

Your rabbit's operation

Should your rabbit require an operation, including neutering, please see below some helpful instructions to ensure a safe operation and recovery period:

- For most pets it's necessary to withhold food for a period of time before they are anaesthetised due to the risk of them vomiting whilst they are asleep.

However, rabbits are **unable** to vomit so there is no need to withhold your rabbit's food before his/her operation. It can actually be detrimental to a rabbit's health for it to be without food for a prolonged period. It's important to ensure that your bunny is eating as normally as possible right up until the time when he/she is admitted to Hillside Vets.

- Please bring a small quantity of your rabbit's normal food to the surgery with you. This is to ensure that they will have a food that they are used to and likely to eat both before and after their operation.
- If your rabbit normally lives with another rabbit he/she may be more settled at the surgery if their companion comes along with them. This can also prevent problems when you bring your rabbit back home again as they may smell a little different to normal which could upset their companion. If you think this may be the case with your rabbit please contact us to arrange.
- For their own safety, all rabbits admitted to the surgery must be brought in a suitable basket/carrier. We can also loan out baskets on request – please just ask.
- You will need to bring your rabbit to Hillside Vets between 8.15am and 8.30am on the morning of their operation.

On arrival at the surgery you will be asked to wait briefly whilst the nurse takes you through your pet's consent form. Please ensure that you have appropriate contact details (including work and mobile phone numbers) to hand and ensure that you are contactable throughout the day should the need arise. If your rabbit is on any medication, please make sure that you are able to tell us the time that the last dose was given.

- If you would like any additional procedures carried out whilst your rabbit is under anaesthetic, such as nail clipping or microchipping, please let the nurse know when going through the consent form and this can then be arranged.
- Once your rabbit has been admitted, he/she will be given a full clinical examination and be administered pain relief and any necessary antibiotic injections, giving them time to take effect before the operation is started.



- Once your rabbit is recovering nicely from their anaesthetic, either the vet who carried out the operation or the nurse that has been looking after him/her will telephone you with an up-date. A discharge time will be agreed at that time.
- When you come to collect your rabbit the nurse will explain the post operative care your pet needs and give you a written copy of these instructions.
- Unless agreed by prior arrangement, full payment will be required on collection of your rabbit. If you have pet insurance, and your rabbit has undergone a procedure which can be claimed for, please bring along your policy details and a claim form. Hillside will then be able to process the claim on your behalf.
- Once you have collected your rabbit from the surgery, it is important that someone is going to be at home with him/her throughout the rest of that day and evening. This is to keep an eye on them to ensure they are recovering as they should be.
- Your rabbit will need to be kept warm overnight as small animals can be particularly susceptible to the cold. If your rabbit lives outside then its hutch will need to be moved either inside or into a sheltered place such as a shed or garage. It might be an idea to cover it over too.
- It will be very important to make sure that your rabbit is passing faeces as normal during recovery. For this reason it's a good idea to completely replace the bedding in the hutch before collection.



Further information about anaesthetics and sedation

In the past it was thought that anaesthetising a rabbit carried a considerably higher risk than anaesthetising a dog or cat. Advances in anaesthesia and increased knowledge of rabbits

have greatly improved anaesthetic safety, and they are now at **no more risk than a dog or cat**.

At Hillside Veterinary Centre we are very experienced at anaesthetising rabbits and are proud and happy to say that we have an extremely high anaesthetic and sedation safety record. However, we do understand that anaesthetics and sedatives can be quite daunting and so have provided some information below to show how we aim to keep any risks to your rabbit to a minimum.

Pre-anaesthetic examination

We examine all patients before an anaesthetic and also recommend the added safety precaution of a pre-anaesthetic blood test. This helps to rule out any internal medical conditions that we need to be aware of and allows us to adjust the anaesthetic used to the safest combination for your pet.

We particularly recommend this for very young, older or sick rabbits and this is carried out in our in-house laboratory. There is an additional charge for this pre-operative blood test, but can be discussed with the nurse at the time when completing the consent form.

General Anaesthetic

There have been many advances in anaesthetics over recent years and we use modern, safe anaesthetics at Hillside Vets which ensure a smooth and controlled anaesthetic, with less drowsiness on recovery. This is safer because it has less effect on the heart, kidneys and liver than older anaesthetic agents. It is especially suitable for 'day patients' allowing them to go home on the same day in a brighter and more alert condition.

Whenever possible we also *intubate* all rabbits, passing a tube into the windpipe to maintain the airway to deliver anaesthetic gas and oxygen, and greatly improving the safety of the anaesthetic.

Anaesthetic monitoring

One of the most important parts of the anaesthetic is the monitoring. All of our team at Hillside have received extensive training in the monitoring of anaesthesia and your rabbit will be continually monitored until they are fully recovered from the operation.

Additionally we use other monitoring equipment such as pulse oximeters, oesophageal stethoscopes and where appropriate ECG heart monitors to improve the safety of our anaesthetics. Modern anaesthetics can be reversed very quickly should a patient get into difficulty.

Intra-venous fluids

Older or sick rabbits might be put on 'a drip' prior to surgery to help support their circulation and protect their vital organs under anaesthesia. We will usually discuss this with you before the operation if we feel this is necessary for your pet.

Post-operative feeding

It's vitally important that rabbits continue to eat normally both before and after an anaesthetic, otherwise digestive problems can occur. We therefore ask that you bring some of your rabbit's normal food to the surgery as he/she is more likely to eat a food that is

familiar. If necessary we will provide you with a special diet which can be fed by syringe so that you can ensure that your rabbit is eating once back home again.

As with most technological advances, these anaesthetic agents and patient monitors do result in an increase in costs. We hope that you agree with us that a small increase in cost is well worth the benefits of using the very latest in anaesthetic practice to ensure a smooth and safe anaesthetic or sedation for your rabbit.

However, it is important to note that all anaesthetics carry some small risk to your pet, but with the above measures in place, the aim is to reduce that risk to the lowest possible level.

When you come to collect your rabbit from the surgery, you will be given some written post-operative instructions. Please bear in mind that there will always be some drowsiness after an anaesthetic and you should ensure that you are at home to supervise your pet at all times for the first evening.

If you require any further information regarding your rabbit's operation, please feel free to speak to one of our nurses who will be more than happy to help.

Disclaimer: Hillside Vets' website is intended to be used only as a guide and information resource, not as an alternative to a veterinary consultation and advice. Nothing contained in this website should be construed as medical advice or diagnosis. For specific healthcare advice please discuss the particular symptoms and circumstances of your pet with your vet.