carefully watching where he was going, but he got up and down the stairs of his cage just fine. He took his medicine every evening like a good sport, and because he spent so much time in our arms, he soon became one of the friendliest rabbits we'd ever had. He loved to perch on Corey's shoulder, where, for some reason, he seemed to have no trouble maintaining his balance. He'd perch there happily, watching television or the computer screen crookedly but contentedly.

Over time, we stopped noticing Sammy's tilt. Then one day we realized that it didn't seem so prominent. We took him back to the vet for a checkup and everyone was amazed. We'll never know if it was the meds or the interaction, but Sammy's head had slowly righted itself over time. The tilt was almost unnoticeable a year after we'd rescued him, and we eventually stopped the meds.

Sammy was later adopted to a wonderful home where he had a lovely bunny girlfriend twice his size. He captured the hearts of his new family, just as he captured ours. We enjoyed seeing pictures of him and hearing stories about his proclivity for stealing cookies and entertaining people. His adopter, Anne Miller, told us that she only noticed his head tilt when he was startled. Most of the time, when he was relaxed, his head was perfectly straight.

Sadly, our Sideways Sam passed away last year. He slipped away at home, probably not from anything related to the e. cuniculi. As with all our foster rabbits, we never really knew how old Sam was, so we hope that he had lived a long life and his time had simply come. His unforgettable spirit, and the lessons he taught us, will never be forgotten. And we can definitely vouch that he was a wonderful example of a bunny who conquered a difficult condition.

— Kirsten Macintyre

Living with Head Tilt *cont. from page 1*

and then vanish weeks or months prior to the head tilt. Some rabbits who have been exposed to E. cuniculi never develop any symptoms of illness; others may experience problems with the kidney, brain, spinal cord, liver or lungs. A bunny who is showing signs of head tilt and has no obvious ear infection should have a blood test to determine whether he has been exposed to this parasite.

A rabbit who has had a stroke can also

develop head tilt very quickly. Such a rabbit may initially be left with one side of his face, and perhaps one entire side of his body, affected. One side of his face will droop, he may drool, and one eye may not function properly. He may not move normally or may move in circles. Function usually will slowly return over a period of months. Care for a bunny who has suffered a stroke involves nursing him through his difficulties in eating, drinking and mov-

ing. Antibiotics do not help these cases, but sometimes are given to help rule out infection. Acupuncture can also be considered in treatment of these cases.

Other possible causes of head tilt include:

- Trauma (a blow to the head or face)
- Cancer
- Muscle contraction (a "pulled muscle")
- Intoxication

Regardless of the cause, most cases of head tilt have similarities. The "down" eye (the one facing the floor) will usually not close and will require eye ointment to keep the eye moist.

Lack of balance is what causes rabbits to "roll" and be unable to stand, so try to pick him up as little as possible. When you must pick your rabbit up, hold him securely against your own body, to help him feel as stable as possible. Depending upon the size of your rabbit you can usually figure out how to confine him to a smaller space (perhaps a sweater box with the higher sides). Place a synthetic sheepskin rug (which allows urine to pass through but will keep the rabbit dry) on the floor of the cage or box, and then place rolled towels or small blankets to help prop him up, so that he will be less likely to roll when he loses his balance. A stuffed toy bunny friend also helps.

Most rabbits will keep eating but may need

to be hand fed with lots of sympathy with every bite of food. He may not want his pellets, but he will usually eat a variety of fresh green veggies, carrots and fruits if you hold them for him. It may help to switch from timothy to alfalfa hay to encourage him to eat lots of roughage. If the rabbit is not eating or drinking, the doctor may recommend that fluids be administered subcutaneously and food given orally by syringe.

Head tilt is a very serious condition that should never be taken lightly. If you see any indications that your rabbit seems "off kilter," make an appointment with a vet immediately – don't wait, because time may be of the essence. However, plenty of rabbits do survive, sometimes fully recovering or almost fully recovering (some bunnies may be left with a slight head tilt for the rest of their lives). Rabbits are mighty fighters and you can help him in his fight by offering lots of sympathy and carrots.

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 on page 6. We can't return items, so please do not send originals.

Much of the information for this article was gathered from the National House Rabbit Society web site. Many thanks to Dr. Jeff Jenkins, whose article on e. cuniculi can be found at www.rabbit.org/chapters/san-diego/health/vet-talk/cuniculi.html, and to Sandi Ackerman and Dr. Barbara Deeb, whose article on head tilt can be found at www.rabbit.org/journal/3-8/head-tilt.html.

