



Tellington TTouch® Southern Africa

Issue 03, April 2017

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Website of the month
Book of the month

TTouch South Africa

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Eugenie’s Letter

Dear TTouch Friends,

We have just finished a spectacular series of workshops with the best of the best! Robyn Hood!

Even our Certified Practitioners learned more and more with Advanced Trainings. Getting to do “practical application” with such a good coach is really a privilege and many people took advantage.

And for **more good news**, I am so excited to tell you that we have had 3 upgrades for our Practitioners to Senior Levels. Lindy Dekker is now a TTouch Instructor for Companion Animals as well as for Horses. So undeniably the most experienced TTouch person in SA! But we also now have 2 new Practitioner 3s for Companion animals – Niki Elliott and Nicky Lucka, so South Africa is becoming more and more expert in the TTouch Methods and I’m super proud of all three of these Ladies!



Niki Elliott,
Robyn Hood &
Nicky Lucka



“Owl,” said Rabbit shortly, “you and I have brains. The others have fluff. If there is any thinking to be done in this Forest--and when I say thinking I mean thinking--you and I must do it.”

– A.A. Milne, The House at Pooh Corner



Lindy Dekker
and Robyn Hood

CAPE TOWN

I am happy to confirm that the Cape Town workshop May 20-25 is definitely a go and will probably be held at the Cape of Good Hope SPCA in Grassy Park. Edie Jane Eaton, one of our Canadian Instructors will be teaching and it's a great opportunity for those in and near the Western Cape to do a full **5-Day Training for Companion Animals**. Please email info@ttouch.co.za if you

would like more info on this training.

In the meantime, Lindy Dekker will also be giving a **3-day Equine Training** April 29 - May 1 in Paardeboshch, Malmesbury, So good things coming to the Cape!

If you haven't yet joined our Facebook Page "**TTouch Southern Africa**", then please do go on and sign up as it will allow you to keep up with not only Ttouch News but also interesting animal articles and much more!

Again, a big thanks to Tracy and Karen Bullivant for sponsoring the **Danilo Bursary**, which was won this time by Debbie Hunt at the Companion Animal Training in JHB. Debbie was thrilled to have half of her course fees paid and it allowed her to spend her own money for equipment & extras!

Here's hoping you're keeping warm in the unusual cold weather for April! Almost time for the Fireplace!

Warmest wishes,

Eugénie Chopin



Debbie Hunt: winner of the Danilo Bursary

**Instructor for
Tellington TTouch
Companion
Animals**

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Upcoming Tellington TTouch Trainings

For Companion Animals and Horses

You need no previous Experience to join these Trainings

These trainings are for any person who wants to better understand their animals as well as for those who would like to work with animals themselves.

Cape Town Practitioner Training For Companion Animals

Workshop: **5 Day training for Companion Animals**

Presented by: **Edie Jane Eaton**

Date: **May, 20th to 24th, 2017**

Venue: **TBA**

Price: **Full price R5200 -Deposit R2800**

3 Day option available

Price: **Full price R3500 -Deposit R1800**



Contact: Eugenie Chopin
at: info@ttouch.co.za
on: 011 884-3156

Gauteng Practitioner Training for Horses

Workshop: **5 Day training for Horses**

Presented by: **Debby Potts**

Date: **September, 16th to 20th, 2017**

Venue: **Donnybrook Stables, Glenferness Midrand**

Price: **Full price R5200 -Deposit R2800**

Early Bird price **R4680 expires 16th July 2017**

3 day option available

Price: **Full price R3500 -Deposit R1800**

Early Bird price **R3150 expires 16th July 2017**



Contact: Lindy Dekker
at: equibalance@iafrica.com
on: 083 616 0577

Gauteng Practitioner Training for Companion Animals

Workshop: **5 Day training for Companion animals**

Presented by: **Debby Potts**

Date: **September, 22nd to 26th, 2017**

Venue: **TBA Midrand or Sandton, JHB, Gauteng**

Price: **Full price R5200 -Deposit R2800**

Early Bird price **R4680 expires 22nd July 2017**

3 Day option available

Price: **Full price R3500 -Deposit R1800**

Early Bird price **R3150 expires 22nd July 2017**



For more details, [click here](#)

Using Tellington TTouch for Rabbits

By Lauren McCall, TTouch Instructor

A series of two articles on how to apply simple TTouch techniques for common health and behaviour issues.

