



The STRAWBERRY FOUNDATION

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By spaying 1 female you are possibly preventing the birth and death of 184 billion rabbits in the following seven years!

Why Spay or Neuter my rabbit? Some Scary Numbers...

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Summarised by Jenny Janse van Rensburg in June 2018

A single female rabbit can have 1-14 babies per litter, but let's be conservative and say that the average litter size is six. We'll also assume (remember, this is all hypothetical) that only *half* of those are females, and we will calculate the potential reproductivity of our bunny population only from these hypothetical three females per litter. We're also assuming no mortality, since we're talking about *potential* reproduction with no set environmental carrying capacity. This isn't unreasonable since a rabbit can easily live seven years and beyond.

Rabbit gestation lasts 28-31 days, and because they are induced ovulators, mother rabbits can be impregnated again within minutes of giving birth. This means that mama could, hypothetically, have one litter per month if she is constantly with a male rabbit. (Poor mama!)

If our "starter bunny" begins reproducing at six months of age (again, not an unreasonable estimate), and has babies for seven years, then by the end of the first year:

- **Year One:**

One mother rabbit x 3 female babies in 12 months = 36 female babies (plus your original mama makes 37) Let's add the new babies to the reproductive population at the beginning of the *following* year. At that point, their average age would be six months - the time of their first litter. If starting at the beginning of Year Two, each of the Year One female rabbits produces an average of 3 female offspring per month, then by the

- **End of Year Two:**

37 mother rabbits x 3 female babies x 12 months = 1332 female babies
(plus your original 37 will equal a total of **1369 total**)

- **End of Year Three:**

1369 mother rabbits x 3 female babies x 12 months = 49 284 female babies
(49 284 + last year's 1369 = **50 653 total**)

- **End of Year Four:**

50,653 x 3 x 12 months = 1,823,508 female babies
(1 823 508 + last year's 49 284 = **1 872 792 total**)

- **End of Year Five:**

1 823 508 x 3 x 12 months = 67 420 512 female babies
(67 420 412 + last year's 1 872 792 = **69 293 304 total**)

- **End of Year Six:**

69 293 304 x 3 x 12 months = 2 494 558 944 female babies
(2 494 558 944 + last year's 69 293 304 = **2 563 852 248 total**)

- **Year Seven:**

2 563 853 248 x 3 x 12 = 92 298 716 930 female babies
(92 298 716 930 + last year's 2 563 852 248 = **94 862 569 180!**)

That's nearly 95 billion female rabbits in seven years!

Remember that we haven't even included the males. On average, there should be as many males born in each litter as females. We didn't include them in the multiplication, since "it takes two to tango". But each year, as many males as females are born. So that adds up to another...

- **Year Two:** 1332
- **Year Three:** 49 284
- **Year Four:** 1 823 508
- **Year Five:** 67 420 512
- **Year Six:** 2 494 558,944
- **Year Seven:** 92 298 716 930

Add that to the females, and it means **that first mama and her female descendants will have produced 184 597 433 860 rabbits in seven years.**

...all of whom will need a home!

You can see why people use the phrase "reproducing like rabbits." This amazing capacity for reproduction is the main defense *Oryctolagus cuniculus* has against extinction, since they have so many predators in the wild.

Since unspayed rabbits generally have a shorter lifespan than unspayed cats, it might be unrealistic to expect a female to live a full seven years if she's reproducing at that rate. Even so, the descendants of that initial female, reproduction left unchecked, are quite capable of bringing that number into the millions in only a few years.

Do the bunnies of the world a favour: have your companion rabbit spayed or neutered!