

# THE RABBIT'S TALE

SPRING/SUMMER 2005

Alabama EARS is a Chapter of the House Rabbit Society VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1



## Alabama EARS

PO Box 130218  
Birmingham, AL  
35213

Website:  
www.AlabamaEARS.org

Email:  
info@AlabamaEARS.org

Hopline:  
(205) 942-9589

*This issue of The Rabbit's Tale is dedicated to all the bunnies purchased as Easter gifts who went to the Rainbow Bridge, instead of a forever home.*



## EASTER IS NO FUN FOR A REAL BUN

By Mary Alexander, Educator-in-Training

It hardly seems possible that Christmas is over, and Easter will soon be upon us. While most of us are looking forward to celebrating the Easter holiday, the volunteers at Alabama EARS (Encouraging Alabama Rabbit Support) are gearing up for the holiday in a different way. All of us are familiar with the tradition of the "Easter Bunny," leaving baskets of goodies for children. We've all seen the cute pictures of children, dressed in their Easter finery, holding a cuddly little bunny. Many take the tradition a step further, by giving live rabbits as Easter gifts. And each year, some 3 to 6 months after the Easter holidays, unwanted former Easter bunnies fill local animal shelters and rabbit rescues.

Contrary to Easter-time hype, rabbits and

small children are typically not a good match. The natural exuberance, activity, and noise-level of even the gentlest toddler are stressful for these sensitive creatures. Children like a companion they can pick up, carry, and cuddle, just as they do their favorite stuffed animal. Rabbits, being prey animals, become frightened when they are picked up, or held. Feeling threatened, they often respond defensively: kicking, biting, and scratching. The child then loses interest in this "toy" and the rabbit winds up neglected or abandoned.

Alabama EARS recently joined other House Rabbit groups in support of a campaign called "Make Mine Chocolate!" This campaign was initiated by the Columbus House Rabbit Society

*see Easter is no fun page 2*

## EARS PARTNERS WITH MAKE MINE CHOCOLATE CAMPAIGN

By Ruth M. Fledermaus, Volunteer

While cruising the Easter merchandise at Target the other day, I was startled to see what I thought was a real rabbit on the shelves! On closer inspection, I found that it was actually a beautifully realistic plush toy bunny. "If only people would buy bunnies like this instead of real rabbits for Easter!" I sighed. "At least this kind of bunny won't wind up at a shelter!"

The rabbit lovers behind the Make Mine Chocolate campaign agree. Started in

2002 by the Columbus House Rabbit Society, the campaign's message is that rabbits have special needs as pets, and should not be acquired casually as an Easter treat. Make Mine Chocolate seeks to educate the public on the realities of living with rabbits, and to encourage giving chocolate or toy bunnies instead of living ones at Easter.

Alabama EARS is proud to announce that we are among the many

*see Make Mine Chocolate page 4*

Thinking of adopting a bunny? Alabama EARS has bunnies with all kinds of personalities waiting to go to their forever home. Before you decide to bring a bunny into your home, please take a little time to learn what it is really like to live with a house rabbit. We recommend three short articles to give you a quick overview: “Living with a House Rabbit,” “Are you a Rabbit Person?” and “What are Rabbits Really Like” can be found on [www.Rabbit.org](http://www.Rabbit.org) and on our website [www.AlabamaEARS.org](http://www.AlabamaEARS.org). (Follow the Rabbit Care link for these and other great articles about domestic rabbit care on the EARS website.)

### I am ready to be adopted!

*Piccolo: Piccolo is a small lop-eared bunny with a beautiful brown and white coat. He is healthy, has been neutered and is ready for his forever home. Even though he was given such a hard start in life by his first family, Piccolo still loves humans and he wants nothing more than to be petted! To see a photo of this adorable boy and read more about his story and how he came to Alabama EARS visit our website.*

## EASTER IS NO FUN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1









in 2002 to educate the public on rabbit care and to encourage people to purchase chocolate Easter bunnies or stuffed toy animals rather than give live rabbits as Easter gifts. Using ceramic pins in the form of chocolate bunnies as the symbol, the campaign’s goal is to spread the message that rabbits should not be a casual purchase, but rather a serious commitment. It’s time to break the “Easter Bunny Cycle.”


It’s a common misconception that a rabbit is a low maintenance pet. In reality, they require almost as much work as a dog or cat. To truly enjoy a rabbit’s unique personality, he should be kept inside the house, where he can interact with the family. This means the rabbit must be litter- trained, and the house must be bunny-proofed. Rabbits can be very destructive. A rabbit’s teeth grow continually; wild bunnies have a wide array of things to chew on to keep their teeth worn down properly so they can eat. Domestic rabbits must have “chew toys” provided; otherwise, they will help themselves to your furniture, electric cords, and other household items. Rabbits are territorial, and should be spayed and neutered – otherwise they will “mark” their territory with urine and feces.

