



THE *Rabbit Advocate*



PROVIDING INSIGHTS INTO THE LIVES OF HOUSE RABBITS

SPRING 2007

On the Road with the RA Outreach Team

Outreach is a way of bringing rabbits to meet the public, and thanks to Western Pet Supply, we have a friendly and convenient location where animal-loving folks are able to stop by and learn about rabbits.



photo: Emily Mejia



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Western Pet Supply is located at 6908 SW Beaverton Hillsdale Highway at the intersection of Scholls Ferry Road.

Outreaches are from 11:00–2:00. Upcoming dates: April 7, May 3, June 9, July 14.

Once a month, Rabbit Advocate volunteers pack up their outreach kit and take their show on the road. Outreach is a way of bringing rabbits to meet the public, and thanks to Western Pet Supply, we have a friendly and convenient location where animal-loving folks are able to stop by and learn about rabbits.

“Every time I go, I feel like I have at least provided some new information to one or more individuals who already have rabbits,” says team leader Beccy Kirk. “I like to think that this has somehow improved the lives of the rabbits in their care. Maybe it is knowledge of diets, spaying or neutering or just creating an appropriate living environment.”

“I think the outreaches help not only for adoptions, but the number of people who show up with rabbits and have questions is pretty great. We spend a lot of time teaching others the proper diet and living environment,” says Emily Mejia, also a team leader. “I also enjoy having the outreaches at Western Pet. The employees are so nice to us and cater to our needs. It is a great store and the clientele are caring towards animals.”

Sometimes an outreach will result in an adoption, but the primary purpose is education. The rabbits are displayed in pen set-ups, complete with toys and litter boxes—which often bring exclamations of surprise. People are able to imagine living with a rabbit in a home environment and they can personally interact with a sweet, charming bunny. In addition to the hands-on experience, visitors may browse and take home our free educational handouts. As one volunteer explains, “Even if you only help one rabbit, isn’t it worth it?”

Stop by and say hello to our volunteers at our next outreach.



Long Haired Beauties Require Special Care

When we are both comfortable, I pet her to relax her. The underside is usually the most matted, and will take the longest, an hour or more, so I start there.

By Jan Hutto

There are your nice, normal short-haired rabbits, and then there are those wild-looking long-haired rabbits! These 'punk rockers' that show up at shelters, or need rescuing, include Angoras, with their long, silky white fur that can be spun into wool, the Swiss fox, Cashmere lop, the Woolies, and the newer Lionheads. These rabbits have a very difficult time finding good adoptive homes where they will get the special grooming attention they require. They look marvelous in those calendars, but this is no accident. It is due to fastidious, weekly and monthly grooming!

It's vital these rabbits get routine grooming to remove loose hair and mats. They do not molt the way short-haired rabbits do. They just get woollier. Excessive matted and clumped fur can cause sores on the skin, fecal hair balls, and an inability to move freely. Grooming and clipping them allows for close examination of the whole rabbit. It can also become a wonderful way to help you check their overall health, checking for fleas or mites, and



photo: Jan Hutto

to bond with your bunny! I am fostering two in my home, now, Cotton and Felix, both minis. Just how to do this became an urgent new research project for me, as I had zero experience. Here is what I have learned:

Good articles:

- Grooming Angoras—Avoiding a Bad Hare Day, by Shannon Cail. www.rabbitnetwork.org/articles/angora.shtml
- The Long and Short of It: Caring for long-haired pet rabbits, a leaflet available online from the Rabbit Welfare Fund. <http://www.rabbitwelfare.co.uk>
- Grooming Angora Rabbits, by Jan Rebman. www.kindplanet.org/angoragroom.html
- Etherbun archives, by doing a search on 'Angora grooming'

The equipment:

- These are the tools listed by most reliable sources:
- A small, metal slicker brush; be extra gentle!
- A stiff bristle hair brush; the soft ones are useless.
- A flea comb, as well as a wider spaced metal comb. There is a cat molting comb, which removes the dead undercoat, and if you can find one, a combination comb with wide and narrow teeth.
- A pair of medium-sized blunt tipped scissors for clipping. They need to be sharp.
- A blow dryer (Use on the lowest, coolest setting—this is said to prevent matts from forming.)
- Rakes and specialized rolling-toothed combs (The Hair Buster, The Untangler) are favored by some groomers.
- Most reliable sources suggest avoiding the use of electric clippers, unless they are the costly, professional groomer's version, but even these can really scare your rabbit!

