

Why You Should Spay or Neuter Your Rabbit

1. Altered rabbits are healthier and live longer than unaltered rabbits. The risk of reproductive cancers (ovarian, uterine, mammarian) for an unspayed female rabbit stands at approximately 85% and is virtually eliminated by spaying. Your neutered male rabbit will live longer as well, given that he won't be tempted to fight with other animals (rabbits, cats, etc.) due to sexual aggression.

2. Altered rabbits make better companions. They are calmer, more loving, and dependable once the undeniable urge to mate has been removed. In addition, rabbits are less prone to destructive (chewing, digging) and aggressive (biting, lunging, circling, growling) behavior after surgery.

3. Avoidance of obnoxious behavior. Unneutered male rabbits spray, and both males and females are much easier to litter train, and much more reliably trained, after they have been altered.

4. Altered rabbits won't contribute to the problem of overpopulation of rabbits. Over 15 million adorable dogs, cats, and rabbits are killed in animal shelters in this country every year. In addition, unwanted rabbits are often abandoned in fields, parks, or on city streets to fend for themselves, where they suffer from starvation, sickness, and are easy prey to other animals or traffic accidents. Those rabbits who are sold to pet stores don't necessarily fare any better, as pet stores sell pets to *anyone* with the money to buy, and don't check on what kind of home they will go to. Many of these rabbits will be sold as snake food, or as a pet for a small child who will soon "outgrow" the rabbit.

5. Altered rabbits can safely have a friend to play with. Rabbits are social animals and enjoy the company of other rabbits. But unless your rabbit is altered, he or she cannot have a friend, of the opposite sex, or the same sex, due to sexual and aggressive behaviors triggered by hormones.

6. Spaying and neutering for rabbits has become a safe procedure *when performed by experienced rabbit veterinarians.* The House Rabbit Society has had over 1000 rabbits spayed or neutered with approximately .1% mortality due to anesthesia. A knowledgeable rabbit veterinarian can spay or neuter your rabbit with little risk to a healthy rabbit. ***Don't allow a veterinarian with little or no experience with rabbits to spay or neuter your rabbit.***

Surgery can be performed on a male rabbit as soon as the testicles descend (3-4 months) and for females, at 6-8 months.

Make sure your rabbit is in good health prior to the surgery. Depending on your rabbit's age and health conditions, your veterinarian may recommend a blood panel to check for anemia, kidney function, and liver enzymes. This will help indicate any special precautions that need to be taken prior to or during surgery.

Food and water should NOT be removed from a rabbit the evening before surgery! Any change in diet can upset a rabbit's sensitive digestive tract and cause problems in post-operative recovery. After surgery, make sure the rabbit's cage is clean, and check her incision site daily for swelling or discharge. Do everything you can to get your rabbit to eat again as soon as possible after returning home. If your rabbit has not eaten for 48 hours after surgery, consult your veterinarian.