

# THUMP

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## How Veronica, a Special-Needs Bun, Charmed Thumperino

By Amber L. Spradlin

My husband, Adelmo, and I recently adopted a sweet bun named Veronica from New York Rabbit Rescue & Rehab. Earlier, for our six-month wedding anniversary, we had adopted a male rabbit, Thumperino, from a family in Connecticut that had an accidental litter. Thumperino had blossomed into quite the little character. He learned to play piano, did some simple agility tricks, ran rabbit races through the house, and enjoyed traveling by all means of transportation (car, subway or even bus – his favorite because he can see more from the raised vantage point). Thumperino's mellow personality led us to register him as a therapy pet. This allows him to accompany me to my office in Rockefeller Center to practice his skills on over-worked office executives and occasionally to tag along with my husband, who is an opera singer. At age three we thought his life was complete but always wondered if it could be more fulfilling if he had a partner.

After several unsuccessful attempts to meet bunnies on our own, we ventured into the Union Square Petco to see what



Veronica and Thumperino.

buns might be there from the Rabbit Rescue & Rehab family. A volunteer told us how to set up an appointment at New York Animal Care & Control Center on 110th Street. Cindy Stutts and her team carefully spent time introducing Thumperino to all of the possible rabbits under her care at AC&C. He quietly and politely introduced himself to all of them and three buns were candidates for a possible match. Adelmo and I then interacted with each possible rabbit and weighed the options of which rabbit would fit our life, our home, Thumperino – and also, which rabbit liked us back. Veronica, a two-year-old female with special needs, proved herself to be the rabbit for our little pack.

Veronica is a tiny lady with a beautiful long coat, seal-point markings and slight spinal deformities that possibly developed from overcrowding in her mother's uterus. The best thing about Veronica is that she has no concept of her limitations and tackles each task or toy with the same spirit and determination as any other rabbit – traits that brought us to register her as a therapy rabbit, too. Her hearty spirit demonstrates that disabilities need not limit one's potential enjoyment of life. She exudes tremendous pride in kennel décor, rearranging her blankie,

her pillow bed and stuffed monkey toy. We introduced her to the joy of cardboard tubes – bunnel tunnels, as Adelmo and I like to call them. Now, we chuckle at the shuffle, shuffle sounds of her "burrowing" back and forth inside the tubes while we are in the next room.

From the very beginning, Veronica and Thumperino had many successful interactions. They mostly dated for two to five minutes on a tablecloth placed over our bed. Since Thumperino had been a free-roaming house rabbit for three years, the only neutral spaces without his territory stamp were the bedroom or the shower. We had a breakthrough date on day two. Veronica had been making cooing, guinea pig type sounds when they were together and presenting her head for grooming. Having been away from other rabbits since he left his litter mates, Thumperino didn't understand her language. Finally, he seemed to figure out what she was seeking. He licked her ears and head, which pleased her so much she gave a little bounce and then flopped beside him.

We ended each of these early dates on a positive note, and we let the rabbits' body language and actions guide us. We

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Top, Veronica at AC&C.

Bottom, Day One in her new home.

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made a point to give each rabbit equal attention. Veronica and Thumperino each received a tiny cube of carrot or apple as a reward treat, and we made sure to familiarize each rabbit with the other's scent. The most important thing we kept in mind was that we were a pack teaching each other how to live together.

After a couple of weeks, we noticed that the rabbits wanted to share the same kennel. We adjusted the living space to give them each their personal property and configured positioning of their food, water and litter to make it easiest for Veronica to have access. The first week was difficult. One day we came home and Thumperino had carried all of her

possessions from the kennel into the hallway, but we found them grooming his stuffed lion toy together so we figured they weren't too upset and just returned her things.

Veronica now has learned the command we use for bedtime: "Thumperino night-night and Veronica night-night." She hops right in the kennel after him and they snuggle up like kittens in a basket. She has also taught him how to play with her favorite toy, the red slinky, and introduced a game during meals where she hops over him while he runs in circles around my ankle until I place the bowl of greens on their mat.

Veronica is a welcome addition to our family and we have all been completely

smitten with her from the moment we met. What a little love puff...wait...a BIG love puff in a little package! We are forever grateful to Cindy for rescuing this fur angel.

Thumperino and Veronica have their own pages on our rabbit themed website [www.HocksOut.com](http://www.HocksOut.com). We share pictures and videos of them; we have branded items for rabbit lovers, and a page for Hocks Out Press, where the debut book *Thumperino-Diary of a Superbunny* is available for purchase. Sales have been positive and I have been able to donate a portion of the sales to help rabbit organizations and charities. Rabbits have brought my husband and me such joy we hope others will consider rabbit adoption, too!

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