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***For Immediate Release***

## **EASTER BUNNIES ARE NOT THE BEST EASTER GIFT**

**March 28, 2018 – BOSTON, MA** - The birds are chirping, the flowers are blooming, the sun feels a little warmer. Easter is a beautiful and happy time of year: and FOUR PAWS aims to help keep it that way.

But, there's a caution sign as well: this time of year, hundreds of thousands of baby rabbits and baby chickens are sold to unknowing parents eager to buy a cute, real-life present for their child.

There is a pervasive myth circulating today that a bunny or chick can make for the perfect Easter gift and/or "first pet" for children. In reality, bunnies and chicks are a lot of hard work. That presumed lighthearted, cute gift can easily turn into a disastrous house mate and long-term responsibility.

"Most people don't know what exactly it takes to care for a baby animal until it's unfortunately too late," explained Robert Ware, Executive Director of FOUR PAWS International's Boston office. "This is what we are trying to avoid by educating the public *before* that impulse purchase," he continued.

"The typical American home is far from an ideal place to house rabbits," reports Dr. Katherine Polak, veterinarian and FOUR PAWS' Director of Stray Animal Care. "Rabbits are a fearful, prey species with a strong fight or flight response," Dr. Polak continued. "Rabbits also have unique health considerations including the need for spaying or neutering, frequent dental care, special diets, and routine veterinary exams."

FOUR PAWS urges the public to avoid the temptation of bringing home that cuddly looking rabbit or sweet chirping chick for these important reasons:

- Baby rabbits and baby chickens are extremely fragile and susceptible to shock, broken bones and dislocations due to improper handling. They are sensitive to light and temperature changes and get sick easily, often dying within days of being "home."

- A rabbit is a long-term relationship and should be carefully researched and prepared for. A rabbit raised in the house or in a coup has a lifespan of roughly 8 – 14 years, the equivalent lifespan of most dogs!
- By falling victim to their cute little noses, fluffy tails, and long floppy ears and deciding to purchase a rabbit or chicken online, at a roadside stand, or through a pet store, you may be unwittingly supporting exploitive industries. Numerous pet shops stock bunnies in stores as soon as Easter grows near, the same shops that go along with puppy mills and irresponsible breeders.
- Rabbits are the second most expensive pet behind dogs. A true care regimen requires the right food, habitat, space to run and hop, and toys to play with.

While a pet bunny can potentially bring many years of joy to the RIGHT owner, thousands of new bunnies are brought home each April, only to be quickly forgotten, neglected and mishandled, or set free to fend for themselves in a world made up of predators, traffic, curious pets, and high summer temperatures.

In fact, in 2009, after public pressure mounted, PETCO and other shops stopped selling rabbits at their stores because of the amount of returns and abandonments.

If after adequate thought and preparation, it is truly desired to have a bunny as a pet, please consider adopting a rescue bunny. Animal shelters and bunny rescue organizations are actively caring for bunnies that need permanent homes – especially AFTER the Easter season fades away.