



HARELINES



Volume 12 Number 1 THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BUCKEYE HOUSE RABBIT SOCIETY

Winter 2008

On The Road: Tips for Traveling with Rabbits

By Herta Rodina



Every year since we moved to Ohio in 1987, our household engages in a mini-migration. In early June we head to our cabin north of Toronto, Ontario, and in late August we return to our home in Athens, a journey of over 500 miles. Of course, we take our two bunnies and, on occasion, a foster rabbit awaiting adoption. We've had ample opportunity over the years to learn how to make road travel as comfortable and stress-free as possible for our lagomorph passengers. If a car trip is in your bunny's future, here are some points to keep in mind.

First, plan what items you'll need for your rabbit when you arrive at your destination. Because we always go to the same place for an extended stay, we have duplicates of

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everything already there – pens, bowls, litter boxes, water bottles, grooming tools – but you may need to take these with you. In many cases, the same pellets, hay, and litter will be available where you're going, but if you're unsure, pack a supply just in case. Changes in routine, no matter how smoothly executed, will cause your bunny stress, so provide as many familiar things as possible. Don't forget favorite toys! If possible, locate a rabbit-savvy vet at your destination before you leave, just in case an emergency arises. Your regular vet may know of a colleague in your new area or you can check the yellow pages for an exotics vet. A phone call will tell whether they treat rabbits. If your rabbit is on medication, pack enough for the duration of your stay. Take any current medical records with you. You probably won't need any of this, but if you do, you'll be relieved you planned ahead.

Decide how you're going to pack your vehicle and choose the best spot for your rabbit. In our case, we remove the back seat of our minivan and place the bunnies, in their carriers, directly behind us; our other belongings are stowed at the far back. With this setup, the passenger can check the rabbits to make sure they're traveling well. Plastic pet carriers with rigid tops, sides, and bottoms are best for car travel; place them on an even surface where they won't tip or slide if you swerve or stop suddenly. Plus, in the event of a minor accident, the plastic carrier will offer more protection for your rabbit than

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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>

THE BUCKEYE HRS RESPECTS YOUR PRIVACY

We know our members value their privacy and that's why we never, ever, sell our mailing list or distribute it to any other party. All of our members' information is held in the strictest confidence.

Special Thanks to:

Clay and Nancy Pasternack, for their thoughtful contribution in memory of **Pepper and Omar**.

Linda Gardner, for her wonderful donation in honor of **Hugo**.

Melodye Traupel, for her generous gift in memory of her beloved **Danny**.

Pam Loch's 5th grade students, who once again honored their teacher with generous holiday donations to the Buckeye HRS!

The kind and thoughtful artists at Etsy For Animals who chose the Buckeye HRS to be the Charity of the Month for January. **Etsy** – www.etsy.com -- is a sophisticated website where artists and crafters can sell directly to the public. A number of items are donated by **Etsy** members to support nonprofit organizations and we were thrilled to be chosen to begin 2008!

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

Paula Otter, Patricia Wolanski, Irene and Rachel Levy, Michael Romanik, Pam Loch, Stacie Hecht, Sue Milewski, David and Joyce Weaver, Michael Lipinsky, Christa Billerman and Fayaz Bhanji, the Pike Family, Helen Grayson, Cathy Montiegel, Mary Zimmerman, Jim and Laura Gills, Sidelia Reyna and Todd Bennett, Jennifer Lockmiller, Kyra Kester, Anita Watson.

An extra special thanks from Buckeye volunteer Michele Roth Kerley **to everyone who responded to Lily and Sweetpea's passing with such kind sentiments, condolences and other comforting acts.** "You all made my heart start to heal faster."

Our new and continuing Sanctuary Rabbit Sponsors! This program would not be possible without your compassion and generosity. We wish we could acknowledge each of you individually!

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



Spotlight On Coalby

By Sue Zimmerman

Meet Coalby!! Coalby was born in January 2006 and has been in our foster home since she was only three weeks old. Coalby's mom was rescued from the Lorain County crisis just before giving birth to three adorable baby girls. All of her family has been adopted and Coalby patiently awaits her turn for a permanent loving home.

