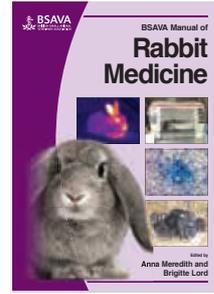


Should I have my rabbit neutered?

Molly Varga and Lucy Gott



Female rabbits

Neutering (commonly called spaying) your female rabbit (doe) can:

- Prevent unwanted pregnancies
- Allow both sexes to be kept together
- Prevent reproductive tumours of the uterus (womb). These develop in 80% of rabbits by the time they reach 4 years of age. The cancer can spread to other organs, which is often fatal. Removal of the womb is therefore recommended even in older rabbits once breeding is no longer desired
- Help to reduce hormone-related behaviours such as aggression towards owners and other rabbits, scent-marking and mounting (although these may not stop completely).

Ideally, spaying is performed at around 5 months of age. As female rabbits get older, fat develops around the womb. This makes surgery more difficult and may increase the risk of complications.

What does spaying involve?

The operation is performed under general anaesthetic and it involves removal of the womb (uterus) and ovaries.

Your rabbit should be in good health, have a normal appetite and be passing plenty of normal droppings. She will be admitted to the hospital on the morning of her surgery but she can eat right up until her arrival at the practice.

After the operation your rabbit will have a shaved patch on her abdomen and a scar with stitches in the skin (or stitches just under the skin and surgical glue in the skin). There will also be stitches in the muscle layers underneath the skin.

Male rabbits

Neutering (commonly called castrating) your male rabbit (buck) can:

- Prevent unwanted pregnancies
- Allow both sexes to be kept together
- Help to reduce (although may not completely stop) hormone-related behaviours such as aggression towards owners and other rabbits, scent-marking and mounting
- Prevent testicular tumours developing.

Castration can be performed from 5 months of age, or possibly when the rabbit is slightly older, depending on the size of his testicles.

What does castration involve?

Castration is performed under general anaesthetic. It involves removal of both testicles but the scrotum is left.

Your rabbit should be in good health, have a normal appetite and be passing plenty of normal droppings. He will be admitted to the hospital on the morning of his surgery but he can eat right up until his arrival at the practice.

After the operation your rabbit will have a shaved area between his back legs and two small scars, which are closed together with either several small stitches or skin glue.

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Should I have my rabbit neutered?

continued

After the operation

Your rabbit should be able to come home on the same day as the surgery, provided he/she is eating well and passing droppings. Occasionally we need to keep a rabbit in overnight if they are not eating so we can monitor them and give them supportive care.

Your veterinary nurse will explain the postoperative care and pain relief required at a discharge appointment when you come to collect your rabbit.

Once your rabbit is back home:

- Check they are eating and passing droppings:
 - If they are not eating properly and/or they are producing fewer droppings, contact the practice
- Look at the scar and stitches every day:
 - If there is redness, heat, swelling or a discharge, please contact the practice
 - If your rabbit is interfering with the scar, please contact the practice. An Elizabethan collar may be needed but we don't use them on every rabbit, as they can interfere with appetite and eating.

Skin stitches (if applicable) will need to be removed after 10 days, at a re-visit appointment.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Male rabbits can still have viable sperm for up to 4 weeks after castration and may need to be separated from unneutered females during that time if pregnancy is to be prevented.