Some people prefer to keep their pet rabbits in outdoor pens. Although this may be a simpler arrangement, House Rabbit enthusiasts don’t recommend it. Rabbits are intelligent, playful, and social. To relegate a bunny to an outdoor hutch is a disservice to the animal, and you. You can’t enjoy your bunnies’ antics if he’s outside, and you’re indoors. Rabbits kept outdoors have an average lifespan of about one year; while house rabbits can live 8 to 10 years. Outdoor bunnies become easy

prey for predators, not only in rural areas but in urban and suburban locations as well.

If you are considering a pet bunny, please remember these facts:

-  Rabbits can live 8 to 10 years.
-  Rabbits are better pets when spayed and neutered – it helps with behavior problems that arise when they reach adolescence. Spay/neuter surgery can cost \$100 or more.
-  A rabbit’s diet should consist of hay, water, fresh vegetables, and a good quality pellet.
-  Rabbits require as much care as a dog or a cat.
-  Rabbits require routine veterinary care.
-  House your rabbit indoors, and provide safe exercise space.
-  Rabbits do not make good pets for children.
-  It is a death sentence to set a domestic rabbit “free.” They lack the survival skills to live in the wild.

Although they are wonderful pets, rabbits are not for everyone! So if your child is begging for a bunny this Easter, do a rabbit a favor, buy a stuffed or chocolate rabbit. Remember: Easter’s no fun for a real bunny! To learn more about the “Make Mine Chocolate” campaign, visit the website at [www.makeminechocolate.org](http://www.makeminechocolate.org). To learn more about rabbit care and behavior, or to become a volunteer or make a donation, please visit EARS’ website at [www.AlabamaEARS.org](http://www.AlabamaEARS.org) 

## A MOMENT WITH FRIENDS

*Cowan Cowan is an EARS volunteer and fosterer-in-Training. She has lived with house rabbits for two years. When she isn't busy being a bunny mom, Connie is busy with her human family and her two beautiful grandchildren.*

**EARS:** What are your bunnies' names?

**CC:** My bunnies are Mopsy and Beau (bonded pair) and Grace and Baxter (bonded pair). [They] are very much in love and constantly groom each other and sleep together. I think that is one thing about bunnies that many people are unaware. A companion bunny brings so much joy and happiness to the bunny as well as the bunny's family. And there is still only one litter box, one water crock, one pellet bowl, and one nightly salad with each bonded pair! A bonded pair is really no more trouble than a single rabbit, and the contentment on their faces says it all!

**EARS:** Where did your bunnies come from?

**CC:** Our first rabbit, Mopsy, came to us because I did not want [my daughter] to take her to the Lee County shelter. I feel so strongly that if you make a commitment, you need to stick with it. It is so unfair to a rabbit to buy it while it is little, play with it, and then surrender it because you are tired of it. The others are Alabama EARS rescues.

**EARS:** What was the biggest adjustment you made to your life after getting a rabbit?

**CC:** Learning to care for a rabbit. I have always been a cat person, so we had so much to learn!

**EARS:** What do you wish you would have known prior to bringing your first bun into your life?

**CC:** I wish that I had known more about the bunny's care and its needs. Mopsy came to us with her small wire animal cage, a water bottle, and cedar bedding. After meeting Linda Howard, our main fosterer, I learned how most of the things we were doing were wrong.

**EARS:** What surprised you (at first) about living with a house rabbit?

**CC:** What surprised me most was how aggressive an unsprayed rabbit could be! Mopsy would charge, bark, and bite. Everyone was afraid to even feed her. After her surgery, her personality was completely changed - well, almost! She is still a feisty little girl, but very sweet and gentle. I have also been surprised at how much personality a bunny can have.

**EARS:** Any favorite foods?

**CC:** My bunnies love parsley, cilantro, kale, red leaf lettuce, romaine, and baby carrots. They stand up and beg for their banana pieces.

**EARS:** What is the hardest part of having house rabbits? Why is it worth it?

**CC:** Having to deal with their occasional illnesses, and unfortunately, a couple of their deaths. Losing a bunny is such a heart-wrenching experience. But you find some comfort in knowing that you did make a difference in that bunny's life, even if it was for a short time. It is also difficult to see a bunny that is sick or in pain, but rewarding to nurse it back to health.


**EARS:** When are the moments that you are particularly glad that you have rabbits?

**CC:** When I see the contentment in their faces. It is so satisfying to work and socialize a scared little bunny and see it begin to trust you and feel your love.

