

COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER— JULY 2023

NEUTERING YOUR RABBIT

Unless you wish to breed from your bunny, it is a good idea to consider having them neutered. This has benefits for social, health and behavioural reasons.

Bonding

Rabbits are very sociable animals and can get depressed if kept alone, ideally they should always live in pairs or in a group.



The best companion for a bunny is other bunnies! Bonding rabbits can sometimes take time and it is best to seek advice, however, they can bond successfully with either a companion of the opposite or same sex.

The pair will need to be neutered to control their hormones to limit mounting, bullying and sexual aggression, (even with a same sex pairing). Rabbits are a prey animal and are naturally anxious, so although they can fit into a fur family of larger pets, be aware they may feel threatened and stressed. It is also not recommended to keep rabbits with guinea pigs, not only do they have different dietary needs, but also rabbits can bully and be very aggressive (even when neutered) towards guinea pigs, sometimes with fatal consequences!

Pregnancy – When to Neuter?

The average female rabbit (doe) can be sexually mature at 3 – 8 months of age depending on breed, size, and weight and may breed all year round. The gestation period is 31 days, give or take a couple of days either side, and the litters can range in size from 1 – 15 kits. The doe can become pregnant again immediately after giving birth. If a doe was left to breed monthly and had an average of 7 kits in each litter you could potentially have at least 84 kits on your hands **per year**, but remember the kits can start to breed from 3 months of age too! A male rabbit (buck) can become fertile from the age of 8 – 12 weeks according to their breed, size, and weight. The average lifespan of a rabbit can be anywhere from 8 – 12 years.



That's breeding like rabbits !!! Entire (un-neutered) rabbits have raging hormones that can lead to a number of problems.

Health

If left entire 80% of female rabbits can develop cancer of the uterus by the age of 5 years old. Does can also suffer from false pregnancies which are stressful for them and sometimes they will pull their own fur out to nest with. Entire rabbits tend to live more stressful lives. This stress can impact on their health and can lead to gastro-intestinal issues which in rabbits can be serious.

Behaviour

Bucks will also spray urine more frequently to mark their territory. Once neutered they will lead a much more relaxed life and are less smelly. Aggression can also be more apparent in entire rabbits towards other rabbits including their siblings, and even more of a concern, it can be directed at their owners, scratching, biting, and growling, after neutering they are much less territorial.

Neutering

For the male and female both procedures are performed under general anaesthetic. In the buck both testicles are removed through the scrotum or lower abdomen once they have descended at approximately 10 – 12 weeks of age. In the doe the procedure is more complex, the ovaries and the uterus are removed via the abdomen, usually from 4 months of age. Please contact the practice for further information if you would like to book your rabbit in for neutering.

THINKING OF TAKING YOUR PET AWAY WITH YOU?

It's that time of year where we are coming into the warmer months and many of us are thinking of travelling with our pets. We have compiled a list to take the stress out of packing for your pet:

- **WATER AND BOWL**

It's a great idea to have a water bowl and fresh cool water available even for the journey. Especially on warm days dogs need to be hydrated and having their own bowl can encourage them to drink. Non-spill travel bowls are available for long car journeys.

- **FLEA/WORMING TREATMENT**

Is your dog up to date with flea and worming treatment? Let us know where you intend to travel and we can advise on specific health risks for your dog (e.g. ticks). We also sell tick remover hooks at the surgery which are very handy to have with you on your travels.

- **OWN FOOD & BED**

Taking your dog's own brand of food is advised. Although we humans like to try different culinary delights on our travels, a change in your dog's diet can result in gastric problems, which is the last thing both you and they need on holiday! Although discovering new places is exciting, after a long day out there nothing like your own bed. Taking your dog's bed gives them a reassuring space to help them feel settled. Also make sure that they have toys and chews to keep them busy.

- **ID TAG AND ID CHIP**

It is a legal requirement to have a collar and tag with owner's name and address on. It is also a good idea to check your identichip contact details are up to date, including mobile contact information, please don't hesitate to ask at reception for further information.

- **VACCINATIONS**

Alongside the usual annual vaccination we also advise to cover for kennel cough. Meeting new dogs in a new area it is advisable to have the best cover possible to keep your dog healthy. If you're traveling abroad, you will need a rabies vaccination and Animal Health Certificate. Please phone the surgery for advice.

- **POO BAGS**

Always pick up after your dog. Have poo bags to hand and dispose of them responsibly.



MICROCHIP YOUR PET

Microchips don't replace a tag and collar, but they can make all the difference when it comes to getting your pet back.



Did You Know?



1 in 3 family pets will get lost



But only about 6 out of 10 microchips are registered



Microchipped dogs are more than twice as likely to be returned to their owners.



Microchipped cats are more than 20 times as likely to be returned to their owners.

- **MEDICATION**

Please make sure you take all your current medication for your pet with you. You can order repeat prescriptions from us no less than 24 hours in advance but please be aware that your pet may need to be seen by the vet if they have not had a recent repeat medication check so please allow plenty of time.

- **PROBIOTIC PASTE**

On holiday dogs can often have a bout of diarrhoea. This can be due to a change in environment or eating habits or picking infection up on walks. Often a light diet and probiotic paste can improve the symptoms sufficiently to avoid a visit to the vet. This paste can be bought over the counter from us and packed up just in case.

- **CALMING PRODUCTS**

Some dogs get very stressed and anxious when travelling and it can be a good idea to help calm them. We recommend a calming spray to help your dog cope with stress. This can also be safely used in new environment/holiday homes etc.

- **WATCH HEAT**

It has been very warm recently and you may have lots of tricks in place at home to keep your dog cool but it's worth thinking of how you can adapt them to your holiday environment. Alongside fresh cool water and shade, try planning activities to avoid the hottest time of the day; early morning walks and late evening activities are advisable.



Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