Monthly grooming:

If it has been awhile, start with a full body cut, which needs to be done monthly. Severely matted rabbits will take several one-hour sessions. One session daily is best, so your rabbit doesn't tire and associate grooming as a bad thing. She will let you know when she has had enough for one day. Praise her for being such a good bunny!

I sit on a brightly lit kitchen chair near a table where I have all my grooming tools handy. Placing a towel on my level lap works nicely, with a paper bag nearby to drop the clippings into. I start by putting my bunny on her back cradled with her head toward my knees. You can also do this on the floor, if you prefer.

When we are both comfortable, I pet her to relax her. The underside is usually the most matted, and will take the longest, an hour or more, so I start there. Other tricky areas will be her chest or dewlap (feel for the chest bone), neck and cheek areas (don't clip her whiskers!), her hindquarters (watch for her genitals). I switch her around frequently, so she isn't too long in one position. Clipping her back is the easiest, as she can be on all fours while this is quickly done. Lastly, use a flea comb to gently trim the base of her ears. This feels good!

To clip, brush the fur upward, and hold it at, skin level, between your fore-finger and middle finger to assess where her delicate thin skin is. Trim above your fingers. Aim to trim at around 3/4" to 1" long. Err on the side of caution. You can always fine tune later. Move in 1-inch increments as you go. After a half hour give bunny a 15

minute break to stretch, let her have a little healthy treat, and then try to finish up the section you are on.

If you encounter a very large mat, carefully snip down just into the very top of the mat. Holding the clump at the base; gently pull the mat apart horizontally, being careful not to tug on the skin. Use the tines of the flea comb or slicker brush to gradually break it up, then brush again until it is fluffed out. Clip as needed, and repeat. If the mat is very close to the skin, clip it as close as you can; then just let it grow out some so that it can be more safely cut later. Brushing too hard can irritate their thin, delicate skin. When you are done, gently blow dry using the lowest setting on your hair dryer to fluff. Always clean tools in a 1% bleach solution for 15 minutes between uses.

Rabbits can easily startle, so if she should accidentally get nicked with the scissors, treat it like a bite wound: clean it with 50/50 hydrogen peroxide and water, or Betadine on a moistened cotton pad. Then apply Neosporin. Use a butterfly bandage and gentle pressure to stop any bleeding. If you are careful not to clip too close, and only clip when she is relaxed, this hopefully will not happen at all.

Weekly grooming (daily is better)

Gently brush the top and sides, feeling for any new mats that may be forming. Check the genital area for hay imbedded into the fur, clipping this area as short as possible to avoid this. It will look 'choppy' at first. Don't worry, within a few days it will look much better! Practice makes perfect! You will see places you missed, but they can be shaped up a little better the next time. This maintenance will make your monthly clipping much easier the next time.

Cotton and Felix seem to know this is good for them, and thrive on this special dotting. Don't over do it, use rewards, keep it loving and positive, and it should be a stress-free experience. Making the time for them and keeping them beautiful is very rewarding, and they do feel so much better afterwards!

Thank You to Our Vets!

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of the following veterinarians and staffs for their services to our rescued rabbits:

***Dr. Chris Wilson,
Beaverton Pet Clinic***

***Dr. Mark Burgess,
Southwest Animal Hospital
Beaverton***

***Dr. Katrina Ramsell,
Southwest Animal Hospital***

***Dr. Ken DeReamer,
Paws & Claws Pet Medical Center
Troutdale***

***Dr. Ross Weinstein,
North Portland Veterinary Hospital***

***Dr. Mary Blankenvoort,
St. Johns Veterinary Clinic***

***Dr. Peter Davis,
St. Johns Veterinary Clinic***

***Dr. Rebecca Prull,
Dogwood Pet Hospital, Gresham***

***We'd love to add more names to this list!
Please call us at 503- 617-1625 if you are
a rabbit-savvy vet who is able to donate
services to help rescued rabbits.***

KUDOS

BUSINESS BENEFACTOR

Bark Market, Portland, OR
Home Run Realty Co. LLC,
Beaverton, OR
Foster Feed & Garden,
Portland, OR
Quality Cage, Portland, OR
Marion's Carpet Warehouse,
Portland, OR
Leith Petwerks, www.
leithpetwerks.com