**EARS:** What do you wish the world knew about rabbits?

**CC:** I wish the world would understand that bunnies should not be bought on impulse or as gifts for children. Too many people adopt the precious baby bunny and do not consider the ten-year commitment it brings. That tiny bunny will grow up so fast and will need a lot of time and attention. If someone truly wants to adopt a rabbit and make the needed commitment, the animal rescue groups or shelters are a much better place to find that special bunny than the pet stores. Rescued bunnies are usually old enough to know their personalities, and that is a definite advantage over buying a baby bunny from the pet store.

**EARS:** Is there anything else you'd like to share with EARS members about your bunnies or experiences with living with a house rabbit?

**CC:** I would like to encourage other members to become more actively involved with the fostering program, if they have the time. Fostering is so rewarding! Making a difference in an innocent little bunny's life just gives you a feeling that you can't describe. If additional foster homes are available, more of the shelter bunnies can be saved. 

### We are Ready to be adopted!

All of Alabama EARS' adoptable bunnies have been spayed or neutered. If you are interested in adopting one of these buns, please fill out an application on our website at [www.AlabamaEARS.org](http://www.AlabamaEARS.org)

*Joey: Joey is a beautiful, white bunny with charcoal grey spots and gorgeous dark eyes. This super-loving guy is a manageable weight (about 5 lbs) who deserves a forever home. He is a little shy but LOVES to be petted! He does well with other bunnies---male and female---and his foster mom thinks he would really like to go to a home where he could have a best-bun friend to play and snuggle with all day long. Joeys also has excellent litter box habits.*

*Ginny: Ginny has the most gentle and loving personality. You'll fall in love with her as soon as you pet her and she makes a quiet "cooing" sound in appreciation. This girl is smart and will toss her food dish when it is close to dinnertime---just to make sure you don't forget. She also has excellent litter box habits. Ginny came to EARS from the N.GA HRS chapter and would do well in either an experienced bunny home, or one with first time bun parents.*

## We are Ready to be adopted!

*Petey: Petey came from the Elmore County Shelter. He is almost solid white with brown eyes—you just melt when you look at them. Petey is about six months old, comes when his name is called, and visits the other foster buns when it is his free time in the foster home. He seems to need a bunny companion. Do you have a spayed female who might be his best friend?*

*Babs and Snookums: B&S are the most precious bonded pair! Snookums is a little shy at first but has no problems nudging his foster mom's hand for affection. Babs is more assertive and climbs into her foster mom's lap for attention. They are, of course, spayed and neutered. B & S are best friends so they must be placed in the same home.*

*Rusty: Rusty is a sweet calico bunny. He will sit as long as he is being petted. His favorite toy is a cardboard box that he loves to dig in and remodel.*

*Abigail: Abigail's name is bigger than she is! At (almost) 3 lbs this petite young lady is playful with spunky attitude. She loves to rabbit race and has excellent litter box habits. She's quite a talker and "honks" to express herself. See a photo of this elegant gal on our website.*

## MAKE MINE CHOCOLATE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

organizations that are partnering with the Make Mine Chocolate campaign. We will be selling their signature ceramic pin, in the image of a chocolate Easter bunny. Wearing one of these pins encourages conversations that raise awareness of the problems of rabbits at Easter.

And what are those problems? Rabbits are such a symbol of Easter that it seems natural to acquire one as part of the celebration. It's difficult to resist the temptation, especially when there are children involved who are begging for a cute little bunny of their own. Yet far too many people acquire rabbits without having done their homework.

While rabbits are cute, they are not always cuddly, and they can be skittish when faced with a boisterous child. Parents tire of actual chores involved in caring for the rabbit, and children lose interest, as though the bunny were just another toy. All too often, the bunny who was the star of the Easter celebration winds up "set free" outside, or surrendered to a shelter. The consequences of this are staggering for animal rescue groups.

Those of us involved in rabbit welfare issues dread the months following Easter, when there is a definite surge in the number of rabbits turned in to shelters and found running loose outside. Rabbits are the third most frequently euthanized animals at shelters, and a large percentage of these are bunnies discarded after Easter.


The cost to shelters and rescue organizations that must care for these rabbits is great, both financially and emotionally. Alabama EARS takes in as many of these bunnies as we can, but there are still many more who need homes. The solution will only come when the public realizes that rabbits are

not disposable pets.

I am sadly aware of this problem on a personal level, as both of my rabbits were probably discarded Easter bunnies. Loki was found wandering dangerous city streets, emaciated and filthy, while my other rabbit, Mirage, could be the poster child for the Make Mine Chocolate campaign.

Abandoned in a wildlife sanctuary at just the right time of year to have been an Easter purchase, Mirage eluded capture for over a month. In fact, her name is a reference to the fact that she was there one minute and gone the next! When she finally succumbed to some tasty treats in a Hav-A-Heart trap, she weighed two pounds less than her full weight, had patches of fur missing, and was covered in sores. Mirage was also terrified of people, and had probably never been properly socialized.

