

Pre-Surgery Vet Checklist for Rabbit Spay/Neuter

Choosing the right veterinarian is essential for a safe and successful rabbit spay or neuter surgery. Use this checklist to ensure your vet is rabbit-savvy and prepared to handle the procedure safely.

1. Are you experienced with rabbit surgeries?

Not all veterinarians are trained in rabbit medicine. Look for an exotic vet or one who specifically treats rabbits on a regular basis. Rabbits are anatomically and physiologically different from cats and dogs, so it's crucial that the vet is familiar with their unique needs—especially when it comes to anesthesia and surgical handling.

2. How many rabbit spays/neuters have you performed?

Experience matters. Ask for a general estimate of how many rabbit procedures they've done. A vet who has performed dozens (or hundreds) of rabbit spays and neuters will be more comfortable with the procedure and better equipped to handle complications.

3. What type of anesthesia do you use for rabbits?

Rabbits are sensitive to certain types of anesthesia. The safest options are isoflurane or sevoflurane gas anesthesia, which allow for better control and faster recovery. Avoid vets who use injectable-only anesthesia unless they have a specific reason and experience using it safely in rabbits.

4. Do you require pre-surgical blood work?

Pre-op blood tests help check liver and kidney function and may detect underlying issues that could complicate anesthesia. For young, healthy rabbits, it may not be required—but it's a wise precaution in older rabbits or those with unknown health histories. Ask what your vet recommends and why.

5. How do you monitor rabbits during surgery?

Rabbits are prey animals and hide signs of distress. A good vet team should monitor heart rate, respiratory rate, oxygen levels, and body temperature throughout the procedure. Someone should be dedicated to keeping a close eye on the rabbit before, during, and after surgery.

6. Will my rabbit receive pain medication before and after surgery?

Pain management is essential. Ask what pre-op and post-op pain relief will be administered and for how long. Most rabbits go home with meloxicam (Metacam) or similar meds for a few days. Clarify whether you'll need to give medications at home and how to do it safely.

7. Do you recommend fasting before surgery?

Rabbits should never be fasted before surgery. Their digestive systems rely on constant movement, and fasting can lead to GI stasis or other complications. Confirm that your vet knows this—if they recommend fasting, it's a red flag.

8. How long will my rabbit stay after surgery?

Some vets send rabbits home within a few hours, while others prefer to keep them under observation longer. Ask how long they plan to monitor your rabbit after surgery and whether they'll be discharged the same day or kept overnight, especially if there were any complications.

9. What is the post-operative care process?

Get clear instructions for aftercare, including feeding guidelines, what signs to monitor, how to keep the surgical site clean (if necessary), and how to limit activity. Make sure you're given a written care sheet or emergency contact number.

10. What is your success rate with rabbit spays/neuters?

A reputable vet should be comfortable sharing their success rates and complication rates. While no surgery is risk-free, this question helps you gauge their level of confidence and experience with rabbits.

11. Are males and females spayed/neutered differently?

Yes. Neutering males is typically a quicker and less invasive procedure, while spaying females involves abdominal surgery. Ask what to expect in terms of healing time, incision care, and pain management for both sexes.

12. What should I do if my rabbit stops eating or pooping after surgery?

Eating and pooping are signs that the digestive system is functioning. If either stops for more than 12 hours, it's an emergency. Your vet should give you step-by-step instructions on what to do and when to call for help if your rabbit seems lethargic, isn't eating, or hasn't passed droppings.