

## **ADVANTAGES OF SPAYING OR NEUTERING THE PET RABBIT**

Even if your rabbit is a single pet and one has no intention of allowing it to breed, there are important health reasons for getting it spayed or neutered.

Female rabbits, called does, are in heat 75 percent of the time. Unspayed females can become quite aggressive; growling, charging, and biting at their owner in an attempt to defend their cage or territory. Other hormonal behaviors can include urine spraying and nesting due to false pregnancy. Spayed females typically do not display these behaviors.

An unspayed female rabbit has a high chance of developing several forms of lethal cancers. These tumors can develop in rabbits as early as four years of age or younger. They include cancer of the uterus, ovaries, cervix, and mammary glands and are nearly always fatal. Other reproductive problems that might occur include: pyometra (an infection of the uterus), endometrial hyperplasia, (which produces bleeding from the uterus) and mammary gland hyperplasia. Spaying a rabbit at an early age, preferably before six months, dramatically reduces or even negates the chances of that rabbit developing these life threatening conditions. Female rabbits spayed at an early age have a potential life span of eight to nine years. This life expectancy is double that of an unspayed female rabbit.

Male rabbits that have not been castrated may also possess some intolerable behavioral patterns. These behaviors can include aggression and urine spraying. Early neutering can eliminate these behaviors. Neutering also reduces the pungent odor of male rabbit urine.

Male rabbits do not appear to be as predisposed to reproductive tract cancers as are female rabbits. Nevertheless, neutering can reduce any chance of testicular cancer or testicular injuries to nil. The scrotal skin is quite thin and rather pendulous, which predisposes the testicles to injury. These injuries can lead to life threatening infections.

As demonstrated above, the reasons for spaying or neutering a pet rabbit go far beyond simple population control; they can lead to a longer, healthier life for the pet bunny.