Nibbles Rodent & Rabbit Rescue
www.nibbles.org.uk
Reg Charity No.
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Our Guide to

Neutering Your Rabbits

Why do Rabbits Need Neutering?

There are a number of important benefits gained from neutering your rabbits, from health, behaviour and overall welfare. Sadly, many new owners are not made aware of the importance of neutering at the point of sale, and we regularly see the fall out from this lack of advice at Nibbles. Neutering is important regardless of the sex of your rabbits and all rabbits should be neutered, even if they are being kept in single sex pairs.

Our guide will help you understand why neutering rabbits is so important for their overall welfare, and how it will help your rabbits live long, healthy and happy lives. Rabbit's aren't the low cost pet many people expect!

Why Neuter Two Litter Brothers?

One of the most common mistakes we see at Nibbles is the fallout from two litter brothers being sold as a 'bonded pair'. For the first few weeks they will happily co-habit and seem like the best of friends, but as they mature and their hormones begin to kick in, they also begin to squabble. Soon these squabbles turn into serious fights and the brothers have to be separated. This is when we get the call, one brother has to go and will we take him.

Neutering young isn't a total guarantee against the brothers falling out, but it does seriously reduce the probability from 99% down to around 20%. With those odds in place, neutering is vital.

Why Neuter Two Litter Sisters?

Uterine and Ovarian Cancer

While two litter sisters have a lower probability of falling out when they reach sexual maturity, it is not unheard of, however, the main reason neutering is vital for female rabbits is to prevent the development of cancer. Research as shown that 80% of unneutered female rabbits have developed uterine or ovarian cancer by the age of 5, with cancerous changes beginning by the age of 3. With those odds in place, neutering is vital to prevent an early and painful death. With the uterus and ovaries removed, the risk of cancer is completely eliminated.

Why Neuter Mixed Sex Pairs?

The most obvious answer to this question, is to prevent the rabbits from breeding. We've all heard the saying 'breeding like rabbits' and two rabbits can quickly become 50 rabbits if left to breed out of control.

Keeping a neutered female with an unneutered male, may prevent pregnancy and cancer, but this will not stop the males urge to mount the female continuously, especially during the spring.

The female's only defence towards this onslaught of attention is to become aggressive towards the male. Eventually, it is highly likely they will need to be separated.

When should a rabbit be neutered?

Males can be neutered from between 12-16 weeks of age and females from 16-20 weeks. The ideal body weight is 1.2kg. It is important to neuter as early as possible to prevent bonds breaking down.

If your rabbit is already an adult, it is still perfectly safe to get them neutered. We regularly neuter adult rabbits when they arrive in our care, and sadly many of the older females already have cancerous changes.

Other Benefits of Neutering

Company - As a social prey species rabbits find safety in numbers and benefit greatly from company of their own kind. Neutering makes this possible.

Litter Training - Neutered rabbits are much more likely to use litter trays and keep their space much cleaner. It also helps to eliminate the unpleasant habit of spraying urine.

Aggression - Neutering helps to prevent hormonal aggression, which is the most common cause of aggression in rabbits, both towards other rabbits and towards humans. From lunging, biting and chasing, neutering is the only way to curb these behaviours.