She is sweet and gentle with an enjoyable, easy-going personality. She loves to explore and play with her toys and doesn't mind being held. **If you are interested in adding Coalby to your family, please contact Sue Zimmerman -- 419-355-8433 or sue@ohare.org**



Happy 20th!!

The national House Rabbit Society is marking its 20th anniversary this year! Rescuing 20,000 rabbits in 20 years is certainly a reason to celebrate!

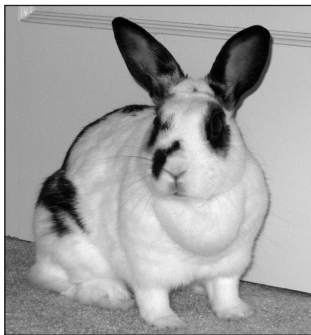
Check out www.rabbit.org for a slate of special events to commemorate this remarkable achievement. The Buckeye HRS is proud to be part of this premier international organization.

Holiday Raffle Results

And the winner is ... Theresa Nagy of Pittsburgh, PA. Congratulations to Theresa and many thanks to all who supported the Buckeye HRS through the purchase of raffle tickets. Proceeds will allow us to make the future brighter for more needy bunnies in Ohio.



Somebunny Needs YOU!



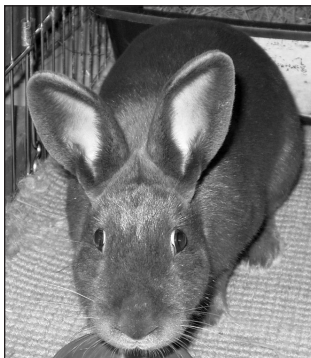
Belle is a real cutie! She loves to be petted on her little nose. Belle also enjoys digging in her hay box and napping in her cardboard tunnel. She is a bit on the shy side but is really coming around. Can you welcome Belle into your home? **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



Sylvester is quite a unique looking bunny with his stripes and two-toned face! He LOVES his free time and pellets. This handsome guy would make a great addition to your home. He has lots of love to give. Why not make an appointment to meet him? **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



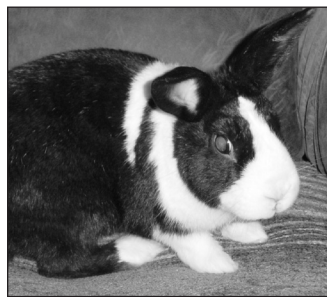
Kitty Kat is a dwarf-like bunny who is a little on the quiet side, although very friendly. She likes to be petted and sometimes doesn't mind being picked up. She packs a lot of hay and salad into her tiny, 3.5 pound body, with rich chocolate-brown fur and one white paw. This little girl also wins a prize for being the best with her litterbox. **Please contact Kristen Doherty 440-543-4959.**



This is **Pumpkin!** She is a very sweet young lady. Just look at her awesome blue/gray fur! What a beautiful bunny! Pumpkin enjoys playing with her toys and she especially loves to chomp on hay. Wouldn't you love to make Pumpkin a member of your family? **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



Roz was also rescued from the house in Elyria. She's a four and a half pound little girl who's a little on the shy side but with lots of personality. She likes the company of other bunnies -- so why not try her as a bonding companion? Her favorite thing to do is rearrange her cardboard houses. Roz has a hearty appetite and scarfs down her salads and hay. She has no problem at all using the litter box. **Please contact Kristen Doherty 440-543-4959.**



Ramona is another Dutch bunny from the Elyria overcrowding situation. Despite her background, Ramona enjoys being around people and receiving pets, especially nose pets. Ramona loves to explore her surroundings and play with her cardboard toys. She's a five pound black and white little girl, a good hay eater, and a great litter box user! **Please contact Kristen Doherty 440-543-4959.**



Meet **Benji.** He's a domestic bun who looks a lot like a wild cottontail rabbit. Benji was part of a group of over 20 rabbits seized from a backyard breeder who was not feeding and caring for them. Benji is an active young male. Since he was never kept as a "pet" bunny, he needs some socialization time with a family that will help him to learn to trust humans. He's not afraid of people, he just needs to bond with someone who will take the place of his former hutchmates! **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**