(Or "How to keep your bunny happy and hopping healthy")

Series Overview

If you are reading this article, you probably have at least a passing interest in rabbits, or in learning more about how to work with small animals. Some of you will be dedicated "rabbit people". You know who you are. You have stories to share about bonding challenges, or nod sagely when someone talks about the ravages of E. cuniculi. Whether you are a small animal lover, or someone who regularly works with rabbits, I have written these two articles for you. The first article will focus on general tips and behaviour issues, and the second on health concerns.

Some of the general principles of working with small animals most certainly apply to working with rabbits (i.e. sensitive nervous systems, applying TTouches to small areas, gentle handling and so on). There are, however, issues both health and behaviour related that are more particularly common among rabbits. These would include health concerns like head tilt, gastrointestinal (GI) hypomotility/stasis, shock and malocclusion.



Lauren doing TTouch on one of her rabbit friends.

Behaviour difficulties might include bonding with other rabbits, biting, stress thumping, and shyness.

The basket of TTouch tools I will refer to are generally well-known and include: the Coiled Python, Lying Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Raccoon, Chimp, Llama, hair slides, ear and mouth work and Tiger TTouches. I will also refer to belly lifts, and body wraps.

Though I will briefly describe how to do the belly lift and body wrap, this article assumes a certain basic knowledge of TTouch. If you feel like you need

a brush up, please refer to any of the excellent books written by Linda Tellington Jones, and the All Wrapped Up book for pets by Robyn Hood.

General Tips on Working With Rabbits

One of the key aspects of working with rabbits is being able to determine their level of stress. A rabbit who is hunched up, head down and ears flat back is probably not a happy bunny. A frightened rabbit will sometimes shut their eyes, willing the perceived threat to go away. While body posture is a useful indicator, I prefer to keep an eye on the respiration rate. Rabbits have a higher respiration rate than many species, about 30-60 breaths per minute. It's tough to count breath rate in a rabbit, so I use a rather non-scientific tool I call "the wiggle rate". Try to observe how fast your bunny's nose

One of the key aspects of working with rabbits is being able to determine their level of stress.

wiggles, or twitches as they breathe when they are relaxed doing their normal routine. This is a good visual baseline. When stress is present, the wiggle rate on the nose will increase quickly and markedly. When I am working with a rabbit, I am actually keeping an eye on it's nose! Most animals ultimately find the TTouch tools calming, but occasionally the uncertainty of what you are doing can cause a slight increase in the respiration rate of a bunny. This is nothing to worry about. It may mean that you need to change what you are doing (try a different TTouch for example) or perhaps give the bunny a short break, or touch the rabbit in a way that you might normally interact with them (petting, scratching, etc.) incorporating the occasional TTouch as you go along. I have found that rabbits generally settle very quickly into whatever TTouches I am doing with them.

One of the keys to working with rabbits (all animals in fact) is for you to be relaxed using soft joints and having a normal wiggle rate yourself. Rabbits like most animals are sensitive to the signals you are giving off while you are around them. If you are stiff and holding your breath, the bunny will be inclined to suspect that you are up to something and they will be watchful and tense. Set a good example and model the relaxed state you are looking for in your bunny. Whether working with a rabbit on a table, on the floor or in my lap, I prefer to work from behind them, so that we are both facing the same direction. This keeps them from backing away from me, and enables me to lightly contain the bunny with my forearms. I am usually "asking" the bunny to stay with me by placing my thumb at the shoulders and my four fingers lightly stretched across the bunny's chest with my non-working hand (the other hand doing the TTouches). Alternate left and right hand from containing hand to working hand as needed.

In my experience rabbits are like many other animals in terms of which TTouches they find relaxing. I tend to start at the shoulders with back of the hand TTouches like Chimp or Llama.

