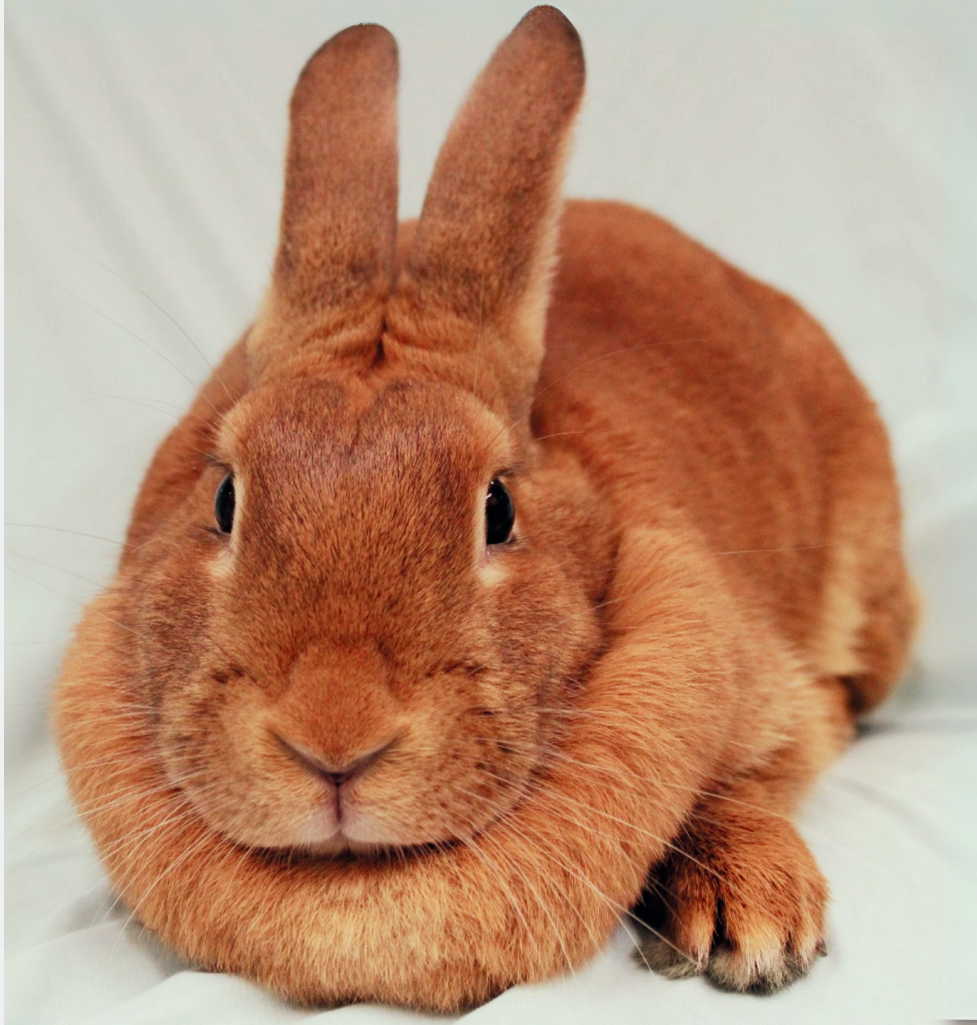


Ask The Expert: *Critter Edition*



Bambi

Q: What should I know before adopting a rabbit — especially if I have never had one?

A: One of the most important things you can do before adopting a rabbit is to locate a good veterinarian in your area who has experience caring for rabbits. Education is key, and vets can be an excellent resource for

you and your new pal, especially when you're new to rabbit ownership. You also will want to make sure you have plenty of space for your rabbit. Contrary to popular belief, rabbits are not cage animals.

They do best in a pen of at least 10 feet by 6 feet, or a room that can be sectioned off. (Cont.)

“It’s a good idea to thoroughly understand these amazing little creatures before bringing one home. Rabbits and guinea pigs get relinquished more than any other small animal at CCHS — often because people don’t realize how much work is required to care for them.”

There are a lot of misunderstandings about owning a rabbit. For example, many people think bunnies are low-maintenance pets. But they actually require a lot of care and attention.

Q: Where can I learn more about rabbits? What is the best resource?

A: You can always ask me, Breanne Tabbert, or any of our CCHS staff for help. If we don’t know the answer, we will help you find it. I often reference the House Rabbit Society of Chicago when I need to learn more about rabbit behavior.

Q: Do rabbits prefer to live in pairs?

A: Just like dogs and cats, some rabbits do well with a companion while others do better on their own. Overall though, small animals can benefit from having a buddy to live with. Bunnies in particular are generally happier and healthier in pairs. Two rabbits may even be easier to care for than one because they can entertain each other.



Laverne and Shirley

If getting a second rabbit is something you’re interested in, we offer on-site introductions to allow rabbits a neutral place to meet for the first time. We can also offer additional guidance on how to set your rabbits up for success.

One practice we don’t recommend is an outdated method of “trauma bonding” rabbits. This involves purposefully putting two rabbits together in a stressful (Cont.)

situation with the intention of scaring them into seeking comfort from one another. This method is neither safe nor effective, and there are much more positive and safe ways to introduce them.

Q: Can I clicker train my critter?

A: Yes! Because clicker training is based on positive reinforcement, this method of training is generally safe and can be done with many species — including rabbits. The toughest part may be finding a reward that your critter enjoys.

Once you learn this method, the sky's the limit on what you can train your rabbit to do!

Q: How can I provide a great quality of life for my small animal?

A: It is important for us pet parents to provide what we call “enrichment” to any animal we own. The type of small animal you have will determine what the best form of enrichment is.

Rabbits, for example, enjoy scavenging opportunities, which you can create by scattering food throughout their enclosure. You can also place hay and treats in a paper bag for them to throw around and shred. Ferrets enjoy tunnels and digging pits. Small animals in tanks, such

as hamsters and mice, enjoy burrowing opportunities in their enclosures.

Reptiles like lizards can be easily enriched by rearranging their tank once in a while. And our smart birds can enjoy a variety of interactive toys in their enclosures and also enjoy auditory or visual enrichment, such as bird videos.

I recommend looking online for simple and fun DIY enrichment projects for your critter to enjoy. If you're crafty, you'll enjoy the creative outlet — and then the reward of watching your little friend enjoy your handiwork.

Feel free to reach out to me at breanne@cuhumane.org if you need ideas or have ones you want to share.

Pictured right, top to bottom: Mocha, Gus & Sherman, and Mollylopasaurus are ready to find their forever homes. Visit cuhumane.org to learn more.



BREANNE TABBERT, at right in photo at left, has done it all in her decade-plus career at CCHS. She started as an animal care intern and has helped in nearly every department since then. Today, Tabbert is the shelter's animal behavior specialist. When she isn't training animals at the shelter, she enjoys hikes with her pup, Piper.



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ON THE COVER

Introducing Cessa, a sweet 5-year-old terrier/pit mix, who loves people of all ages. She is so good with meeting new people that she attends nursing home visits and Pet Pals Club, our hands-on program for animal lovers ages 10 to 15. She's also a smart girl – she learns quickly and even helps us train new volunteers! Cessa is available for adoption and would love to be your new best friend.

CCHS is piloting doggy field trips to help our pups get adopted. This issue's cover shows volunteers walking Cessa at a sunflower farm. Her vibrant personality inspired us to create **our first full color cover**.



Cessa soaking it up at Pet Pals