



RABBIT

Diet and Care Recommendations

GENERAL INFORMATION

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

DIET

Pellets: ¼ cup daily. Use timothy-based pellets; we recommend Oxbow brand rabbit pellets. Alfalfa pellets are okay for growing rabbits but should be switched to timothy-based pellets when they reach adulthood. DO NOT feed seeds or nuts, dairy, or meat. Rabbits are strict herbivores.

Hay: Provide access to timothy hay at all times.

Vegetables: Good choices include collard greens, mustard greens, dandelion greens, chard, kale, parsley, and bok choy. Avoid spinach in large quantities. Also avoid iceberg and romaine lettuce as these do not have adequate nutritional value. 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

Cage: Make sure wire bottom cages are covered 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. Aspen shavings are okay but not recommended.

Moisture: Provide a water bottle or bowl 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

Bring rabbits in once a year for an annual health check. We recommend spaying and neutering rabbits for their health and wellbeing.



Common Illnesses:

- a) **Dental Disease:** Symptoms include: changes 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.
- b) **Facial Abscesses:** Symptoms include: decreased appetite, lump on jawline or cheek area. This is related to dental disease and may require surgery.
- c) **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**