Bunnies often enjoy hair slides especially around the neck and head (though all over is just fine too). I have a rabbit, Meredith, who is part Lion Head and she has a long haired mane around her neck. She loves hair slides there. Coiled Python, Clouded Leopard and Lying Leopard are also popular choices among buns. For rabbit TTouches I have found the 1 – 3 pressure range most comfortable for them. The relatively long ears of rabbits lend themselves beautifully to long mindful ear slides. Remember to start where the ear attaches to the head, sandwiching the ear between your thumb and index finger. Slide from the base to the tip in parallel lines until you cover the whole ear. If you are working on a lop eared rabbit, slide your fingers down or to the side with the ear, if your bunny's ears stand up, then slide upward. If you are working with a giant breed like an English lop, support the underside of the ear with one hand while doing the slides with your other hand. You have a lot more ear space to work with and you may find it easiest to use your middle as well as your index finger and thumb to do the slides. Try a little experimentation and find out what your bunny enjoys. Just remember to watch the wiggle rate as well as the body posture to determine how things are going.



Be gentle when stroking the ears. With a lop eared rabbit, support the ear with one hand, and stroke with the other.



Like any animal, how long you work on a bunny is a very individual determination and will vary not only on the rabbit, but how they are feeling at any given time. Having said that, rabbits have sensitive nervous systems and will only tolerate a certain amount of touching of any kind. You may find at the outset that a couple of minutes of TTouch on

your bunny will give them enough to think about, and process in their body before they need a break. Once your bunny is used to TTouch, you should be able to work up to 10 or so minutes fairly rapidly.

Behaviour Issues

Stress: Biting and Thumping

Rabbits are sensitive little beings and they get stressed easily. What sets them apart from many other species is that extreme stress can kill a rabbit fairly quickly. I have often wondered if the expression “dying of fright” started with rabbits. Rabbits can manifest stress in various ways, biting and thumping the ground with their back feet are common.

Ouch! Rabbits can bite hard. And though they need to chew to keep their ever growing teeth worn down, they can chew/bite inappropriately. Go into the home of most house rabbit people and you’ll see chair and table legs nibbled at bunny height. Rabbits are given hay to free feed on, in addition to what ever pellets and veggies are in their diet so they have plenty of opportunity to chew. To them, anything they can get their teeth on is pretty much fair game and excessive chewing can become a nervous habit. Rabbits do carry stress in their mouths (in human terms, mouth stress would include teeth clenching, overeating, lip licking, talking too much, etc.) and they will bite when stressed or annoyed.

General body work will help reduce overall stress and relieve tension patterns, which is where the rabbit holds its stress in the body. The most effective TTouch for biting and general reactivity is the mouth work. Cradling the jaw with my non-working hand, and resting my thumb gently on top of the bunny’s head, I begin my TTouches at the back of the jaw and work my way forward. A rabbit’s mouth is small, so use just one or two fingers. Curl the fingers not being used inside your

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hand so they don’t stick out the sides making all of your fingers stiff and “pokey”. When you are working around the whiskers, flatten them onto the cheeks so that they aren’t bent in different directions, and do the circular movements right on the whiskers. You may only be able to do three or four TTouches on each side. That’s fine. A little bit of mouth work goes a long way. It is better to do a little bit of mouth work 1-2 times a day then stress your bunny while you insist on doing “just a few more circles”. Daily mouth work for a rabbit that bites is a must.

I try to interrupt biting behaviour on the spot by doing some circles on the mouth as the rabbit is attempting to bite. I will also do some general body work at that time if the situation permits.

Reprogramming behaviour means training the bunny to think and respond in a way other than biting. Just one or two circles can interrupt the biting behaviour and obviate the desire to use their mouth.

I make a habit of working on my rabbit’s mouth even if there is nothing in particular I want to address. I consider it to be like a “tune up”. Given that rabbits frequently carry tension in their mouths, I think keeping their mouths as relaxed as possible is a great way to keep them more relaxed in general. After a while I find that the cellular memory built up in the mouth from the TTouch work means that I can quickly and easily relax my rabbits even in stressful situations like visits to the vet. Rabbit mouths can be the first body part to get tense, and therefore the first to relax.

