



Rabbit Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

Domesticated rabbits can live up to 12 years. Small breeds reach sexual maturity at 4-6 months, larger breeds at 6-10 months. Rabbits are in the order Lagomorpha, distinguished by having two pairs of upper incisors. They share an order with hares and pikas, and are closely related to rodents.

DIET

Pellet: ¼ cup daily. Timothy-based pellets. Alfalfa pellets are okay for growing rabbits but should be switched to timothy-based pellets when they reach adulthood. We recommend Oxbow brand Rabbit pellets. Do not feed seeds or nuts, dairy or meat. Rabbits are strict herbivores.

Hay: Always provide Timothy hay.

Vegetables: Good choices include collard greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens, chard, kale, parsley, bok choy. Avoid spinach in large quantities. Also avoid iceberg and romaine lettuce. Decrease the amount of leafy greens if it causes your rabbit to have diarrhea.

Fruit: Occasional. Be careful when feeding fruit; in large amounts, fruit can cause abdominal pain, gas, and diarrhea.

ENVIRONMENT

Rabbits should be kept in a cage that provides them with plenty of space to move around, hop, and hide.

Cage: Make sure to cover wire bottom cages with cardboard or towels. It is easy for rabbits to get their toes or toenails stuck between the wires, causing injury. Many owners let their rabbits hop around the house. Be careful! Rabbits will chew through electrical cords and wires.

Substrate: Use paper-based bedding, such as Carefresh or Yesterday's News for litter. Don't use cedar or pine shavings. The oils in shavings can cause skin and respiratory irritation, and can also cause changes in liver function. Alder shavings are okay but not recommended.

Moisture: Provide a water bottle or bowl of water at all times, and change the water daily.

Furniture: Provide at least one hiding box. Rabbits like to hide when scared. Many rabbits will use a litter box if one is provided. Do not use clay cat litter. It can be ingested, causing impaction.

MEDICAL CARE

Exams: Bring rabbits in once a year for an annual health check.

Spay/Neuter: We recommend spaying and neutering rabbits for their health and wellbeing.

Common Illnesses:

Dental Disease: Symptoms include: change in appetite from hard foods to soft foods, decreased appetite, smaller and/or soft stools, drooling, and runny eyes. Diagnosis requires a detailed oral exam often requiring anesthesia. Though not curable, it is treatable with regular tooth trims.

Facial Abscesses: Symptoms include: decreased appetite, lump on jaw-line or cheek area. This is related to dental disease and may require surgery.

Gastric Stasis: This can be caused by a reaction to pain; can also be caused by a change in diet or overfeeding fruit. Symptoms include: loss of appetite, no stool production, and rapid breathing. This condition can escalate very quickly, so rabbits exhibiting any of these behaviors should be taken to a veterinarian right away.

Bring your rabbit to a veterinarian right away if it is exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

Loss of appetite

Diarrhea or soft stool

No stool production

Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing

Extreme lethargy