

RABBIT DESEXING

Most people are well aware of the options around desexing of cat and dogs but less is known about the options for rabbits and what is recommended.

We recommend desexing of both male and female rabbits. This makes them much easier to keep in pairs without the risk of unwanted offspring and reduces aggressive behavior in both sexes as well. Many owners opt to castrate their male rabbit as this is the cheaper option but we strongly recommend all female rabbits not being used for breeding are desexed also. The reason for this is that female rabbits are VERY prone to uterine cancer – it is thought to affect up to 85% of all female rabbits older than 3 years. Once cancer develops they can still be spayed but this may not stop the cancer from spreading.

The optimum time for spaying female rabbits is around 5-6 months of age – before this age the surgery can be more difficult as the uterus and ovaries are very small and easily damaged. More mature rabbits can still be spayed but the surgery is again more difficult as fat is stored around the uterus and this makes it difficult to visualize the blood vessels.

Male rabbits should be castrated at around 4-5 months but they can still be done at an older age if you've missed this ideal age. Also keep in mind that males can remain fertile for up to 6 weeks after being castrated so they should ideally be kept separate from any unspayed females during this time.

Rabbits are unable to vomit and so fasting before surgery is not needed and it is important for normal gut function to have food available at all times – for this reason we ask you to bring your rabbits normal food with them on the day of surgery so they can have this available prior to surgery and as soon as they are awake again afterwards. If your rabbit has a companion you can bring them both to the clinic together as they feel less stressed with company. Pain can stop rabbits from wanting to eat and so we provide pain relief for at least 24 hours after castration and 2-4 days after spaying. If your rabbit is not starting to eat again within 24 hours of surgery this can be serious and you should contact the vet clinic for further instructions.

