# **Entertaining** the Disabled **House Rabbit**

# By Phyllis O'Beollain

In addition to food, shelter, good medical care, and love, the house rabbit needs mental stimulation. All pets need something to do besides eat and sleep, regardless of their age or (dis)ability. Physicallychallenged pets may be more limited in their options for entertainment – they may not be able to hop, climb. or dig as others can – but they still need the outlet. Even when my bunny Arctic was so sick with head tilt that she was not able to stand by herself, she would lay on the carpet and pull at her baby keys toy, moving it a half inch one way, then the other. As she gradually recovered, she returned to most of her usual activities, albeit with modifications.

Here are a few suggestions for entertaining physicallychallenged house rabbits, along with ideas for inexpensive playthings.

# Interesting things to examine

Rabbits are generally curious creatures, and there are many bunny-safe things that can enrich their environment. Pets with limited mobility will greatly appreciate

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your bringing the interesting environment to them in the form of new objects to look at, smell, and even taste. Some miniature pumpkins, a dish of freshly-fallen snow, some fragrant herbs, a new bunny-safe stuffed toy – the disabled bunny depends on you for help with alleviating boredom and stimulating his interest and spirits. Even if your bunny does not care to eat the fresh mint, the fragrance will excite his sense of smell. Your bunny may wish to chew on the pumpkin or may simply smell it or lick it; in any case, it enriches his environment.

# **Digging behavior**

Arctic used to love to dig on the carpet, her cardboard box toy, her litter box. Even when she could no longer balance properly to dig normally, she would sit in her cut-down litter box and push the shredded paper

> out with her head. Yes, her head. She then got out of the litter box

> > Continued on page 4



Arctic examines some pumpkins.



Oreo examines some fresh snow.





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Visit the House Rabbit Society at http://www.rabbit.org and the Buckeye House Rabbit Society at http://www.ohare.org

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# **Special Thanks to:**

Janet Reed, for her generous contribution in memory of her sweet Wilma.

**Liz and Steve Claytor**, for their thoughtful donation in tribute to Caddy and Bogey Savage.

**Shannon Bailor**, for her much-appreciated gift in her beloved Cooper's memory.

**Small Pet Select**, for donating a percentage of hay purchases to the Buckeye HRS. See our website for details (under Recommended Supplies) and remember to use the coupon code "Buckeye" to receive free shipping and to help us help more bunnies.

The following members, whose monetary and in-kind donations allow us to meet our ongoing fostering and educational goals:

Carol Harvey, Gay Marie Goden, Stacie Hecht, Bob and Holly Piekarczyk, Barbara Roberts, Shirley Wood, Dorothea Mayerchak, Jim and Laura Gills, Judy O'Neil, Carey Miklavcic, Jude Smith-May, Mary Zimmerman, David Truelsch, Irene Levy, Jessica Yakonick, Kim Johnson and Rob Lovicz, Leah Holtzapple, Cathy Montiegel, Anna Hamel, Kellie Henisa, Terese Easterday, Carmella Coia, Christa Billerman and Fayaz Bhanji, Jim and Laura Brown.

**Our new and continuing Sanctuary Rabbit Sponsors!** These special rabbits, who will spend the rest of their lives in foster care due to serious medical conditions, have you kind and generous people to thank!

As always, the **Monks Copy Shop** of downtown Columbus, for their discount on printing our newsletter.

# Holiday Raffle Results



And the winner is ... **Rachel Levy of Cincinnati!**Congratulations to Rachel and many thanks to all who supported the Buckeye HRS through the purchase of raffle tickets. Proceeds are allowing us to make 2017 brighter for more homeless bunnies in Ohio.

# Farewell to Caddy & Bogey

By Gary Savage

Caddy and Bogey were the two remaining brothers of triplets who were rescue bunnies. We adopted them in the winter of 2010 when they were just over a year old, delightful, and ornery. They loved to run around jumping and chasing each other and stealing food out of each other's mouths. They spent almost

all of their time together whether exploring, eating, playing, or sleeping. Even when they managed to escape, they would run kicking and jumping together around the house before returning to their room.