RABBIT ANGEL

Lorraine Gilbert in appreciation of all the hardworking Hillsboro volunteers

RABBIT CHAMPION

Mary Thompson

RABBIT BENEFACTOR

Keith & Elizabeth Olson, in memory of Suzie

RABBIT RESCUER

Leann Bleakney
Amy Carolan, in celebration of Lulu
Ingrid & Ron Doerksen
Melinda S. Eden
Curry Garvin
Shelley Hanel, in memory of Jasper
Vicki Holechek, in memory of Twinkle
Michael Hutchens, in memory of Maia
Daniel & Kendal Mc Donald
Keith & Elizabeth Olson
Shannon Marie Phillips
Jean Sted
Sydney Thomson
Joan G. Wikler & Beth Cool
Virginia Winter, in memory of Florence Ann Winter
Amy Young-Leith

RABBIT SPONSOR

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Beth Bown
Roberta Cobb
Ron DeLuca & Beccy Kirk
Cinnaomon Ginness
Jon Gramstad
Marjorie Miyasako
Evelyn Roeloffs
Karla J. Saindon-Hayes, in memory of Brad Sypher
Allyson Sale, in memory of Hopper

The Story of Faith: A Bicillin Healing Experience

I knew I had to bring this little three month old baby Lionhead home the day I put my hand in her cage and she leaned into it with all her might like she was begging me to help her. I had no idea what I was getting into that day. I knew she had a bite injury, but did not know how serious it really was.

By Janeen Hammers

I talked to another Rabbit Advocate about the injury which was visible as two large abscesses on her back, and she told me about some information she had found on the internet about using bicillin (which is an injected form of penicillin) for the treatment of abscesses. I spent a couple of days doing research and found a "Bicillin Study" by research scientist Marcy Rosenfield Moore which gave a detailed protocol for treatment. I also found many other case studies involving rabbits who had multiple drug treatments and surgeries that were unsuccessful until they tried bicillin.

I picked her up on February 1st and took her to a vet the following morning. He did an exam in front of me and then said he was going to take her in another room and look at the wound. I mentioned the possibility of using bicillin, but he was not very receptive. He removed some fur to get a closer look. There were two large holes in her back and I watched as he removed the thick pus by scooping it out with a small spoon-like scoop. He wanted me to see so I could do similar cleaning with a q-tip at home. He found another lump in her abdomen towards the left leg which was connected with the back wounds. (Bacteria may spread through the body by elongated "fingers" of infection, which complicates treatment.) I again brought up the subject of healing abscesses with bicillin, and he again rebuffed me... saying I should not believe everything on the internet. He said bicillin would not be the first course of therapy that he would recommend... and then he started talking about other drugs and surgery. "What is the prognosis?" I asked. "Not good," he replied. "OK, I want the bicillin!!" I said. He reluctantly agreed. He does not believe that bicillin is the "magic bullet" some people are saying it is... and that may or may not be true, but my intuition told me that it may just be the magic bullet for this little one. He said this would be a test case for him. This bunny did not have a name

when I brought her home, but I decided to name her Faith so he would remember her.

So he sent me home with instructions for cleaning the wounds and packing them with Manuka honey (which has natural healing, antibiotic and antiseptic properties), a two week supply of bicillin, some pain medication, and some Chlorhexidine solution for flushing the wounds before packing with the Manuka.

I faithfully cleaned the wounds every day and used some high grade Manuka honey for packing them. I also started her on some herbal therapy to boost her immune system, and gave her blackberry leaves every day. The bicillin was given by subcutaneous injection every other day. Since the wounds were so close to her neck and she was so skinny I had to give the shots in her butt. I had never given shots before so I had to learn as I went along.

By the third day, Faith was eating and pooping and although she was still very weak she managed a little head shaking and a tiny binky when I let her out for awhile to play.

On the fifth day I found a small scab on the left side of her butt. The vet had said "If we are lucky there will be a rupture of the abscess somewhere else", expecting it to rupture on her belly where the large lump was I believe. Anyway, I carefully removed the scab and it opened to a small slit which immediately released some creamy pus. I was able to squeeze quite a bit more from it before flushing and sealing with Manuka. I also noticed that the pus from the original wounds had changed to a creamy texture and was much easier to remove with a q-tip. Another problem I encountered was removing the hardened Manuka... a q-tip just was not working. So I started using a pointed rubber dental massager, and it worked great! I also noticed a new lump starting on her right shoulder.