Rabbits thump their hind legs on the ground to warn potential predators, or when they are annoyed. Thumping in itself isn’t a bad thing, but it is symptomatic of varying levels of stress or fear. When working with a rabbit who thumps, I think about the bunny’s overall level of physical, mental and emotional balance and well-being. I don’t have a specific TTouch for thumping, I apply a basket of

TTouches, including tail work, and perhaps a body wrap until I find a combination that seems to help the bunny relax.

As prey animals, rabbits are naturally wary. They rely on their back legs and their speed to get them away from dangerous situations. They also kick with their hind legs when fighting or defending themselves. It is no surprise then that when they are uncertain or upset, their hindquarter muscles tense and twitch rapidly. In situations of habitual stress, some rabbits don't do well around other rabbits, or in shelters for example, and they develop very sensitive back ends. I typically use Coiled Python starting at the shoulders and working my way down the back all the way around the hindquarters. I emphasise a long slow release. I also use Clouded Leopard and Raccoon TTouces around and on the hind feet, often adding a lift at the end of each circle to ease the tension held in the muscles.

Body wraps can be wonderful for bunny stress. I generally stick to a half wrap unless I have a good reason to use a full wrap. Rabbit physiology is such that with a full wrap extending around the hind end, the bunny often gets tangled up in the wrap as they hop around, or thump. The half wrap is often an effective and easier choice even though it does not have the benefit of influencing the hind legs. Leave the wrap on the bunny a short time and observe the response and respiration rate. It is common to have to give the rabbit a minute or two to get used to the feeling of having the wrap on before they begin to move around. If the rabbit seems comfortable with the wrap, leave it on 3-4 minutes to start with, gradually working into longer



This is a half-wrap Body

periods of time, perhaps up to 15 minutes. As with many things TTouch, little and often is often better than one long session. It gives the nervous system a chance to process the information you have been putting into it.

Shyness and Rabbits You Can't Touch

As with many animals, I have found that rabbits sensitive to touch, are also often shy (the flip side of that is that they can also be reactive). Aside from managing environmental variables like loud noises, I find that doing the TTouces and perhaps using a body wrap very helpful. Shy rabbits are usually hunched up with their head down. They may use their front paws to slap at your hand when you attempt to touch them. General TTouch body work, ear work and mouth work are the goal with these quite reserved buns. So how do you work on a rabbit that doesn't like to be touched?

Rabbits who are tense, like people, are sensitive to touch. It literally feels uncomfortable. Some rabbits find hands in general alarming, and may have a fear of being grabbed. You can try stroking any part of the rabbit with the back of your hand. Try using back of the hand TTouces like Chimp or Llama. If that is too much, you can use a small paint brush to put more distance between your hand and the rabbit. The bristles of the brush are soft and soothing. You can stroke along the head, mouth or body to do circles, just think of the brush as an extension of your hand. A cotton or wool hiking sock or rubber grooming tool can cushion the contact between you and the animal. If the bunny likes to be covered, use a towel over the body and head, and do the TTouces on the towel. The key to success in working with a shy rabbit is to find a way in. Find one TTouch they like and build, however slowly that needs to happen, from there. Avoid the temptation to do too much. End on a good note with the bunny waiting more, rather tipping over the edge into telling you they have had enough by having to bite or thump.

Bonding

My illusions about rabbits being cute, harmless fluffy little critters was shattered when I watched a rabbit rescuer try to bond two of her rescue rabbits. I had never seen two animals fight so fast or so ferociously. Rabbits either like one another, or they don't. Having said that, rabbits are social creatures and people prefer to have them live in pairs for company. The process of putting two rabbits together is called "bonding". After adopting my first rabbit from a shelter many years ago, I was somewhat mortified to hear that the way people traditionally bonded rabbits was to put them into stressful situations so that they would huddle together for safety. This included setting the washing machine on the spin cycle and putting the bunnies on the top of the washer presumably to spin and vibrate their way to happiness (ugh) or to put them in the back of a car and drive around curves.

As a budding TTouch person I rejected any such notions and experimented with what I consider to be more respectful, gentle and effective TTouch solutions. Bonding is a very big deal among rabbit people and rescue groups. Here is a process using TTouch and some effective rabbit management techniques that I have had success with. Parts of this process works best with two people.

