

Portland teen animal rescuer warns of danger to bunnies as Easter holiday approaches

As Easter approaches, rescue organizations and concerned citizens grow weary of the “Easter bunny” crisis in the PNW. Unfortunately, irresponsible Easter traditions mean many bunnies don’t live to see their first birthday.



Tualatin, Oregon Apr 5, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Eilan Keister of Tualatin, Oregon has been running her own animal rescue, Avalon Microsanctuary, since June 2020, when she was barely legal to drive a car. Keister runs her rescue out of her family home in suburban Tualatin and warns of the danger facing rabbits as Easter approaches. Many baby bunnies are purchased as gifts, and then, months later, dumped outdoors by careless individuals who don't realize this is a death sentence for domestic rabbits.

As an 18 year old, full time college student, Keister has been an animal activist for years and was heavily involved in rescue work before starting her own rescue and sanctuary. Microsanctuaries are typically smaller operations, but Avalon Microsanctuary quickly ballooned with intakes, due to the massive need in the PNW. Her sanctuary and every other rabbit rescue in the greater PNW is already bursting at the seams with bunnies that have been previously neglected, abused, or dumped. And, Eilan's experience rescuing for the last couple of years has her bracing for new waves of rabbits requiring rescue in June, as babies purchased for Easter become hormonal and more difficult to handle. Perplexed and ill prepared individuals often purchase bunnies from stores or breeders with little knowledge of the need for spay and neuter and often aren't even sure of the sex of the animals they have. When the frisky teenage bunnies become difficult to handle, they are often dumped outdoors, where they can quickly procreate, leading to the many colonies of feral bunnies in the PNW, and/or they become the next meal for a predator, since they lack the survival skills and beneficial coloring of their wild cousins, cottontails or Jack rabbits.

The sad truth is that many rabbits purchased as "Easter bunnies" won't make it to their first birthday. Rabbits are the third most dumped animal in the U.S., behind cats and dogs, yet entities for rescue and rehabilitation are few and far between.

Eilan is contacted nearly daily to help bunnies in need — either a bunny who is injured/neglected/abused, a bunny who has been dumped and roams feral outdoors, or, a bunny someone no longer wants. She helps as many as she can, knowing that when she says yes, it is a life saved.

She supports her rescue with her income as a part time vet assistant, along with modest donations from concerned animal lovers throughout the country.

When her sanctuary takes in a new bunny, the animal receives a veterinary evaluation, any needed medical attention, vaccination against Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease, and spay/neuter procedure. Medical costs alone average over \$400 for a bunny that's healthy.

Most of her rescued bunnies live on site at the sanctuary, nestled into a typical suburban neighborhood in Tualatin. Some are placed with foster families elsewhere in the PNW. Regardless of their temporary landing spot, each bunny receives love and care while they regain their health and learn to trust humans again. It's a delicate relationship, taking commitment and time.

Once an animal is healthy and well adjusted to home life, Eilan begins the lengthy process of finding an adoptive forever home. Adoptive families are carefully screened to ensure they can provide a safe, enriching the indoor environment, and that they are prepared to meet the social, emotional and medical needs of their new family member.

Keister shares these important facts for those considering adopting a rabbit :

- Their diet is 90% hay, so they are not a good option for anyone with grass allergies. Many brands of

pelleted food in pet stores can also be extremely harmful to rabbits, especially “fiesta mix” pellets. Unfortunately, the regulation for small animal foods and toys is virtually none.

- Because they are prey animals, most bunnies do not like to be picked up or held. However, they often enjoy being pet and snuggled.
- They are considered exotic animals and require specialized veterinary care.
- Spaying and neutering prevents unwanted litters but is also crucial for their long term health, temperament, and potty training. Females can become pregnant immediately after giving birth, so separating unfixed animals is crucial.
- Domestic house rabbits can live 10 years or more and require a large home base as well as space to free roam in the house. They are not cage animals or “starter pets”.
- Rabbits enjoy time outdoors in bunny-proof, predator safe enclosures, in cooler weather, under 75 degrees. Having them live full time outside will expose them to disease and predation and will drastically shorten their lives.
- Bunnies are social creatures. They enjoy being with their humans, as well as with dogs, cats and other bunnies.
- Bunnies should be fixed and bonded to one another before they can live safely in the same enclosure. Rescues and sanctuaries can often help with bonding.
- Bunny rescues can guide you to a bunny (or fixed bunny pair) that is the best fit for your lifestyle.

“We dream of a world where all beings are sheltered, loved deeply, and considered in every circumstance”.

For more information on domestic rabbits, or to get involved with volunteering, fostering, or rescuing:

<https://www.avalonmicrosanctuary.org.avalonmicrosanctuary.org/>

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