As many bunnies, they took great joy in climbing and jumping to high places. One of their favorite places to sleep was in

one of the computer chairs in their room. A couple of times when we made the mistake of leaving one of the chairs too close to a desk, they jumped on the chair and climbed to the desk and managed to disable the computer, printer, and one lamp before being discovered. Another time they managed to step on the remote control unit sitting on the desk and turned on the television in their room while we were away. When we got home they were both sleeping under the desk as if they knew nothing about it. They also enjoyed taking turns sitting with us and reading the newspaper in their room. However, after a few minutes they would get bored, grab a corner of the paper, and take off running and jumping across the room

dragging the paper behind them.

We lost both boys in June 2016, just two weeks apart. We truly believe that after Caddy died, Bogey just gave up because he missed his life-long companion.

Though we had the boys for only six short years, we will never forget the joy and happiness they gave us.



Caddy & Bogey

# Adopted!

Grayson has found his forever home with Lorea and Justin. He is a happy only child, just the way he likes it. His new favorite thing is to watch movies on the couch with his humans. **Y** Captain and Tennille have found their bunny paradise with Kelly and Jon. The family couldn't be happier with their new additions. **P Malibu** has found her forever home with the Scholberg family and her new bun-friend, Mr. B. \*Peewee is now the happiest, most spoiled bunny with his new family. Lama, Dale, and Carmen (bunny) are all pleased with their new addition. \* Greyson is the first of the Sandusky County Dozen to get a forever home. He is happily hopping around the home of his new parents, Rich and Donna Brady. 

After more than two years in foster care and after all her babies were adopted, Lacey has found a special loving home with John and Ruth Miller, the caring couple who first rescued pregnant Lacey when she was dumped on their doorstep.



All bunnies love toys!

and pushed the box around, spreading the joy and the shredded paper all over. I had to put a brick in her litter box to keep it in one place. Again, don't assume your pet will not have the same interests in her pre-disability hobbies. S/he may simply adapt to her disability and carry on!

### Things to toss

Rabbits enjoy flinging things, and many enjoy simply re-arranging things ("That toy looks better over here. No wait – over there. No, no, let me try it over there!"). Arctic loved to re-arrange her cardboard furniture, food dishes, and toys, even if only moving them just an inch or two in either direction. Lightweight baby keys, balls made from cardboard rings, and toilet paper tubes stuffed with hay are good choices for throwing and/or re-arranging. Pets with very limited mobility may need a whole pile of small, lightweight toys if they are not able to retrieve the toys themselves -- they toss all the toys, you retrieve them and let them throw them again ... and again. Another option is to attach a toy (baby key ring, for example) to the side of the xpen with zip ties so that the toy remains within your bunny's reach. Be sure to choose toys made from very hard plastic with no small parts to choke on or swallow.

# Cozy cloths

Many pets like to rearrange and hide in or under bedding (old towels, fleece baby blankets, or other small, soft cloths) and even an immobile pet can push and pull the cloth until it is just right (for the moment, anyway!). Some pets like a small fleece put over them as a little cover to hide under. Supervise your pet to make sure that s/he shows no interest in actually eating the cloth, as that would be very dangerous.

### Paper shredding

Some rabbits enjoy shredding things; even immobile bunnies can shred small paperback books or those



Arctic wrapped up in her blanket.



small, impossible-to-read phone books. As long as your bun does not eat the paper, put a book within his reach and let him have at it. A small, natural-straw whisk broom is also good for shredding, as are the grass mats which are marketed for bunnies and other small pets.

## Chewing

Even disabled rabbits need to chew. Their teeth constantly grow and need to be ground down by chewing. Untreated apple twigs, untreated wood blocks or other wooden toys, the afore-mentioned stuffed cardboard tubes are all good choices for the rabbit with limited mobility. Provide a variety of these to keep your pet amused.

# Handicapped accessible

Rabbits with disabilities such as splay leg may not be able to scoot into cardboard tubes or navigate the doorways of cardboard cottages. A cardboard box with the bottom and the ends cut off makes a great tunnel for a bunny to shuffle under; if need be, a cardboard "awning" can even be affixed to the side of an xpen for bunny to hide under. My blind bunny Bubba loved to jump up on the bed for a nap, but was unable to hop down because he could not see the floor where he would be landing. I attached a homemade ramp (using zip-ties, NIC panels, pet grass mats, and a couple of clamps) and Bubba was again able to snooze on the bed.

### Variety

Offer your disabled rabbit all sorts of toys. Even if they are not able to play with the toys the way that most would play with them, they will usually find a way to amuse themselves. Make sure the toy

is safe for rabbits, and then let them try it out for themselves.