J.J. is a funny and confident bunny who loves to play with his toys and be around people. He weighs about five pounds, is perfect with his litter box, and is used to being around dogs. J.J. would be a good choice for a family with kids. **Please contact Kristen Doherty 440-543-4959.**



Big, beautiful **Diva** will want a star on her door while she enchants you with her gentle ways and loving nature. An excellent litterbox performer with a strong appetite, her fondness for tunneling through paper bags adds to this eight-pound bunny's

character. Her past is a mystery and her age unknown, but don't let that stop you from inviting Diva to play a leading role in your home. **Please contact Herta Rodina (herta@ohare.org) 740-797-7616.**

Herman is a sweet little cinnamon-colored Holland lop, about



3 lbs, who will lay in your arms or lap for hours at a time. He is a true "lap bunny" and craves lots of human attention. Herman would be perfect for a family with children or for an individual who works at home. **Please contact Kristen Doherty 440-543-4959.**



With her rich, lustrous fur and jet-black eyes, **Ember** is a classic beauty with a trusting, affectionate manner. She has perfect litterbox habits, loves her hay and veggies, and is in excellent health. Born in the summer of 2006, Ember has been

patiently waiting for her forever human. **Please contact Herta Rodina (herta@ohare.org) 740-797-7616.**



This is **Lucy**. She is a mini-rex with beautiful gray and white velvet fur, born in the spring of 2006 and weighing about three pounds. Look at her and you would never know that she had been very dehydrated and near death. Curious, she loves to see what is going on, and is also starting to enjoy attention. Lucy is good with her litterbox habits and loves her food. She

is ready for that special person to give her lots of love and attention. **Please contact Sue Zimmerman (sue@ohare.org) 419-355-8433.**

Lorain County Bunnies

Won't you consider letting one of these adorable and very friendly little bunnies into your home? How about a matching pair? **Please contact Kristen Doherty 440-543-4959.**



Adopted!



Little Miss **Feather**, happily settled in her forever home, is entertaining Gary and Sue with world-class binkies and Olympic-caliber flops. ♥ After being shuffled from home to home, **Scooter and Coconut** have been adopted to Colleen and family of West Salem, where they have free roam. ♥ **Vera (now Sophia)** was adopted by Tanya in Canton and shares a house with **Dante**, a former Buckeye HRS foster rabbit. ♥ **Nala (now Ariel)** has found a new life with Beth Smith and family of Canton. ♥ **Cindy** will get lots of snuggle time with the LaBillois family in Akron. ♥ **Vernon** is adjusting to his new life in the country with Colleen and Kirsten in Jefferson. ♥ **Robby** celebrated the New Year by settling into his forever home with Suzanne. ♥ After well over a year in foster care, **Harry** now knows the joys of permanent human and rabbit companionship.



Photo Contest Winners

from the northeast Ohio Buckeye HRS
picnic



**"Bunnies and
Their People"**
by David
Weaver



**"Bunny
Mischief"** by
David Weaver



**"Bunnies
Relaxing"**
by Marisa
Wynne



**"Snuggle
Bunnies"** by
Norm Henke



Cecal Dysbiosis a.k.a. "The Scoop on Rabbit Poop"

By Dr. Susan Kelleher, DVM

House rabbits are often presented to the veterinarian with the chief complaint of "diarrhea". Most commonly it is not true diarrhea. True diarrhea is defined as loose or liquid feces. What is usually happening with pet rabbits is that they are producing loose cecotropes. Let's look at how a rabbit's intestinal tract normally works to understand this problem. Rabbits produce two different products in their intestinal tract. One is the normal dry, hard fecal pellets that we usually see in the litterbox (or around the floor) and the other is a soft cluster of small cecal pellets that are coated in mucous. This second product is the result of a fermentation process that goes on in the cecum and these are called cecotropes. Other names for this product are "night feces" or "soft feces". The cecum is the largest section of the rabbit's digestive tract. It is somewhat analogous to our appendix. In humans, the appendix is a vestigial organ. In rabbits the cecum is a very large, highly developed section of their intestinal tract. There are many different organisms living in the cecum that break down the high fiber foods such as hay that are consumed in a healthy rabbit's diet. These organisms process high fiber foods into usable nutritional products such as essential fatty acids. Once processed and packaged with a mucous coating, these cecotropes are excreted and are usually ingested directly from the anus. It is the mucous coating that protects this special package of nutrients from the very acidic environment of the stomach and helps it get into the intestines for proper absorption. The term cecal dysbiosis (pronounced "cee-kal " "dis-bi-o-sis") refers to something having gone wrong with the biology of the cecum. "Cecal" refers to the cecum, the "fermentation vat" of the digestive tract.