For the next couple of days I was cleaning three areas, and watching the shoulder lump get bigger

and redder. Faith had only had four shots of bicillin at this point. I wondered if I should increase the dosage to daily shots. I tried to call my vet but he was gone for the weekend so I decided to email the author of the Bicillin Study. She was very receptive and responsive to my concerns. She told me a week was not enough time to see results, but that I should start to see improvement during the second week.

On the eighth day I left the two original bite wounds alone and decided to see if I could open the shoulder lump which was looking very big and ugly and a little dry on top. I used the rubber dental tool to see if I could poke a little hole in it and to my surprise the whole top came off like a little volcano. It was full of thick pus but I was able to completely clean out the shallow infection and seal it with Manuka. I also noticed one more very small bump near this one.

By the tenth day of cleaning I noticed that most of the wounds were starting to bleed a little when I opened them and could see they were definitely healing. The larger, deep bite wound that connected to the abdomen lump had a rubbery drying pus plug that I was able to pull out. I decided to leave the wounds alone for the next couple of days as long as they were looking good. Faith was feeling much better and able to do some very respectable binkies!

The lump on her abdomen was starting to shrink, and the little one on her shoulder remained unchanged. Marcy Moore had told me to expect to see the abscesses shrinking or even disappearing, but there may be some that feel hard when squeezed, and that those contain dead bacteria and pus that hardened and dried out. She said those can take a long time to go away but they aren't a problem, no living bacteria.

On the thirteenth day I noticed that the deep wound scab looked a little raised so decided to see if it would open easily and it did and had a two inch rubbery pus plug attached. I swear Faith was tooth purring when I pulled it out! The next day

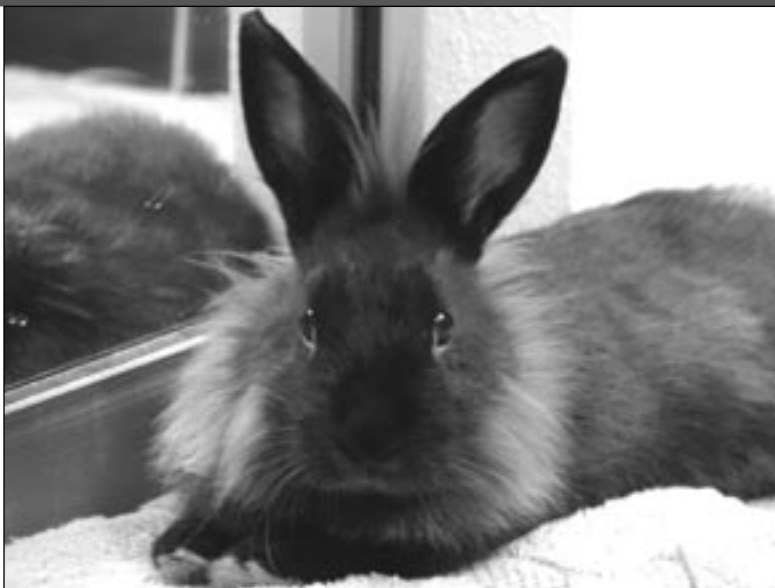


photo: courtesy: Janeen Hammers

I got another small short plug out, and then left it alone.

On Friday, February 16th, exactly two weeks and seven shots of bicillin later, I took Faith back to the vet for a check up and a bicillin refill. He was pretty blown away by her progress. I really don't think he expected to see her again... and there she was... looking perky and alert and six ounces heavier! He was pleasantly surprised by how awesome she is doing and told me that she is definitely out of the woods and on her way to becoming a healthy happy little bunny.

The normal protocol for bicillin treatment is eight weeks of shots every other day, and four weeks every third day. Because this bunny is so small and so young Marcy Moore told me that another two to three weeks of shots may be sufficient if there is no further indication of infection and the wounds are all healing. As of this writing in the third week of treatment, all the wounds have healed and there have been no new lumps formed.

Editor's note: Bicillin or other medications containing penicillin should never be given orally. We urge readers who are considering the bicillin treatment to read Ms. Moore's Bicillin Study and work closely with a rabbit-savvy veterinarian. While there is much anecdotal evidence of bicillin's effectiveness, it may not be appropriate for all cases.