### Don't underestimate them

Arctic's head tilt left her permanently looking to the left, and she had limited, if any, vision. She remained very busy and active, but because of her disabilities I assumed she would no longer be interested in her canning rings toy or her Go Cat Go toy (a hollow ball made of hard plastic with a small hole on one side. Filled with food pellets or healthy treats, the pet pushes it around with their nose to get the treats to fall out). My assumptions were incorrect. While she was not as agile in play as she had been, she was every bit as entertained by her toys as she was prior to her disability. It took her much longer to push the ball an inch or two, but push it along she did ... from a sitting or lying position!

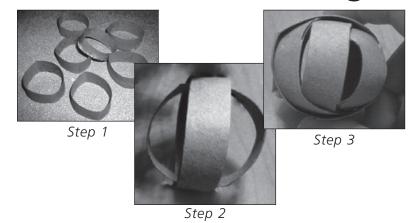
### **Sources:**

The Go-Cat-Go toy and the grass mats are available from Amazon.com; choose AmazonSmile https://smile.amazon.com/ and select Buckeye HRS as your chosen charity, and Buckeye will receive a portion of the proceeds from Amazon at no extra cost to you! A video of Arctic in action with her canning rings toy can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RT4IHYqdThQ

Stuffed cardboard tubes and balls made from cardboard rings are homemade toys which cost pretty much nothing. Baby key toys come cheaply at local dollar stores (beware the "teething keys" – make sure you get keys made entirely from hard plastic). Petting and gentle brushing and lots of love cost nothing and benefit both of you!

# How to make balls from cardboard rings:

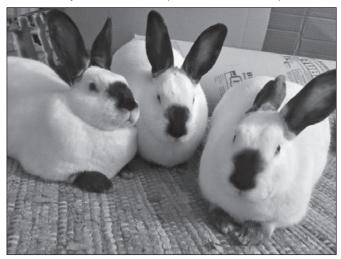
All you need is a cardboard roll and some scissors! The toys are easily created while watching TV or visiting with boring in-laws. The photos illustrate the uncomplicated process of assembling the cardboard rings cut from the tubes.



# Which Rabbit is That?

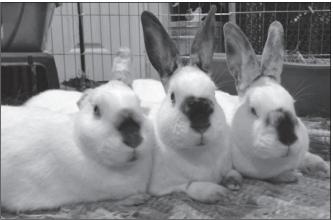
# By Ashley Renee Hampson

Like most humans with rabbits, we have hundreds (thousands?) of photos of every adorable and mischievous thing our three Californians do. Inevitably, the first question we get whenever we make friends and family look at those photos is, "How do you tell them apart?" It's a fair question.



From left: Jaxx, Jackson and Toby

After we point out the unique markings each of them has (Toby has more white on his ears, Jaxx has a bigger spot on his nose), all of a sudden they can tell them apart without too much trouble. But then we get to burst their bubble by telling them that those markings that they now can identify so well actually change with the season.



From left: Toby, Jackson and Jaxx



Three butts.

Californian rabbits (as well as Himalayan rabbits, which make up a part of their breed) have a unique feature similar to Siamese cats. Their dark markings correspond with the cooler points of their bodies -- nose, ears, feet, and tail. While the reason has not been studied extensively in rabbits (in Siamese cats it is attributed to a gene mutation), it gives them a certain Freaky Friday quality when you notice that one rabbit's distinguishing markings suddenly look like one of the other's. For us, this is particularly true with Jackson and Jaxx, whose markings frequently mirror each other's.

Once you get to know them, however, telling them apart is a matter of pairing these physical characteristics with their very different behaviors. Is there a rabbit leading an escape from the living space? Jackson!!! Is there a rabbit shoving his head under another one for grooms? Oh, that's



Litter box party.



our attention-loving Jaxxie. Which rabbit won't stop thumping? Definitely Toby, making his feelings known.

As most rabbit people know, once rabbits become comfortable in their space, their individual personalities shine, making caring for them that much more fun. Like many new rabbit people, when we started looking for a rabbit to

adopt, there were so many choices. Pink-eyed white rabbits (and others that tend to have less unique markings) didn't stand out to us – they all looked the same and it was hard to tell them apart. Looking back we realize that we were judging these rabbits by their fur (get it?) and the best part of caring for rabbits is getting to know them and allowing them to express their individuality.