"Dys" refers to a malfunction and "biosis" to the "biology" of the cecum. So what causes cecal dysbiosis? The most common cause is a diet too rich in simple sugars or carbohydrates. One of the populations of organisms that becomes imbalanced when there is too much carbohydrates in the diet is a yeast called *Saccharomyces guttulatus*. To understand how this can happen think of making home made bread or beer. To "activate" the yeast you put it in a cup of warm water and add a little pinch of sugar. *Saccharomyces* yeast are present in the normal rabbit in low numbers. When sugar is added to the soup of ingesta and organisms in the cecum, the yeast population thrives and multiplies exponentially. Other populations of organisms such as the bacteria *Clostridium piliforme*, *Clostridium spiroforme* and *E. coli* also become imbalanced. The result is that the manufacture of normal cecotropes as well as normal intestinal motility is altered. Ingesta winds up sitting in the cecum too long and "over fermenting". Instead of the nice tidy packages of cecotropes that look like a large raspberry, the resulting product is a malodorous glob of gooey cecal waste that easily becomes matted on the rabbit's rear as well as smeared on the floors in your home.

Cecal dysbiosis is a serious condition. When your rabbit is not forming and ingesting normal cecotropes s/he is missing out on an essential part of vital nutrition. You should have your rabbit evaluated by your veterinarian as soon as possible if you detect this situation. Due to the strong odor and mess of malformed cecotropes, it is usually a very obvious condition. Your veterinarian will thoroughly review your rabbit's diet and history. It is very important that you are 100% honest with your veterinarian regarding what your rabbit has been eating. We all love sweet and high-fat content foods. And we all love to give our pets treats. Sugar and fat are two of the key things that make our food taste good. Our rabbit companions like treats too, but it is up to us to provide them with healthy snacks that won't upset their delicate digestive tracts. Some of the most common culprits in



causing this disease are crackers, excess fruit, cereal, chocolate, ice cream, bread, commercial yogurt drops (look on the list of ingredients on a yogurt drops box -- the first ingredient is sugar!) and commercial "treat mix" type foods. To restore normal function to your rabbit's digestive tract it is imperative that all such foods be eliminated immediately. When your rabbit gives you a hard time about this, you have to be firm and consider what is best for your rabbit's health. There are alternative treats that you can give that not only taste good, but are healthy for your pet. These would include fresh leafy green vegetables and especially herbs such as basil, dill and cilantro.

The most efficient way to resolve cecal dysbiosis is to discontinue feeding any fruit or other carbohydrate foodstuff and increase the amount of fiber in the diet. If your rabbit is not currently eating hay on a regular basis, hay should be introduced immediately. The best product is a good quality timothy grass hay. Alfalfa hay or timothy/alfalfa hay mixes are common, but alfalfa is a legume and is much richer in carbohydrates and protein than timothy hay. Timothy hay should

be offered on a daily basis in unlimited quantities. Once your rabbit is eating plenty of hay, commercial pellets should be discontinued. In addition to the hay, your rabbit can have a daily minimum of 2-3 cups of leafy green vegetables per 5 lbs of body weight. A normal rabbit's GI transit time is 3-5 days. A rabbit with cecal dysbiosis has an altered GI transit time that is often much slower than that. This means that the cecal dysbiosis may take anywhere from 5 days, or if the biology of the cecum is highly abnormal, some times weeks or months to resolve. Once the cecal dysbiosis has been resolved while the rabbit is on just timothy grass hay and leafy green vegetables, you can slowly start to add very small amounts of other foods back into the diet. These would include very small amounts of pellets -- no more than 1/8 cup per 5 lbs of body weight per day -- carrots, and small amounts of fruit as a treat -- no more than 1 tbsp chopped. Under no circumstances should high carbohydrate commercial treat mix foods (the kind with seeds, corn, dried fruits and nuts mixed in), yogurt drops, crackers, cereal, and so forth, be introduced to the rabbit again. It is imperative that all members of the household are aware of the importance of permanently eliminating these foods from the rabbit's diet. After resolution of the cecal dysbiosis, foods should be reintroduced very slowly. Wait 2-3 days between each new addition. If the loose cecotropes return, stop the new food immediately and go back to just timothy grass hay and leafy greens. Note: it is not necessary to add any pellets or other different foods back into the diet. Timothy hay and leafy green vegetables are actually a very adequate maintenance diet that rabbits can live on for the rest of their lives.





