ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

Spaying your female rabbit

Most people get rabbits anticipating less care than dogs or cats. This is just not the case. Rabbits have specific medical, habitat, and nutritional needs that can be just as taxing as your pet dog or cat. This article is going to focus on the importance of getting your female rabbit spayed. The procedure is actually called an ovariohysterectomy. Unless your rabbit has a specific health concern preventing her from undergoing general anesthesia, we recommend that all female rabbits get spayed. Having her spayed is the best defense in order to prevent the following: uterine cancer, unwanted pregnancy, life-threatening uterine infections, unwanted behaviors including aggression, mammary (breast) cancer, and false pregnancies. The most important reason is for the prevention of uterine cancer. Studies have shown that female, unaltered rabbits that are more than 2 years of age have as high as 80% incidence of uterine cancer. Spaying your female rabbit before she is 2 years of age will prevent the formation of these tumors. It is important to realize that spaying your rabbit does require general anesthesia which is slightly more risky than general anesthesia on dogs or cats. However, in the hands of a veterinarian experienced with anesthesia and surgery in rabbits, the prognosis in a healthy rabbit is very good for recovering from surgery uneventfully. So if you have a female rabbit, it is important to consider having her spayed for many reasons. As a side note, if you have a male rabbit, there are fewer risks involved with leaving them intact as the incidence of testicular disease is very low. However, male rabbits neutered as juveniles tend to have less behavioral problems such as marking or aggression. If you are considering having your pet rabbit spayed or neutered, please contact your veterinarian.

Submitted by: Dr. Kathleen Spencer