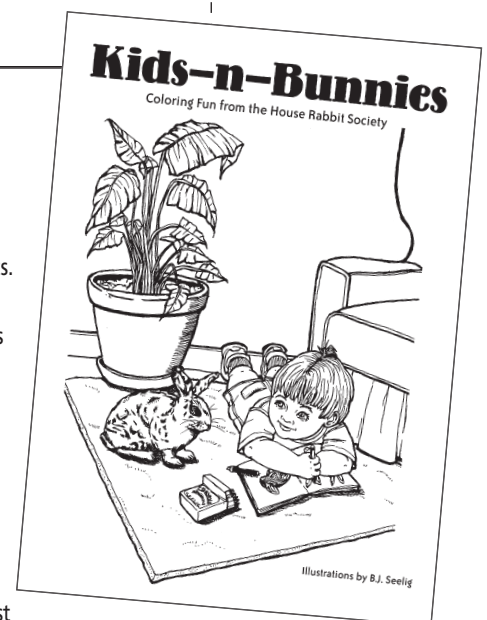
Help Us Spread the Word About Rabbits and Easter

Easter is around the corner, and with it comes the onslaught of baby bunnies bought as impulse pets. Every year, the House Rabbit Society works to get the word out that bringing home a rabbit requires careful thought and planning beforehand, and that the commitment continues long after the festivities of Easter have gone.

Due to the success of last year's program, we are once again asking for your help in spreading the word. In this issue of *All Ears in Sacramento*, you will find an order form for a coloring book. The coloring book is free (one per household) and contains information about proper rabbit care. If you know someone who is thinking about getting a bunny for Easter, please pass the order form to him or her. Parents and children can read the book together, and decide if they are ready to bring a bunny into their family.

We want to make sure that rabbits are a welcome addition to any family, and knowledge is the most powerful way to make that happen. Spreading the word through grass-roots efforts such as this are the most effective method – by educating others, you could help save a bunny from winding up at a local shelter. Thanks for your help!

Do you need more order forms? They are available from our website at www.allearsac.org. Coloring books may also be ordered by emailing kamagurka@mail.com. You may photocopy the order form as well.



Hiring a Professional Pet Sitter: *Peace of Mind When You're Away from Home*

A drop-by sitter will be responsible for not only your pet, but for your home as well, so you should choose one who can be trusted.

If you're headed out of town, and you have no neighbors who can watch your bunny, you might be concerned about finding appropriate care for your pet in your absence. In recent years, the use of professional pet sitting services has become more commonplace. Professional pet sitters generally operate in one of three ways:

- **Boarders/Day Care:** You bring your rabbit to the home or facility that will provide care. These are generally veterinarian offices, kennels, and sitters who have opened their home to care for your pets.
- **Live-in Care:** Your pet remains at home and the pet sitter lives in your home during the entire time you are away while caring for your pet.
- **Drop-by Care:** Your pet remains at home; the sitter comes over 1-2 times a day to provide care to your pets.

The drop-by care sitter is the most common type (and also the majority of the sitters listed in the telephone book). For short trips away from home, this is probably the best and most convenient choice. But how do you go about choosing one?

A drop-by sitter will be responsible for not only your pet, but for your home as well, so you should choose one who can be trusted. Currently, there are no educational standards or state licensure requirements in order to be a professional pet sitter, but most professional sitters have a business license in the county or city in which they provide their services. They maintain business liability insurance and are bonded, and often have had special pet care training offered through the Red Cross, shelters, rescue organizations, colleges or community classes. Many also maintain memberships in national or regional pet sitters associations.

You can find drop-by care sitters listed in the phone book, or you can ask the House Rabbit Society for a recommendation (the SHRS keeps a list of both professional and hobby pet sitters who are comfortable watching bunnies). Pet sitters usually only cover certain areas of town, so you may have to call a couple to find one who

covers your neighborhood. Pet sitters are booked far in advance (especially around holidays), so call early.

When you contact the sitter, she will arrange an introductory meeting in your home to meet you and your pets. You should ask about the sitter's experiences and credentials. You will also need to decide how often you want the sitter to visit and agree upon the service cost. Fees are based on the type of pets, the number of pets, how many visits per day and any other services that may be provided. Some sitters will ask for a deposit towards those fees. You may also be asked to sign a veterinary release form, which gives the sitter authorization to seek medical care for your pet if needed. Once you have decided to enlist the sitter, a service contract is signed and a house key is exchanged.