# **Spotlight On Our Sanctuary Sponsors**

# By Stephanie Lodge

Continuing to feature our wonderful sanctuary sponsors, I would like to introduce you to Jim and Laura Gills. Jim told me their story so perfectly, I didn't change a thing...

"Laura and I live in Mentor, Ohio. I'm a longtime resident of Lake County and Laura is from the Philadelphia area and has been in Ohio for 20 years. Laura had a pet rabbit growing up and was familiar with rabbits before she came to

**Tabitha** 

Ohio. I've been a rabbit person since my youth, having had a pet rabbit when I was in school. In addition, I earned the nickname "rabbit" in first grade because of my love of carrots. Bugs Bunny was also my hero and I was born in the Year of the Rabbit.

During my early years, cats were the pet of choice. A couple of years after Laura and I were married, a friend was getting a divorce. She had several pets, one being a rabbit which she could not take with her. Laura called one day and said, "We have a pet! We are taking our friend's rabbit." It was instant love for both of us. Soon thereafter, we discovered the Buckeye HRS and decided to get involved.

Rabbits are thoroughly in our lives and Bugs Bunny is still my hero. Laura and I are avid boaters. We have three boats ranging from a nine-foot inflatable to a thirty-six-foot cruiser. They are named Bunny Boat, Thumper, and Rabbit in that

> order. We are also skiers and outdoors people. By profession, I am the Lake County Engineer taking care of the Lake County roads and bridges. Laura is a certified interior designer and runs two companies, one doing residential and commercial design work and the other performing yacht interior refurbishing and design.

We are on our third bunny, the last two from Buckeye. Currently, we have a black bunny called Tabitha. She is a most pleasant rabbit who sticks to us like glue. We have had her for about 5 years.

The Buckeye HRS is doing a fabulous job of training, educating, and placing bunnies in homes. Laura and I are happy to be able to provide a little support for those who care."



# **Somebunny Needs YOU!**



**Sylvia** is great with her litterbox, keeps her pen very tidy, and loves her three-story condo house. She is a cautious girl; you have to earn her trust. But once

you do, she is a loyal and loving soul who will open your heart to new adventures. Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare.org) 216-571-1088.

Abby is a beautiful big girl with perfect manners. This four-year-old bunny needs a big litter box and a lot of love and affection. Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare. org) 216-571-1088.





Em – Emerson – is a teenage New Zealand white with an outgoing personality. He came from a bad situation, abandoned in a wooded area near Youngstown, Ohio, but is now thriving. Emmy is looking forward to growing into his ears! Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare. org) 216-571-1088.



is a very
busy boy. He
is only about
one year old
and loves
free time
away from
his pen.
He doesn't

care for being held (because that takes time away from his freedom to explore, you see). He does love attention and is very people-friendly. Humphrey enjoys shredding up newspaper inside his cardboard box. This little goof ball is sure to make you laugh. Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare.org) 216-571-1088.



Sweet, but shy **Ruth Bader Ginsbun** came from a hoarding situation in Texas.
She's still a little leery of people, but with a loving supportive home, she will let her true colors shine. She loves to explore, especially when she thinks no one is watching. She is excellent with the litter box and

always a member of the clean (salad) plate club. Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare.org) 216-571-1088.

Adopted in summer 2016 and then returned due to allergies, handsome **Stannis** is once again searching for his forever family. He's not only good-looking (his photos really don't do him justice), he's also the class clown and with his attitude of a teenage boy, Stannis will keep you laughing.



We think of him as a puppy in a bunny body. This guy loves life, and his energy and inquisitive nature need lots of room to run. At almost ten pounds and with a gentle nature, Stannis would do well in a family with children. He is one of the many bunnies seized from a breeding mill in Oklahoma and has settled into house rabbit life quickly. Please contact Stephanie Lodge (bhrs-stephanie@ohare.org) 216-571-1088.

# The Sandusky County Dozen: Out of the Court and, With Your Help, Into a Home

In June, we were contacted to help with a cruelty case in Sandusky County involving twelve seized rabbits, including a mom with four babies. There are two Flemish Giants, one Dutch boy, and the rest are all small Rex buns with a variety of colors. After moving some of our existing fosters to other foster homes, we squeezed them in. Tied up in the legal system, we were unable to alter or adopt out any of these rabbits until they were surrendered five months later. During the holding time, the babies aged enough that they all had to be moved to individual housing, using up even more precious area with no room for stray intakes. Of course, un-altered rabbits tend to be less than neat and have poor litterbox habits ... and these guys were exceptional urine sprayers, hence much time was spent on cleaning. However, everybun is healthy and friendly now and, by the time you read this, all will have been spayed/neutered and available for adoption on our website.

