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Easter Bunnies – More than Just Chocolate

San Ramon, CA (April 4, 2006) – As Easter Sunday approaches veterinarians and rabbit rescue groups hold their breath -- they know the weeks following the holiday will result in hundreds of bunnies needlessly euthanized or abandoned at local animal shelters across the country.

“It is our intention to educate the public on the realities of bunny ownership,” said Doctor Shann Ikezawa whose special interest is bunny care for Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care. “Bunnies make great family pets, however they require special care that isn’t always taken into consideration when the impulse to adopt a bunny is made – especially during the Easter holiday.”

It’s important to understand the basics of bunny ownership so families can set realistic expectations prior to adoption. Bunnies are an 8 - 10-year commitment and many people are surprised and disappointed to find that rabbits rarely conform to the cute and cuddly stereotype. Bunnies are active – madly dashing about the house, hiding behind furniture and chewing on baseboards. More importantly -- rabbits are very delicate -- which means they are easily hurt by children when picked up. Rabbits also feel frightened when held, which means that young children can get hurt by a bunny kicking and struggling to run. Bunnies will run or try to bite when approached too quickly – a natural instinct – which often results in children quickly losing interest in their new pet.

What happens to bunnies after the initial euphoria wears off? Typically, unwanted bunnies are brought to shelters and rescue groups – but more alarming is the reality that often times bunnies are let loose to fend for themselves in the wild -- where they easily fall prey to the environment.

So, why would a family want to own a rabbit? According to Dr. Ikezawa, bunnies are very social animals that will bond to humans and other family pets including the family dog or cat. Rabbits, as in-door pets, will learn to use the litterbox, play with toys, and can roam freely inside as they don’t need a yard if given enough sun-lit exercise space. If rabbits are caged and kept outside, families will miss out on the special personalities that bunnies offer.

When adopting a rabbit, veterinarians at Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care suggest the following:

- Consider the costs of owning a bunny – including vet care, food, litter, toys, and housing.
- Think about how much time your family has to dedicate to a new bunny – it will take time to litterbox train, socialize and exercise your bunny everyday.
- If your children are young, you will need to supervise their interaction – protecting bunny from child and vice-versa.
- Bunnies are healthier if spayed and neutered – lowering the chance for cancer and relieving sexual aggression. Costs for altering a bunny can range from \$100 - \$200.
- If bunnies are kept outside, they should be brought in each evening as they can easily fall prey to outdoor predators like feral cats, raccoons and opossums. Bunnies also cannot tolerate high temperatures – especially during the summer months.
- Talk to local rabbit rescue groups about the right type of bunny for you – and perhaps consider fostering a rabbit to determine if bunny ownership is right for your family.

About Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care

Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center & Urgent Care offers routine and emergency veterinary care for the San Ramon/Tri-Valley area. Utilizing leading edge technologies like Ultrasound, Endoscopy, Laparoscopy, and Radiology, their veterinary staff is able to deliver the most advanced, least invasive veterinary care available. With independent specialists consulting in Surgery, Radiology and Reproduction, the Center also employs 12 highly experienced veterinarians who specialize in Emergency/Critical Care, Surgery, Behavior, Internal Medicine, Dentistry, Chiropractic, Preventive Care, Ultrasound and more. Services for boarding, grooming and dog/puppy training are also available. Accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association, Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center also works to support local animal rescue groups by donating thousands of dollars in free medical care every year. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am until Midnight, and weekends from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, and provides 24-hour care for all hospitalized patients.

For more information about Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center call 925-866-8387 or go to www.webvets.com
Bishop Ranch Veterinary Center is located at 2000 Bishop Drive in San Ramon, California.

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