

Spaying or Neutering Your Rabbit

The reason for spay/neuter surgery is obvious if you have both a male and a female rabbit. (Remember the old cliché about breeding like rabbits!) But why should you spay or neuter your rabbit if you have only one, or if you have several of the same sex?



There are several very good reasons. Studies indicate that up to 80 percent of unspayed female rabbits will get uterine and/or ovarian cancer between two and five years of age, and a very high rate of males will get testicular cancer. Spaying or neutering your rabbit will help give her or him a potential life span of eight to twelve (or more) years. Also, upon reaching sexual maturity, rabbits often display such undesirable behavior as spraying, chewing, and fighting with other rabbits, as well as becoming aggressive toward people. Spaying or neutering greatly reduces and, in many cases, eliminates these behaviors.

About Your Vet

It is extremely important to make sure that your vet is knowledgeable about the procedure, and experienced with both the procedure and rabbits in general. A rabbit neuter or spay surgery can be dangerous or even life-threatening if improper technique or general anesthesia is used. If the rabbit is older, tests may need to be done to assess liver and kidney function prior to surgery.

The House Rabbit Society (www.rabbit.org) keeps a list of experienced rabbit vets. Please question the vet carefully about his or her experience with rabbits before you take your bunny in for surgery.

About the Surgery

Contrary to the procedure with other animals, food and water should not be withheld from a rabbit the evening before surgery. If the veterinary office staff directs you to withhold food, discuss the request with your vet. Generally, the reason that food is withheld from cats and dogs is the possibility of vomiting during surgery, but rabbits cannot throw up, so it's not a danger with rabbits. Withholding food and water is harmful to rabbits and can result in a longer recovery time from surgery.

To assist with the recovery process, as soon as the rabbit awakens from surgery, he should be encouraged to eat. After surgery, to help the bunny begin eating again, offer him a variety of his favorite fresh foods. Post-operative pain relief will also help your bunny recuperate faster.

This resource was compiled by Liz DiNorma of the House Rabbit Society and rabbit expert Cinnamon Gimness.