On The Road: Tips for Traveling with Rabbits Cont'd.

the soft-sided sherpa carriers. If you need to stack one carrier on top of another, secure them with Velcro along the top of the lower one and the bottom of the upper one, or lash them with bungee cords.

If you'll be on the road for only a couple of hours, line the carrier bottom with a comfy towel. Add some hay and your bunny will have everything needed. For longer trips, place several sheets of newspaper in the carrier and cover these with grass mats cut to fit. In addition to the hay, your rabbit will be able to nibble the mats. More important, urine will pass through the weave of the mats, leaving them relatively clean and dry, and will be absorbed by the newspaper. In our experience, rabbits tend to just hunker down while on the road, but you should provide for the possibility that they may want to drink. Attach a plastic, clip-on dish to the wire door of the carrier and fill it no more than halfway to avoid spills. Do not use a gravity-feed water bottle for travel; the vibration will cause it to leak. You may also place some freshly-washed greens in your rabbit's carrier to provide some indirect water. Do not put hard or heavy objects, like ceramic food bowls or litter boxes, inside the carrier. In an accident, they can become a lethal projectile. Also, to ensure safety, keep bunnies in carriers while your vehicle is in motion; a bunny on a lap doesn't have a chance if your airbags deploy.

For lengthy trips, plan on frequent stops. Your rabbit will appreciate a break from road noise and motion. But, never, EVER, leave your bunny in a closed vehicle without being absolutely certain that the inside temperature won't rise or fall dramatically. Even if the outdoor temperature seems moderate, a closed vehicle can become an oven in no time, even under overcast skies, even when parked in the shade. Take no chances. Have someone stay in

the car at all times, with the windows open; if the temperature in the car is comfortable for you, it'll be comfortable for your bunny.

Talk to your rabbit during your trip; a soothing, familiar voice is reassuring. If you enjoy music while you drive, keep the volume low. Those bunny ears are sensitive and there's



already a lot of ambient traffic noise to fatigue him.

In our case, the total elapsed driving time is about ten hours. With two drivers, this would be feasible in one day, but we spread it over two to give the bunnies a rest from the road. We always pack a two-day supply of hay, pellets, and fresh veggies (in a cooler or in a bag with an ice pack) and have clean newspaper and grass mats on hand to replace the soiled ones. When selecting a motel, choose one that allows pets. The Red Roof chain, for instance, has a very pet-friendly policy. Some motels may charge extra for pets. Find out before you make your reservation, so you have no unpleasant surprises at the end of the day. Wherever you stay, respect the cleanliness of the room. Have an extra plastic bag on hand for soiled newspaper and pick up stray droppings or strands of hay. If you decide to let your bunny run around a bit, supervise carefully and clean up afterwards.

Finally, have an arrival plan. Get your rabbit set up and moved in as soon as you can. Take time out from unpacking or chatting with friends and relatives to check on your bunny, especially if your destination is unfamiliar to him.

With a bit of forethought, you can ensure that your rabbit becomes as good a traveler as you are. You can tell. If your bunny doesn't like your touring arrangements, he or she will face the back of the vehicle, rump towards you, just putting up with it. Our bunnies aren't globetrotters, but they have been known to stand at the door of their carriers, gazing like tourists at the odd, fast shapes out the windshield, agreeing with us that this isn't half bad.