RABBIT SPONSOR cont.

Carrie Sapp
 Bobbi Waggoner
 Anita Winkler
 June Yamrick

RABBIT FRIEND

Allison Brennan
 Bridget B. Campbell
 Lorelei L. Cohen
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 Ruby M. Schouten
 Leslie & Phillip Smith, in memory of Dust Bunny
 Karen G. Stelter, in appreciation of all that RA does
 Andrea Wall
 Valda Wold
 Sarah & Kevin Yasutake, in memory of Bradford Sypher

Special Thanks to...

Virginia Winter for her soapmaking fundraiser project.

Hay elves Jan Hutto and Shellie Fletcher for Bunny's Best Bites.

Donations received after March 2, 2007 will be acknowledged in the next newsletter.



RA Volunteers Assist Hillsboro Police

Rabbit Advocate volunteers assisted the Hillsboro Police and the Oregon Humane Society in caring for 211 rabbits that were impounded in the course of an animal neglect investigation. The case, which was widely reported in the media, brought the problem of animal hoarding to public attention. Animal hoarding is a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder in which a person believes he or she is “rescuing” animals.

Sadly, the large numbers of animals, and the conditions under which they are kept, result in much suffering.

The enormous effort of caring for so many rabbits involved about one hundred volunteers during a three-month period. From set-up to volunteer coordination, cleaning, feeding, medicating, and overseeing care of newborns, this was one of the largest and most labor-intensive projects ever undertaken by the group. Thanks to the efforts of so many volunteers, the rabbits thrived and the many injured or malnourished rabbits recovered

their health. While space does not permit us to recognize each volunteer personally, nearly every able-bodied volunteer gave generously of their time and many travelled long distances to assist in this effort.

Unfortunately, the wheels of justice turn slowly and as of this writing, the rabbits are still in the care of the police. We hope for a swift resolution of the case, and one that ensures that all the rabbits find safe, happy forever homes.

Dear Rabby

Dear Rabby,

We adopted our rabbit two years ago. At first he was very sweet and we took him out daily to exercise and socialize. About six months later, my husband's mother moved in with us. The rabbit started to prefer to socialize with her and despite our daily efforts he didn't really want anything to do with us anymore.

Three months ago, my mother-in-law moved in with her boyfriend, and left the rabbit behind. We still try to interact with him, but he has gotten more and more anti-social toward us as time has progressed. When I fed him this morning, I tried to pet him. He started thrashing around his cage and pulling his fur out!

He's clearly stressed about something, but I don't know what. His daily habits haven't changed at all. We feed him daily, let him out of his cage daily to exercise, and talk to him daily and try to interact. He's eating well, drinking

well, and still likes to run around and explore the bathroom (we let him exercise in our master bathroom as it has a lot of open space, no cords for him to get into, and he likes to sit on the step leading to the tub), but he just doesn't seem to want to have anything to do with either my husband or myself.

I'm really in a quandary about this. I don't want to “give up” on him, but he's clearly not happy with his current living situation, and I don't want him to be unhappy. I'd appreciate any advice you could give me.

Spurned Bunny Mom

Dear Spurned,

Rabbit bonding is a mysterious process, and rabbits choose their companions, human or otherwise, for their own reasons. I appreciate your sympathy for your rabbit's situation and your desire to make him happy.

Your rabbit formed a close emotional bond with your mother-in-law, and is

grieving over her loss. He may benefit from a new companion. Since he is rejecting your overtures, I would suggest trying a bunny companion.

Love at first sight is rare, so be patient and allow your rabbit to meet several prospective partners. Just as your rabbit choose his favorite human companion, he will also chose his bunny friend.

The bonding process may take several weeks, but when you see the rabbits snuggling all day long, you'll know it was worth it! It's one of the nicest gifts you can give to your bun.

Our Rabbit Advocate volunteers are happy to guide you and assist in the process. Check our website, www.adoptarabbit.org, for available rabbits.

Rabby



“Bunny’s Best Bites” Hay Mix for Sale

Hay is the most important component of a rabbit’s diet, and it’s one of the keys to good health and long life.

Now you can give your bunny a special treat with “Bunny’s Best Bites,” our high quality hay mix. Rabbit Advocate volunteers mix and package several types of bunny-healthy hay: approximately 50% first-cut timothy, 25% orchard grass, and 25% equal parts of oat and rye-fescue mixed grass. We also sell alfalfa hay separately in 10-pound “Young Bunny’s Best Bites” bags. The hay is properly cured and dried to prevent issues with moisture or mold.