Clearly, this is a long and expensive process and we're extremely thankful for our members who responded so generously to our plea for funds on Facebook and Twitter. Donations to cover the remaining costs are, of course, greatly appreciated!

# Ode To Bugs

# By Bonnie Hagerman

Bugs is my bunny, not just a cartoon. His blueberry breakfast cannot come too soon. He will bound down the stairs and run fast as can be. Some switch has gone off that told him to pee. His box of hay in his cage is his retreat. Until it's time to jump on top for a special treat. When he was "hiding," I'd look all around. In none of his corners could he be found! Upstairs and down, where was this hare? I then looked up to see him sitting in "my" chair! The top of Bugs's head is so soft to touch. My kisses assure him I love him so much. How could someone have given Bugs up to the APL? There are lots of reasons we all know too well. But fate intervened and I found my cute bun. He's the light of my life and so much fun!



Bugs



Garfunkel may be small in stature, but he is big in attitude. This solid black Netherland Dwarf has no idea that he is a really small bunny (please don't tell him). He LOVES to explore and climb up on top of things just to show off. He will greet you every day at the door to his pen and expects you to pet him right away. Please contact Sue Zimmerman (bhrs-sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.



Helping Rabbits Since 1997!!

# Renting with **Rabbits**

# By Stephanie Ash

In December 2015, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals released research results indicating that more than 1 million households are forced to give up their pets every year. Besides issues related to the pet themselves (like behavioral or medical issues) and family situations (like health troubles or allergies), housing issues were the third-largest reason pets were rehomed. Further, those people reporting housing issues as the reason for rehoming cited landlord issues as the number one reason they had to rehome their pet.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this information, there is hope! Renting when you have rabbits can add additional steps to the house- or apartment-hunting process, but success can be accomplished through open communication with your landlord and setting clear expectations. This article is not intended as legal advice, but rather aims to help renters successfully negotiate rabbit ownership into the lease, provide recommendations on how to be a good renter with rabbits, and offer renters resources if their landlord decides they cannot have a rabbit anymore.<sup>2</sup>

### **Negotiations**

Negotiating your rabbit into the rental agreement is the first step toward successfully renting with a rabbit. Some landlords are pet-friendly and will already have provisions in the lease regarding your responsibilities as a pet owner and expectations to rent with your rabbit. It is important the lease stipulate what pets are permitted and if there are any additional fees required. Many landlords require a pet deposit or an up-front payment of money that is held by the landlord in the event your rabbit damages the rental property.

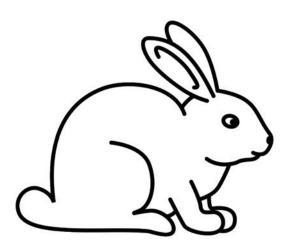
Although it would be great if all lease agreements provided provisions for pets, some lease agreements do not mention pets at all. In this case, it is imperative that you work with your landlord to update the lease agreement. If there is no mention of pets in the lease, it does not mean it is okay to

# Why should landlords rent to tenants with house rabbits?

- 1. Rabbits are quiet and will not disturb neighbors.
- 2. They can be litter box trained and are similar to cats.
- 3. Since your house rabbit is already spayed or neutered, the landlord does not have to worry about unwanted litters of baby bunnies or spraying in the home.
- 4. House rabbits are indoor rabbits, so there is no outside hutch and the issues that go along with that (e.g. unsightly, smelly, drawing unwanted predators to the area, etc.)
- 5. For some, rabbits are kept in a safe enclosure when the tenant is not home and are only allowed to roam when the tenant is home and supervising playtime.

rent with your rabbit. Permission to have your pet should be documented in writing to protect your rights as a tenant.

When trying to negotiate your rabbit into a lease agreement that does not provide for pet ownership, there are some important things you should do when talking with your landlord. First, ask the landlord if they will allow pets. Some landlords have a pet addendum renters can fill out if they ask about renting with a pet, but it may not be included in the standard lease agreement. If the landlord says they do not allow pets, ask them why and try to address their concerns. Advocate for your rabbit! Landlords may have never had a tenant with a house rabbit before and may not understand what amazing companions they are. Prepare for your negotiations by bringing pictures of your rabbit's enclosure and him/her relaxing in your current home. Provide the landlord with your rabbit's veterinary records and show them you are a



responsible pet owner. Last, offering to pay a little more each month to rent with your rabbit and providing previous landlords as references may also sway the hesitant landlord toward allowance.