1. Know that unless the rabbits happen to like each other immediately, bonding can take days or even weeks. Be patient.
2. Have the rabbits (spayed and neutered as applies) get to know each other and their scent by having them next to each other in separate cages or pens for 2-3 days. Do TTouches on each bunny to keep them relaxed.
3. If the rabbits seem to be getting along and not fighting in their respective cages/pens, have one person take one rabbit and another person take the other rabbit to opposite ends of a room or hallway. I suggest the space be 4-5 meters (13 – 16 feet) long if possible. If possible have both people doing

TTouches on the rabbits. The rabbits should not at this stage be facing each other.

4. Turn one of the rabbits toward the other. Continue with TTouch work including mouth work. If there is no particular reaction, turn the other rabbit so they are facing each other. Use really yummy food to reinforce positive responses (non-reactivity) and to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system. (Note: The rabbits will not eat if they are nervous.) If there is reactivity, turn the reactive bunny away. Do TTouches until calm, call it a day.
5. Try the hallway stage again, consider adding a half wrap especially if either or both rabbits were reactive. Wrapping the reactive bunny is most important but please make sure the rabbit is already used to the wrap prior to using it in a bonding situation.
6. Once the rabbits are doing well at that distance, move them gradually closer. The variables are whether they are both looking at each other and how close they are to each other.
7. When they are able to comfortably be near each other in the hallway or other neutral space, try putting them in the same pen but it **MUST BE A NEUTRAL PEN/CAGE**. Rabbits are territorial. Until they are good friends, use a neutral space.

TTouch is wonderful for rabbits and behavioural issues. Remember that TTouch can and should be an everyday part of how you connect with your bunny.



Next time: TTouch for Health Issues.

Can you wrap a parrot?

Q: *from Vanessa Line*

Hi everyone,

Is there anyone who could give me advice on wrapping a parrot? I've been asked to help a friend who is moving next week from here in Namibia to Yzerfontein with their dog, cat and parrot. The parrot apparently stresses terribly in his traveling cage and it is about a 14 hour drive from here via Noordoewer / Vioolsdrif.

Eugenie, does a parrot count as a companion animal??!! He sits on his owner's lap....

A: *from Kerry Macdonald:*

I hope I can offer some ideas for your friend's bird.

I have an African grey who used to belong to my brother before he moved overseas two years ago. Mickey MacParrot (!) was flown down to Cape Town from Johannesburg in a travel crate having never been in one before. Mickey used to be quite a tricky bird to handle, so it was a challenge for my brother to get him to go into the crate in the first place. My brother used a towel that he dropped over him, picked him up and placed Mickey in the crate with no resistance. All was well when Mickey arrived safely in Cape Town and he was remarkably calm. However he is quite a confident bird to say the least.

Over the past few years that Mickey has "owned" me and my home, he has become easier to interact with, but it was very difficult to get him

to take to a wrap. What I do know about grey parrots in particular is they love to play "peek-a-boo" or hide in a towel. Mickey always loved to be covered with a towel and find his way out, even when he was difficult to handle. It is a great way to get a bird into a travel cage or crate too, as they tend to calm down once they are covered in a towel. As I said, this is how my brother got him into the crate. It is a good idea to cover the crate with whatever you use to cover his cage when he goes to bed - something familiar. Most parrots will calm down and go into sleep-mode when they are covered over.

Personally I would not try a wrap for your friend's bird just yet, as it sounds like he has not been exposed to wraps yet. Parrots are quite good at shredding things, so it is unlikely the wrap will remain on him in any case. My bird has become used to wraps now as I initially used them as a play tool (I used a ribbon to begin with). He does take a wrap draped over his head for short periods of time now, and sometimes he allows the wrap to be actually wrapped around his body. However it is a very long process with parrots as it takes time to introduce new items to them.

Prior to moving, perhaps your friend can try putting a towel over him for short periods of time every day, and then try putting the bird in the crate using the towel. If the bird is happy with that, then maybe keep the bird in this cage until they depart. It depends on whether it is a cage or a crate.

I don't presume to be the parrot expert but Mickey has definitely been a great teacher for me.

Is your Cat a Fussy Eater?

