

HOUSE RABBIT

DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS

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A rabbit's diet should be made up of high-quality pellets, fresh hay (alfalfa, timothy or oat), fresh water and fresh vegetables. Anything beyond that is a "treat" and should be given in limited quantities. Any food that is picked fresh must be thoroughly rinsed and cannot be fed if sprayed with herbicides or pesticides.

Pellets should be fresh and relatively high in fiber (18% minimum fiber). Do not purchase more than six weeks worth of feed at a time because it will spoil. Pellets should make up less of a rabbit's diet as he or she grows older, and hay should be available 24 hours a day. Salt licks are not necessary.

The most convenient way to supply water is to use a dripper style water bottle. The water bottles attach to the side of the cage and need to be checked daily as they sometimes become clogged, or leak. An alternative to the bottle is a heavy clay bowl. It's important to clean water bottles and bowls every couple of days. Mold and mildew makes rabbits very ill.

When shopping for vegetables, look for a selection of different veggies - look for both dark leafy veggies and root vegetables. Try to get different colors. Stay away from beans and rhubarb. See the table of recommended veggies and fruits at the end of this handout.

Hay is essential to a rabbit's good health, providing roughage, which reduces the danger of hairballs and other blockages. Apple tree twigs and dried papaya once a week also help eliminate hairballs.

Never feed rabbits human junk food or sweets!

Babies and teenagers:

- 🐾 Birth to 3 weeks old - mother's milk
- 🐾 3 to 4 weeks old - mother's milk, nibbles of alfalfa hay and pellets
- 🐾 4 to 7 weeks old - mother's milk, access to alfalfa hay and pellets
- 🐾 7 weeks to 7 months old - unlimited pellets, unlimited hay (plus see 12 weeks below)
- 🐾 12 weeks old - introduce vegetables one at a time in quantities under ½ oz.

Young adults: 7 months to one year old

- 🐾 Introduce grass and oat hays, decrease alfalfa hay
- 🐾 Decrease pellets to half cup per 6 lbs. body weight
- 🐾 Increase daily vegetables gradually
- 🐾 Fruit daily ration no more than 1 oz. to 2 oz. per 6 lbs. body weight (because of calories)

Mature adults: one to 5 years old

- 🐾 Unlimited grass hay, oat hay and straw
- 🐾 ¼ to ½ cup pellets per 6 lbs. body weight, depending on metabolism and/or proportionate to veggies
- 🐾 Minimum two cups chopped vegetables per 6 lbs. body weight
- 🐾 Fruit daily ration no more than 2 oz. (2 tablespoons) per 6 lbs. body weight

Senior rabbits: Over 6 years old

- 🐾 If sufficient weight is maintained, continue adult diet.
- 🐾 Frail, older rabbits may need unrestricted pellets to keep weight up. Alfalfa can be given to underweight rabbits, but only if calcium levels are normal. Annual blood workups are highly recommended for geriatric rabbits.

Note: When you feed a lower quantity of pellets, you must replace the nutritional value without the calories, which is done by increasing the vegetables. Also, a variety of hay and straw must be encouraged all day long. Do this by offering fresh hay a couple of times a day.

Fresh Veggies and Fruits

Select at least three kinds of vegetables daily. A variety is necessary in order to obtain the necessary nutrients. One vegetable each day should contain Vitamin A. Add one vegetable to the diet at a time. Eliminate it if it causes soft stools or diarrhea.

Sugary fruits, such as bananas and grapes, should be used only sparingly, as occasional treats. Bunnies have a sweet tooth and if left to their own devices will devour sugary foods to the exclusion of healthy ones.

Fresh Veggies

Alfalfa, radish & clover sprouts
Basil
Bok choy
Brussels sprouts
Celery
Cilantro

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Clover
Escarole
Green peppers
Peppermint leaves
Raddichio
Radish tops
Raspberry leaves
Wheat grass

Veggies with Vitamin A

Beet greens (tops)
Broccoli (mostly leaves/stems)
Carrot and carrot tops
Collard greens
Dandelion greens and flowers (no pesticides)
Endive
Kale (use sparingly - high in either oxalates or goitrogens and may be toxic in accumulated quantities over a period of time)
Mustard greens

Parsley
Mint Pea pods (the flat edible kind)
Romaine lettuce (no iceberg or lightcolored leaf)
Spinach (use sparingly - high in either oxalates or goitrogens and may be toxic in accumulated quantities over a period of time)
Watercress

Fresh Fruits

Apple (remove stem and seeds)
Blueberries
Melon
Orange (including peel)
Papaya
Peach
Pear
Pineapple
Plums
Raspberries
Strawberries

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