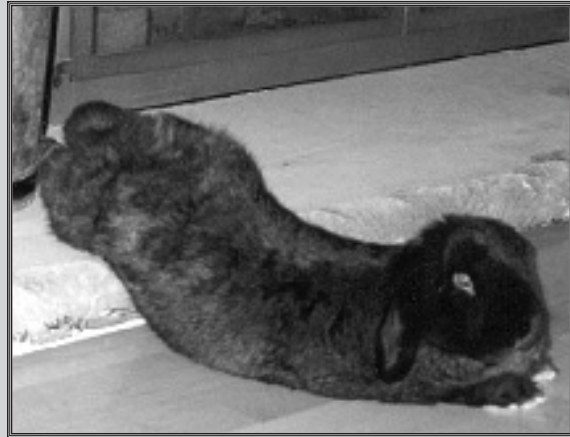
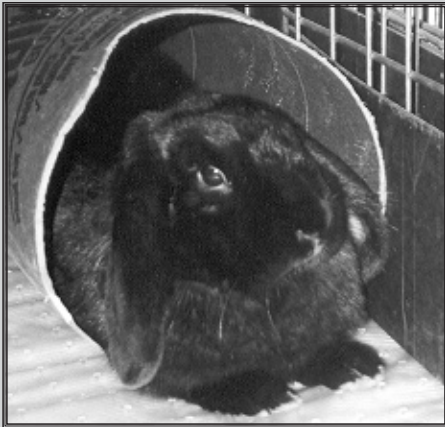




Farewell to Emma

Goodbye our little bi-polar girl. We miss your batting, grunting, lunging, ankle-biting and general moodiness. We miss your relentless begging for a baby carrot, your running across the top of the leather sofa at top speed, your graceful leaps high in the air, and your dramatic flops in the middle of the room. We miss you sitting under the chair next to the tree while we opened our Christmas presents. You always wanted to be close to people, whether a group of four or forty, as long as no one got too close. You were the Queen of Drama, the Queen of Mean, the Queen of Sheba, our Emma Jean. Thank heaven you didn't suffer. We miss you every day.

Kristen and Paul Doherty



Emma was rescued in May 1999 when her "person" wanted a veterinarian to euthanize her because of her bad behavior. The vet instead asked the lady to call the Buckeye House Rabbit Society. We took Emma in as a foster bunny and when it became clear to us that she would never be adopted because of her behavior, Emma became a Sanctuary rabbit. Because she could not co-exist peacefully with other rabbits, Paul and I brought her up to our first floor where we could give her special attention and work on behavior issues. She was roughly 10 years old when she passed away from a congenital heart problem. Emma was one of the rabbits helped by the Sponsor A Sanctuary Rabbit program, so thank you to Emma's sponsors.

PetSmart Stops Sale of Rabbits

Thanks to your phone calls, letters and emails, we have learned that PetSmart is discontinuing the rabbit sale "test" and will no longer be selling rabbits in any of their stores, once the remaining rabbits are gone.

This is wonderful news to all animal lovers, and especially to all of the rabbit people who have been active in this campaign. We have heard that it was because of the vocal opposition of animal lovers across the United States that they have reconsidered their choice.

Please thank PetSmart for their decision, and let them know that it was the right choice.

Address your thanks to:

PetSmart

c/o John Alpaugh

Vice President, Specialty Merchandising

19601 North 27th Avenue

Phoenix, AZ 85027

(623) 580-6100

corpcommunications@ssg.petsmart.com



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Your \$33.00 annual membership in the Buckeye HRS includes:

- National membership (\$18.00) and 3-4 issues of the *House Rabbit Journal*
 - Local membership (\$15.00) and issues of Harelines
- If you are already a national member, your local fee is \$15.00

- I would like to donate \$_____ to help a foster rabbit (vet care, supplies)
- I would like to donate \$_____ in memory of _____.
The grieving family receives an acknowledgment of your gracious gesture.

I would like to volunteer to:

- 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 _____

Please make checks payable to:

Buckeye House Rabbit Society

P.O. Box 5767

Athens, OH 45701

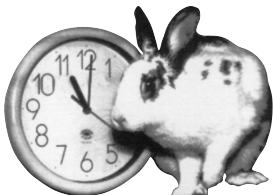
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Buy a bunny a little time...