What Your Sitter Needs to Know

A good sitter will also have plenty of questions for you. Rabbits are generally more delicate than dogs and cats, so in order for your sitter to give quality care for your rabbit, it is important for her to know all about your bunny's habits, diet, and health. Share any information that will help your sitter understand your bunny.

- Tell her about any minor or major health problems your bunny has or has had in the past. If he is currently on medication, show the sitter how to administer it.
- Give specific information on feeding your bunny. Don't just state "a handful" of food; instead, say "½ cup." Measure out a serving of vegetables in a plastic bag as an example. Relay how much your bunny usually eats and drinks each day.
- Because vegetables and fruits are perishables, give a list of acceptable vegetables that your sitter can purchase, but remember not to introduce new foods.
- Tell your sitter the brand of rabbit food your rabbit eats and where it is purchased, in case something happens to your supply of food. Also tell her what type of hay your rabbit eats.
- Show the sitter a normal-sized bunny drop-

ping, so she may be aware of any major changes in size, shape, softness and consistency (any of which could be an indicator of a health problem).

- If your rabbit has aggressive tendencies, let your sitter know so she can make adequate preparations beforehand, such as wearing gloves, long sleeves, or thick socks!
- If you want your rabbit to have exercise time, let the sitter know where he can safely run and play. Point out favorite hiding areas and explain what is not acceptable behavior – and tell the sitter how to stop misbehavior (such as using a squirt bottle or giving a “no!” command). Also explain how to coax your bunny back into his cage.
- If you have multiple bunnies, relay how they get along and whether to commingle them during exercise time. If the bunnies look similar, provide pictures of each along with written descriptions so the sitter can tell them apart.
- If you have other pets in the house, describe how they get along. Give any precautionary instructions.

Your sitter will also want you to provide a detailed travel schedule and a telephone number where you can be reached in the event of an emergency or major question (if you want a daily report of your bunny’s status, your sitter will need a phone number or email address). You should also leave the name, telephone and address of your rabbit’s regular veterinarian and the closest emergency vet who can care for rabbits.

Your sitter needs to know if anyone else has a key or if anyone else will be entering your home while you are away. Liability issues revolve around those with access to your home. Generally, it is asked that no one else enter the house during the service period.

Finally, tell your sitter the best time to visit your rabbit – during quiet sleeping hours (for a shy rabbit) or during active times (for a bunny who likes to interact). A well-timed visit will make the experience more fun for both bunny and sitter.

Before You Go...

Before you leave, purchase extra food, hay and litter. Let your family and neighbors know you will be out of town and a sitter will be coming by daily. If you live in an apartment, let your manager know. Finally, call your veterinarian, and let her know your pet will be in the care of a sitter. Discuss your desires for both medical care and monetary limits in the event of an emergency, and if possible, make arrangements for payment of any potential fees.

It’s also important to prepare your home for your sitter before you leave. Have everything necessary to care for your pet in one general and visible area. Keep a checklist handy so you don’t forget anything: food, treats, medicines, utensils, cleaning supplies, litter and scoops, garbage bags, towels, and broom/dustpan or vacuum cleaner. Provide extra supplies! On the counter, leave any informational material about your bunny and/or home you wish the sitter to have.

Have a fire extinguisher available and in plain sight. If you are traveling in the hot summer months, place containers of water in the freezer for your rabbit and tell the sitter when to give them to your bunny.

Last but not least, set your temperature controls for the house and make sure your bunny’s cage or pen is secure and locked. Take a deep breath, and enjoy your vacation – your pet and your home are in good hands! (Just remember to call your sitter when you get home, so she knows you arrived safely!)

