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**Friends of the Fairfax
County Animal Shelter**

**P.O. Box 2321,
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Spay & Neuter" in the
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Rabbit Spay & Neuter: A win-win for owners and pets

By Mary O'Malley

Is there anything cuter than a baby bunny? All cute and fuzzy with big eyes and ears. Completely adorable, right?

But when that baby gets to be an adolescent he's like any other teenager: raging with hormones and fixated on just one thing! If there's a girl bunny handy we all know what to expect. 30 days later there are lots more bunnies in the world who are going to need a good home for the next 8-15 years. Finding good homes for bunnies is even harder than finding good homes for dogs and cats, so sadly, some of those bunnies may never make it to adulthood. Sometimes people just release them into the woods, thinking they'll find a Cottontail friend and live happily ever after, but the reality is that most domestic rabbits released into the wild only survive a few days.

And the truth is that there are already lots and lots of rabbits waiting for homes. There is not going to be a shortage of domestic rabbits anytime soon, so it would be better not to bring any more random little ones into the world. The obvious answer is to get your pet bunny fixed. There are several rabbit-knowledgeable exotic animal vets in and near Fairfax County who can take care of this for you. It's the responsible thing to do.

But what if you only have one rabbit? No need to spend that sort of money, right? Wrong.

Hormonal male rabbits can be a real pain to live with. They may spray urine to mark their territory, or try to mate with anything that's about the right size, including your hand!

And since they usually bite the back of their partner's neck to hold on while mating, you may find this painful as well as icky. It is not at all unusual for people to decide a hormonal rabbit does not make a good pet and turn him in to the shelter for behavioral reasons. Neutering him would do wonders for making him easier to live with, and we strongly urge rabbit owners to neuter their boys for that reason.

Girls are not exactly angelic teenagers, either, often becoming quite protective of their space and nipping when it gets invaded. But for girls, spaying is not just done to calm them down. It's literally a life-saving surgery. Sadly, rabbits were not bred to live long and happy lives as pets. They were originally domesticated for their fur and their meat. And it turns out that a huge percentage of female domestic rabbits (approximately 80%) will develop reproductive system cancers if they are not spayed before the age of 3. 80%!! Female rabbits older than 3 should still be spayed, because they may not have developed cancer yet and if they have, they may get a little more time when the primary tumor is removed. Spaying is absolutely in the best interest of the rabbit, unless your vet thinks she is a true senior bun and too old to risk the surgery.

Needless to say, the FFCAS is heartily in favor of spaying and neutering pet rabbits. We want them to have the very best chance of living long, happy, healthy lives as spoiled and beloved companions!