By Barbara George, Tellington TTouch Pract

Why do some cats eat everything easily and others fuss over their food? If we look at the process of eating it covers more than just food.

A cat must feel relaxed and safe and be able to eat. Cats that have issues with their mouths, tongue, gums and teeth, nose, sinuses, throat, stomach, digestive system, vomiting, or general pain may not feel able to eat. These cats need to see a vet to resolve their issues and their owners given information on how and what to feed them. Even pain not directly associated with eating can be a cause, such as arthritis. Tiredness, stress, fear and aggression can also affect eating patterns.

Temporary fussiness may be as a result of already haven eaten, either at the neighbour or something found in the garden. The memory of pain associated with certain foods may be a deterrent to eating; this can be based on smell, looks, presentation, texture, the bowl or the place of eating. Many cats don't like being watched when they eat.



There should be no pressure to eat now, such as specific short-term feeding times. The cat must have the desire to eat when food is presented.

The place where cats eat must be safe and secure from their perspective. Natural behaviour is for cats to eat separately; however our domestic cats learn to eat together or share in order to have quick and easy access to free food. The area around the feeding place can have an influence; strong smells, loud noises, air movement, hot or cold temperature, presence – or the perception of – threats, and the association with the place.

Disturbances include high traffic areas (or even any traffic), activity, noise, smells, proximity to entrance/exit points, presence or absence of other animals or family members. Some cats feel the need, for security reasons, to vary the place where they eat; not always eating in the same place. Very insecure cats can even refuse to eat if another cat has been in their special eating place.

Height plays a role too; high places are safer than lower ones if they can be easily reached.

There are no food bowls in nature. Cats learn to eat from bowls because that is how we feed them. Bowls should be washed in clean water and rinsed to remove any smell of chemicals

or other foods, and thoroughly dried using a clean cloth.

Bowls should be wide enough to accommodate whiskers and have shallow or sloping sides to allow access to the food in the corners. While some cats will use their paws to get at inaccessible food, other will leave it. For older, injured or arthritic cats the bowl can be raised to make it easier to access.

The colour and texture of the bowl will play a role for some cats. Food in bowls that are similar in colour to the food, or shiny stainless steel, may not always be visible in some light conditions. Old, scratched plastic bowls tend to harbour bacteria which may have a smell and will interact with the food.

An alternative to using a bowl is to provide puzzle, or interactive, feeders. These will be discussed over the next few weeks.

The food presentation is important. Is it fresh, does it smell good to eat, is it appropriate, and how much is there? Cats have small stomachs (think of the size of a meal of a mouse) and are not designed to deal with toxins.

Cats have an incredible sense of smell and use this to determine if the food is good to eat. Any food that doesn't look or smell right will immediately be rejected. Many cats will reject a meal that has any additives and/or medication as these alter the smell of the food and it may not register as edible. Soft or wet food that has been refrigerated will need to be warmed to be acceptable – mix a little hot water in to increase the liquid intake.

The texture of food plays a role too. Many cats like to chew; this is good

exercise for the teeth and gums. Older cats may prefer softer food. Some like more gravy while others prefer dry and access to fresh water.

Flavour is a learned experience. Many flavourants contain chemicals which may be appealing to some cats; they can become addicted to these flavours and preservatives and refuse to eat anything else. This can cause a problem if the product becomes unavailable or the ingredients are changed.

The volume of food can be an issue; too much food can be overwhelming while too little will leave the cat hungry and with a poor association experience.

Boredom is factor in many cat behaviours. Cats are masters of manipulation; they know exactly how far to push to get what they want, and if this is the only way they can exercise their minds and gain attention it is worth pursuing.

In addition to boredom there are other emotional states that can influence the desire to eat; loneliness, grief, depression, anger, or fear. Fear is often characterised by the cat shutting down emotionally and physically, only doing the minimum needed to stay alive.

Is the so-called 'fussy' cat really fussy, or in pain, stressed, nervous, bored, fearful, or not

hungry, or is there some element of the position or food bowl that makes him feel unsafe, or does he feel the food is not right to eat? There are many areas to consider before labelling a cat 'fussy'.

<https://gosouth.co.za/cat-fussy-eater/>



