

The Importance of Spaying a Bunny: Onyx's Story

by Miriam Palevsky

On January 8th, 2000, I adopted a bunny named Onyx and believed that she had been spayed. She had been with an unneutered male bunny without having a litter and the vet found evidence of a spay incision.

On June 19th, 2000, I went to feed my bunnies and noticed that Onyx seemed to be having a hard time standing properly and was walking with her back legs instead of hopping. Off to the vet we went! The vet said Onyx's ears and eyes were jaundiced. She put her on tetracycline and blood was drawn. The blood results showed that her glucose was high and her liver appeared to be shutting down, but nothing fell together to give any clue as to the actual problem.

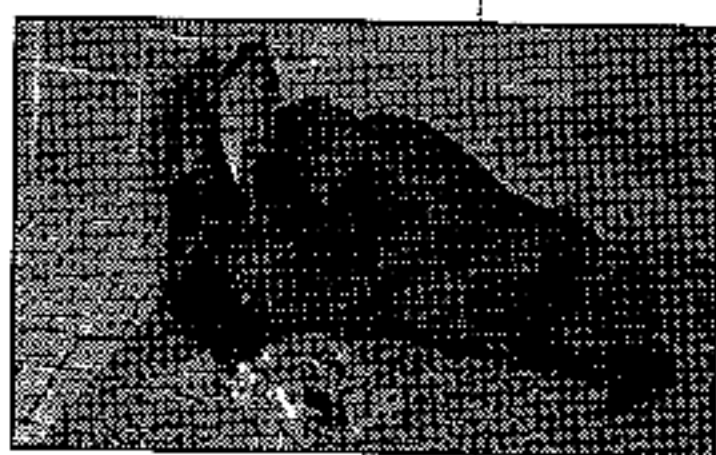
Onyx was getting worse and I noticed blood in her urine. The vet catheterized her and as soon as he stuck the catheter in, blood came spurting out. The vet said he would try to find a colleague who could do an ultrasound on Onyx to determine what was going on.

A few days later, Onyx could no longer stand and her hind legs were completely extended behind her. She

had lost complete use of her body from the waist down. The vet decided he couldn't wait any longer and he would need to perform exploratory surgery right away. He made the most astonishing and shocking discovery. Onyx had a uterus and it was HUGE. She also had a tumor that was a bit bigger than a golf ball and it was right inside the vaginal area, but she had NO ovaries. Whoever spayed her

had removed her ovaries but left her uterus. The uterus was 4 to 5 times its normal size and filled with fluid.

Over the next week and a half, Onyx re-opened her incision twice and needed to have surgery both times. She did not seem to be healing. I decided to create a covering for her belly, so she could not get to the incision. I considered an e-collar, but was afraid it would prevent her from eating. I took one of my husband's tube socks and cut off the elasticized part at the top. I cut two holes for her front paws and then cut small holes all the way around it. I put her in the tube sock and then weaved a string through the little holes I had made, so that I could tighten enough that she could not get out.



Onyx did not come through the third surgery very well and I didn't think she would survive the night. She seemed to have lost her will to fight.

I contacted Kristi Cole for advice, and she gave me the number for the Metropolitan Vet Hospital with 24-hour care. They work with Dr. Riggs, who specializes in bunnies. I called immediately and headed there with Onyx. After assessing her, the vet said she really needed to stay overnight to get stabilized and that Dr. Riggs would be in the next morning to assess her overall situation. I agreed, but it broke my heart to leave her there. They gave her sub-cutaneous fluids and pain medication, syringe fed her some food, changed her antibiotic, kept her in a warmer to stabilize her temperature and monitored her throughout the night.

July 8th, Onyx's pathology came back and it was not good. The report showed that the tumor and tissue removed were a tubular papillary Adenocarcinoma moderately differentiated with neoplastic cells that appeared to invade deep in the myometrium and did not appear to be a general mycosis. This basically meant that she had an invasive cancer in her uterus and that the tumor was also cancerous.

July 25th, Onyx went into GI stasis and no longer wanted to eat or drink anything. She seemed to be giving up.