Given its freshness, the convenience of several purchasing locations, and that it supports rabbit rescue, our customers feel it’s a real bargain. It’s great for ‘1 or 2 bunny’ homes otherwise faced with buying expensive pet store hay in small quantities, or a whole bale that isn’t easily stored, provides little variety, and becomes stale by the time you finish it up.

The ten pound bag can be dumped into an 18-gallon Rubbermaid bin for easy stacking and storage, and then returned to RA at our meetings in good condition for re-use.

We offer a free bag to everyone who adopts from Rabbit Advocates. All proceeds after expenses go to the RA Medical Assistance Fund to help Portland and vicinity rabbits.



photo: Jan Hutto

The cost of the hay is \$7.50 per ten pound bag, and is available at Rabbit Advocates general meetings. You can also arrange to pick up hay. E-mail jhhutto2@msn.com.

Please Donate to Our Garage Sale

Please think of Rabbit Advocates when you’re doing your spring cleaning! We are seeking donations for our annual garage sale, scheduled for June 16-17, 2007. The sale is the largest single source of funding for our education programs, medical fund, and adoption/fostering services. Thanks to the generous outpouring of donations from the community, it has been a big success for us in the past.

Let us turn your castaways into cash for the rabbits. Thank you, donors, for making our work possible!

Tara Rockwell wtrdragyn@gmail.com

Help Wanted!

Can you spare some time to help us with some tasks? Contact Arlene MacMonagle at 503-232-6460 for more information.

Volunteers Needed for Garage Sale Pricing Parties

In order to be ready for the garage sale in June, all items donated are priced, sorted, boxed and labeled by category, then stored till the Friday before the sale.

We have begun having regular pricing parties to keep up with the 100’s of donations that will continue to come in and even increase as the time gets closer.

Volunteers get an early preview of items for sale, there’s always food, it’s social and a lot of fun.

Contact: Tara Rockwell for dates & time: wtrdragyn@gmail.com or 971-998-5440 if you do not have email.

Someone Fluent in English and Spanish

to help produce Spanish versions of our educational publications.

RA Board of Directors

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Upcoming Meetings & Events

Meetings are held on the 3rd Sunday of the month from 4–6pm except where noted. Meetings include a “Bunny Basics” Q & A session where we invite your questions about any aspect of rabbit care. The public is welcome!

New Location for Monthly Meetings

Please join Rabbit Advocates at our monthly meetings, now held at the **HISTORIC KENTON FIREHOUSE, 8105 N. Brandon Avenue in the Kenton neighborhood of North Portland.**

Our meetings are open to the public and we invite your participation. We're happy to answer questions about rabbit care! Every meeting includes an educational presentation.

Meetings are held on the third Sunday of each month from 4-6 PM. There is plentiful on-street parking.

Upcoming Meeting dates:

April 8, Yes it's Easter Sunday 4–6pm

May 20, 4–6pm See the website for topic.

June – no meeting; see you at the garage sale on June 16-17th ! Location: Arlene MacMonagle's, 485 NE Hazelfern Pl. PDX 97232

Directions to Kenton Firehouse:

From I-5 Northbound: take exit 305B, Lombard Street West. Turn right on N. Lombard. Go 7 blocks. Turn right on N. Brandon. Go 5 blocks to intersection of N. Schofield. The firehouse is on the corner.

From I-5 Southbound: Take exit 306 and follow signs toward Interstate Avenue. Go one mile, then turn right on N. Denver (there's a giant Paul Bunyan statue at the corner). Go three blocks. Turn right at N. Schofield. Go one block to the intersection of N. Brandon. The firehouse is on the corner.

Western Pet Outreaches

6908 SW Beaverton Hillsdale Hwy. Portland, 97225

**All outreaches are Saturdays from 11am–2 pm
Dates: April 7, May 3, June 9, July 14**

**Would you like to continue receiving our newsletter, or update your mailing address? Or maybe make a comment or suggestion?
WRITE TO US AT newsletter@adoptarabbit.org**



Rabbit Advocates

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Helpline 503.617.1625

www.adoptarabbit.org

**“Promoting
the Welfare of
Domestic Rabbits”**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED