



Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine

[Home](#) > [News](#) >

Family rabbit regains appetite after uterine surgery

🐾 Tuesday, March 4, 2014 - 12:00am

Gayane Torosyan never thought she'd fall in love with a bunny until her daughter Zara brought one home. Originally from Armenia, Torosyan grew up in a culture where animals were not necessarily considered companions. But that changed when Zara adopted a baby English rabbit named Bunny at College in Arizona and flew her home in 2008. When Zara returned to college, she left the rabbit in her family's care.

"I have time and furniture to spare, so I insisted on keeping Bunny here," said Torosyan. "I wish she had been spayed while she was young and healthy, but my family decided against it. It seemed too intrusive at the time. Little did we know that meant she would face a much higher risk of uterine cancer."

In December 2013, with the family reunited over dinner, Torosyan went to feed Bunny and noticed something was wrong. She was barely moving and not eating. The rabbit normally never let anyone lift her, but this time Torosyan could lift her easily as a toy.

"She was weak and in pain and her fur was coming out in bunches," said Torosyan. "I'd grown so attached to Bunny and spent several years in fear about what would happen as she aged. I'd never gone through the loss of a pet, and now she was in trouble."

Torosyan drove to a Binghamton vet, who performed an x-ray, found Bunny's abdomen enlarged, and suggested taking Bunny to Cornell. It was close to midnight when they arrived at Cornell University Hospital for Animals.

"We started Bunny on a drip to ensure she had adequate nutrition and fluids," said Dr. De Matos, an exotics specialist who oversaw her case. "It was not immediately clear what was wrong with her, so we placed her under thorough observation."

Watching Bunny closely, De Matos called Torosyan several times with updates on her behavior. After feeling her belly over time, De Matos began suspecting the uterus was enlarged. Checking with a sonogram, he found a uterine mass. When he called Torosyan, she was presiding over a meeting of more than a dozen people.

"I was so eager to hear the results that I interrupted my own sentence to answer the phone and left the room to talk," she said. "He was considering surgery but said I should take my time to think it through. I thought it would be cruel to delay so said go ahead."

First thing the next morning, after preparing for the surgery, De Matos called Torosyan to ask one more time. She said to go ahead, and De Matos and Dr. Danielle Tarbert, the service intern, performed surgery to remove the uterus.



“Tests confirmed Bunny had a uterine adenocarcinoma, a very common cancer in unspayed rabbits,” said De Matos.

Tarbert called Torosyan to report the success. She picked Bunny up and nursed her through recovery. After a couple days she was back to her normal perky self, nibbling her favorite foods with vigor.

“I’m amazed at how patient, humane, respectful, and eager to communicate everyone at Cornell was,” said Torosyan. “They explained everything in such a compassionate professional manner, taking all considerations into account, not rushing any judgment or decision, allowing discussion. My whole family had grown attached to our Bunny, and it meant a lot to see how they went above and beyond to save her life. They even set out to buy parsley, Bunny’s favorite food, to help her regain her appetite. I’m not used to such attention. It shows a high quality of service and care— Cornell people put their heart into their work and it shows.”