— Sharon Lowrey

Area Professional Pet Sitters

Elk Grove Region

Annabelle Doolittle Pet Sitting 916-607-7387
David & Lynne Kitts

Folsom Region to Foothills East

Aloha Pet Sitting 916 941-6738
Linda Jordan
The English Pet Nanny 916-965-8831
Trish Bakarich
Mary’s Menagerie 916-216-6599
Mary Signor
Pet Passion Unleashed 530-676-6797
Julie Cox
Pet’s Sake 530-644-7387
Brian Barry
Spoiled Rotten Pet Sitting Service 530-676-3526
Michael Braum
Tender Loving Care 530-677-6216
Ravilla Irwin

Roseville Region to Foothills North

Bird & Pet Clinic 916-773-6049
Veterinary Office with Boarding Facility
Creature Comfort Pet Sitting 916-725-9224
Rom Rodriguez
Countess Critters 916-965-7679
Randi Countess
Home Buddy Pet Sitting 916-205-9354
Kelly Boynton
Pam’s Pet Sitting 916-749-1007
Pam Mitchell
A Pet’s World 916-622-7387
Dale & Cynthia McCoy

Sacramento Region

Always TLC Pet Sitting 916-947-7389
Russ McLean, Rod Scofield
Animal Den 916-456-4720
Pet Boarding Facility
Animeals 916-646-4663
Keith & Jennifer Sharward
Doggie Duty 916-650-7387
Coby Peralta
Home & Critter Sitters 916-447-0735
Joyce Bayer
Karen’s Critter Care 916-612-6125
Karen Yeisley
Saint’s Pet Sitting 916-371-5373
Bonnie Corralejo

Recent Adoptions

Momma (now Sasha) was adopted by Mark and Tanya Kleinman as a friend for their bunny Big Man

Damon was adopted by Shannon Roberts as a companion for her bunny

Fuzzy Boy was adopted by Bonnie Dominick

Aermacchi was adopted by Karen Alaya and family

Cindy was adopted by Kirsten and Corey Macintyre as a buddy for their bunny Harley

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SHRS Manager and Newsletter Editor
Kirsten Macintyre

Newsletter Design
HareLine Graphics

Letters to the editor and newsletter submissions may be sent to:

Sacramento House Rabbit Society
P.O. Box 19850
Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

tel: (916) 863-9690
fax: (916) 372-8858

email:
KMacintyre@yahoo.com

Website:
www.allearsac.org

Rabbits Available for Adoption



Sam is a sweet, active boy with lots of personality.



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



Toy is a sweet Netherland Dwarf mix girl.



Brandon and Penny are a young bonded pair. They are very independent and curious.



Velvet is a female rabbit who is loving and playful.



Max is a fun-loving boy with white feet. He likes to be held and sit in your lap.



Maybeline is a beautiful English spot mix female.



Christopher is a young Netherland Dwarf male who likes to be petted and give kisses.



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



Sara is a sweet, shy bunny.



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



Oliver is a friendly and playful boy who loves to be held.



Pierre is an energetic and curious young male.



Tommy Bahama is a sweet and playful young boy.



Gibson is a two year old mini-rex. He enjoys sitting in laps and being petted.



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



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



Thumper is a mini-lop boy who likes to play with humans and sit on their laps.

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 also detangle 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!

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| March 8
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue | April 12
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Folsom PetCo
855 E. Bidwell Street | May 10
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Arden PetCo
1878 Arden Way | June 14
10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Fair Oaks PetCo
8840 Madison Avenue |
|---|---|---|---|

BAKE SALE!

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



BAKE SALE

The Sacramento House Rabbit Society will be holding its annual pre-Easter Bake Sale in conjunction with its April Adoption Event at the Folsom PetCo. Stop by and pick out dessert for your family or a snack for yourself while you visit with our foster bunnies. All proceeds go towards rabbit rescue. We appreciate your support!

SHRS Goodies

Our popular **SHRS t-shirts**, featuring delightful illustrations by SHRS member Shannon Hawkins (see below), are still available for purchase. Sizes available are L in natural and M, L, XL in navy. \$15 Back by popular demand is the **"Everything I Need to Know" poster**, featuring local rabbits. 12 x 36 inches, \$12. New for 2003 is the full color **Rabbits Calendar**, 12x12 inches, \$15, featuring rescued rabbits from the New York HRS chapter. Also available is the **"Kids-n-Bunnies" coloring book**, full of information about house rabbit care and fun pages to color. \$2 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling per coloring book*. Come by our monthly clinics to see these items in person, or use this form to order by mail.



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 19850, Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

*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.
 if ordering only coloring books, shipping & handling is \$1.50 per book.

allow 2-3 weeks for delivery



Sacramento House Rabbit Society
 P.O. Box 19850
 Sacramento, CA 95819-0850

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: _____

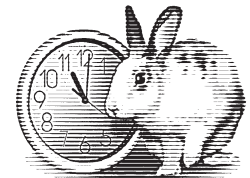
email address: _____

*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