Mirage would have died outside if she had not been captured and cared for. She and Loki are lucky rabbits. They were rescued and are now the king and queen of our home. By partnering with the Make Mine Chocolate campaign, Alabama EARS hopes to cut down on the number of Easter bunnies whose stories don't have such happy endings.

To learn more about the Make Mine Chocolate campaign, please visit [www.MakeMineChocolate.org](http://www.MakeMineChocolate.org). Alabama EARS will be selling the stylish Make Mine Chocolate pins for \$5. Each pin comes attached to a card that has basic facts about rabbits and Easter. They are a great conversation starter and make wonderful gifts for the rabbit lover in your life! We also have a limited number of T-shirts available. Please call our Hopline to purchase these items, and help us spread the word: Rabbits and Easter don't mix!! 



# Alabama EARS

## Membership Enrollment and Volunteer Form

Your tax-deductible donation will be used for medical costs (spay/neuter) and education expenses. As an EARS member, you will receive copies of our newsletter, *The Rabbit's Tale*, and invitations to our BYOBP (Bring Your Own Bunny Photo) parties.

### Contact Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address is for newsletter and party invites

### Alabama EARS Membership (1 year)

Options:

- Alabama EARS \$10.00  
 Alabama EARS and National HRS \$28.00

I've enclosed an additional donation to help the foster bunnies

### Volunteer Opportunities

I'd like to volunteer for EARS and:

- Help at educational events
- Work with the bunnies in the shelters
- Help at fund raising events
- Post Fliers at animal clinics, libraries, supermarkets, drug stores, etc.
- Attend Hay Day gatherings to fill boxes with fresh hay for sale. (The profits go towards the cost of spay and neuter of foster buns)
- Donate a bag of bunny food (Purina Hi-Fiber Rabbit Diet)
- Be a foster mom or dad for an abused or neglected rabbit
- Save my spare change to help pay foster bunny medical expenses (Fun Bun Money)
- Contribute to the EARS newsletter, *The Rabbit's Tale*
- Make copies of House Rabbit Society educational materials
- Bunny sit for other EARS members or a foster home
- Have my bun sponsor a foster bun for a \$20 donation

**Please send this form with your check to:**

**Alabama EARS  
Membership Secretary  
PO Box 130218  
Birmingham, AL 35213**

*please visit our website at: <http://www.AlabamaEARS.org>*



### Adopted!!

Hannah, Emma & Connor, and Brooklyn have been adopted.

### *The Bunny Supply Store is waiting for your order!*

High-fiber food pellets 5 lb. bag - \$2.50  
Oxbow hay - \$12.00 a box  
Woody Pet - \$ 7.00  
Plus more!

And an ever-changing selection of toys and fun things for bun parents.

Call Donna at (205) 595-5634 to place an order and for pick up information.

## EARS NEWS AND ANNOUCMENTS

### Spring Cleaning? Donate your discards!

In 2005, EARS will hold several garage sales in the Birmingham and Huntsville areas. To donate in the Birmingham area, call Connie at (205) 967-8632. To donate in the Huntsville area, call Ruth at (256) 882-2231. The Huntsville sale is set for April 10<sup>th</sup>.

### Bunny Sitters needed

The summer will be here before we know it. Summer vacations won't be far behind. If you are interested in exchanging bunny-sitting services with other EARS members, email us and we'll add you to the list. In addition, sometimes even our hard-working foster moms and dads need a break! Since our last newsletter, two members have volunteers (and bunny sat!) in our foster homes. If you would like more information on how to bunny sit in our foster homes (don't worry the buns stay where they are with daily visits from you) email us for details.

### iGive.com

If you shop online why not have a portion of your purchase price donated to EARS? Register for the free service at iGive.com and shop through their website at any of the 440 + participating stores. It doesn't cost you anything, you may even save money with special offers reserved for iGive.com shoppers, and it helps the foster buns. So far, Alabama EARS members have raised \$13.40 by just shopping online. We think this is a great start and want to encourage everyone to check out iGive.com.

### Membership 2005

Please remember to renew your membership this year! To make it easy, we've included a membership form in this issue. Mail it back to us with your tax-deductible donation of \$10 and you'll be done for another year.

Membership fees are kept low but when everyone renews the money adds up and the bunnies win.

## A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Thank you to **Cory Nichols** and **Mary Russom** of **Vulcan Materials** for their generous donation of 100 printed newsletters of *The Rabbit's Tale* Issue 4.



### *Alabama EARS*

PO Box 130218  
Birmingham, AL 35213