# **Being a Good Tenant**

When you have successfully negotiated with your landlord and your rabbit is permitted in the lease, it is imperative not to forget the most important part of renting with rabbits: following through on your obligations! Pay required pet fees, provide requested veterinary records, and communicate regularly with your landlord. If the lease provides for only one rabbit and you want to adopt one/ two/five more rabbits, talk with your landlord first and amend the rental agreement to allow for more bunnies. Also, make sure the place where your rabbit lives is clean and in good repair, especially whenever the landlord is scheduled to come over. Although your rabbit's area should always be clean, stray poops and timothy hay tracked all over the room have been known to happen to the best of us!

In addition, although you should aim to prevent your rabbit from causing damage to the rental property, sometimes rabbits are rascally and damage can occur despite our best efforts. Promptly reporting damage caused by your rabbit (e.g. baseboard chewing, carpet damage due to digging, etc.) and taking responsibility for the damage is crucial to a good landlord/tenant relationship. Offer to pay for the damage or suggest the damage can be fixed using your pet deposit or security deposit. Investing in renter's insurance that will cover any damage caused by your pet may also be a good idea.

### **Landlord Changes Their Mind**

Sometimes, even when renters do everything right, landlords may change their mind about allowing a pet and may threaten eviction if you do not rehome your pet. If you find yourself in this situation, please know that you have rights as a renter. In order to fully understand your rights in your particular situation, it is a good idea to seek help from a licensed practicing attorney. A great resource to find legal assistance is a Lawyer Referral Service managed by your local bar association, such as the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association or the Columbus Bar Association. These services will help you decide if you need legal representation and will direct you to appropriate resources.

Finding another pet-friendly place may seem daunting, especially on short notice, but there are many landlords willing to rent to tenants with pets. Check with your local humane society to see if they keep a listing of pet-friendly rental properties. Also, many rental websites, such as Craigslist and Zillow, allow you to search for pet-friendly properties. Another great resource is other rabbit advocates! Ask other renters with rabbits who their landlord is and if they have any recommendations on places to live.

### Conclusion

Renting with rabbits is possible with advance planning and open communication. Talking with your potential new landlord about their policies and negotiating your pet into the lease is important so both landlord and tenant know what is expected. Once the rental agreement is signed, be a good tenant by fulfilling your obligations and taking responsibility for any damage caused by your rabbit. Last, know that you have rights as a tenant if your landlord decides you are not permitted to have your rabbit anymore. By negotiating, being a good tenant, and knowing your rights, you and your rabbit can live "hoppily" ever after in your rental home!

### **Footnotes**

- 1 https://www.aspca.org/about-us/press-releases/ more-1-million-households-forced-give-theirbeloved-pet-each-year-aspca
- 2 No part of this information should be regarded as legal advice, or replace an individual's responsibility to be familiar with the law. Please seek guidance from a licensed practicing attorney if you need legal assistance or representation.

# Buckeye House Rabbit Society P.O. Box 5767 Athens, OH 45701



Buy a bunny a little time...

# MEMBERSHIP FORM

MILMOLK	JIIIF I OKM ———	
Your \$35.00 annual membership in the Buckeye HRS includes:		Please make checks payable to:
<ul> <li>National membership (\$20.00) and 3-4 issues of the House Rabbit Journal</li> <li>Local membership (\$15.00) and issues of Harelines</li> </ul>		Buckeye
If you are already a national member, your local fee is \$15.00		<b>House Rabbit Society</b>
☐ I would like to donate \$ to help a foster rabbit (vet care, supplies)		P.O. Box 5767
□ I would like to donate \$ in memory of		Athens, OH 45701
The grieving family receives an acknowledgment of your gracious gesture.		All donations are
I would like to volunteer to:		tax-deductible.
☐ Distribute information to vets	☐ Assist with mailing	
☐ Help at Buckeye HRS booth at Pet Expos and fairs	□ Other	
Name		
Address		
City, State, Zip	_ Phone	
E-mail address		
Bunnies' names and special dates		