To the Editor:

Maurice and Singh report an improved method for restraining rabbits for examination of the eye. This method straddles the rabbit over a bar to prevent it from moving during examinations. The apparatus replaces the conventional headrest of the slit lamp. Its primary advantages include freedom from interference with the optical components of the slit lamp, and restraint of the animal without anesthesia. However, the animal is still able to move its head during procedures such as fluorophotometry or venipuncture of the ear.

We utilize an alternative method which completely immobilizes the animal's head with a combination of physical restraint by bagging the animal and placing it in a structured holding device as shown in Figure 1. The rabbit is initially placed in a commercially available cat-restraint bag. The bag is made of canvas and has a zipper down its length with adjustable fasteners at the neck. Before placing the animal in the bag it is fitted with a disposable diaper. The bagged rabbit is then placed head first into the aluminum holder. A metal bar is positioned above the animal's neck to secure the head. After the rabbit is on the platform, straps are wrapped over the shoulders and back. These straps are fastened with velcro underneath the holder. The entire apparatus replaces the headrest of the slit lamp (Fig. 2). It can be rotated about a vertical axis and tilted on a
horizontal axis allowing convenient access to both eyes during examination.

There are several advantages to the combined "bag and holder" method. The movement of the rabbit is completely controlled. This enables the operator to easily perform venipuncture on the ear. Butterfly infusion sets can be taped to the ear and remain in place for several hours. In addition, fluorophotometric measurements, which must be strictly timed, can be made immediately without waiting for the rabbit to position its head properly. The animal is quite still and relaxed in the bag, and it tends to feel safer than when its legs are left dangling. Furthermore, the bag reduces the amount of airborne rabbit hair. This combined with the diaper protects the optics of the instrument. One person can single-handedly place the rabbit in the bag and the holder without using a loading hopper. The animal and the investigator are protected from injury with the use of this device.

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Reference