

# Collaborating with Rabbits in AAS

Clarissa M. Palmer, PhD

Plymouth State University (Psychology)

Pet Partners Team, Instructor, Evaluator





## From Ancient Wilds to Modern Snuggles: How Rabbits Became Our Furry Companions

- History of rabbits and humans
  - Roughly 40 million years ago
  - Mainly food and fur
  - Prey animals
- Instinctual behaviors
  - Innately wired to be aware and responsive
  - Crepuscular species (most active at dawn and dusk)
  - Highly perceptive to sounds, visuals, scents, and ground vibrations
  - Inherently do not like being picked up
- Domestication
  - Keeping of rabbits as pets became more widespread in the 1800s
  - Increasingly working in Animal Assisted Services (Pet Partners registers approx. 120 rabbits a year)



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## A Hop, a Binky, and a Story: Rabbits in Our Lives

2022 – estimated 2.2 million companion rabbits in the US\*

2023 – estimated 1.5 million in the UK\*

2022 – estimated 0.5 million in Australia

Numbers are increasing in Asian countries

\*Third most popular companion animal

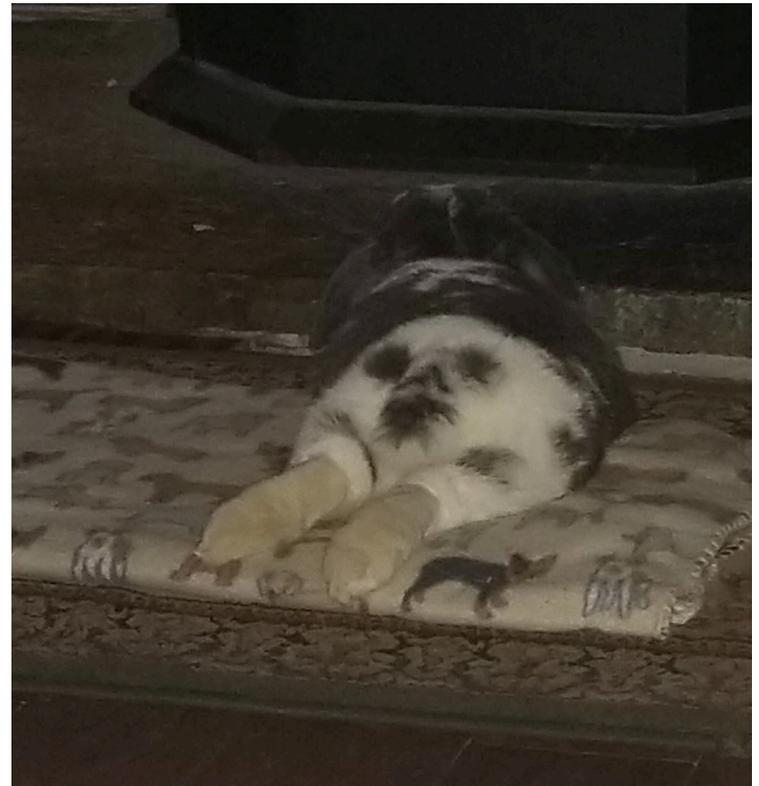
# Rabbit Movement Decoder



**Hopping:** The classic bunny bounce! (Powerful hind legs in action)

**Binkyng:** Joyful leaps and twists! (Pure happiness!)

**Flopping:** Bunny pancake! (Ultimate relaxation mode)





# Rabbit Movement Decoder

**Thumping:** The bunny alarm! (Warning: Danger or displeasure!)

**Zoomies:** Speedy bunny laps! (Energy overload!)

**Chinning:** "This is mine!" (Scent-marking territory)

**Nudging:** Gentle nose boop! (Hey! Pay attention!)

# Rabbit Movement Decoder



**Nipping:** A little nibble.  
(Could mean "hello" or "back off!")

**Periscoping:** Bunny lookout!  
(Checking out the scene)

**Crouching:** Low and tense.  
(Feeling scared or stressed)

**Teeth Grinding:** Soft purrs or  
"ouch!" (Listen to the  
context)



# Evaluating individual rabbit interest in participating in AAS



- Temperament, Disposition, Behavior
  - Shy and timid or playful and curious
  - Affectionate and enjoy cuddling or more independent and aloof
  - Rebounding after test visits
- Communication style
  - What are they trying to tell us? And how?
  - Thumping, biting, sounds, avoidance
- Age
  - Lifespan 8-12 years
  - May impact temperament
  - Earlier socialization may impact interest in people
- Environment
  - Active or quiet?
  - Exposure to varied experiences



## Practical considerations for working with rabbits



- Behavior and desire to participate
- Equipment (for safety and comfort)
  - Traveling
  - Harness & leash
  - Carrying or walking
  - Hygiene & Infection Control
- Natural (instinctual) behaviors
  - (prey animals)
  - Noise
  - Movement
  - Time of day



**Break times**



## Practical considerations for working with rabbits in various settings

- Schools
  - Guidelines might only be developed for canines so education of all is needed
  - School schedule not aligned with crepuscular nature
  - Younger students – safe handling, misconceptions from movies & books
  - Older students – scientific information, encouraging importance and benefits of quiet time
- Hospitals
  - Long-term care – level of familiarity with staff and patients, comfortable may lead to complacency
  - Short-term care – turnover of staff and patients/clients, create quick intro to help people understand needs of individual rabbit
  - Emergency room – rabbits like to chew! Be aware of wires, lines, medications. Also, understand reason for ER visit (both patient and you!).

# Is it safe for you and your rabbit??

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Are you both having fun  
and enjoying your work  
with AAS?





Have more questions about  
Wascally Wabbits in AAS?



Ask Away!

Clarissa M. Palmer  
cmpalmer@plymouth.edu