

RABBIT NUTRITION

Fresh Water

Your rabbit should have access to fresh water 24/7 as it is a very important component of their diet. When you adopt your rabbit, take notice as to whether or not they have been drinking from a water bottle or a bowl and try to continue with that method in your home. If you would prefer one over the other, you can always test it out to see if your rabbit will switch. If using a bowl for your rabbit's water, make sure to get a heavy duty ceramic bowl, as rabbits love to rearrange their cages! Lastly, remember to change the water daily and clean the bottle/bowl about once a week.

Fresh Hay

Your rabbit should be provided with fresh hay at all times to aid in digestion and oral health. Rabbits are natural born grazers so munching on hay is also great for their mental well-being! You should feed hay that has high fiber content, such as Timothy hay. Mixing in other kinds of hay and grass, such as meadow hay, oat hay, and orchard grass, to the Timothy hay will make for one happy bunny! You will commonly see Alfalfa hay sold in stores and marketed for all rabbits. This kind of hay is very high in protein, calcium and fat and should only be fed to young (under 9 months) or pregnant/nursing rabbits. Feeding Alfalfa as your rabbit's primary source of hay will most likely lead to unwanted weight gain.

Fresh Vegetables

Fresh leafy greens should be given to your rabbit on a daily basis. The general rule is to feed about 2 cups of veggies for every 5 pounds of body weight. Ideally, this should be broken down into two feedings per day, one in the morning and one in the evening. Here is a list of some appropriate vegetables:

Broccoli	Dandelion	Escarole	Mustard greens	Romaine
Carrot tops	Collard greens	Fennel	Oregano/Parsley	Swiss chard
Chicory	Dill	Green leaf	Radish greens	
Cilantro	Endive	Lettuce/Kale	Red leaf lettuce	

Fresh Fruit

You will quickly discover that your rabbit loves sweets! They are very food motivated and will do anything for a little bit of sugary goodness. Fruit is considered to be a treat as it is high in sugar and calories. Dried fruit makes for a great and easy-to-store treat, just make sure to avoid those that have added sugar. Although your rabbit will constantly beg for treats, you need to be able to resist the cuteness! Excessive treats can lead to obesity, bacterial imbalance and digestive problems. The House Rabbit Society recommends no more than 1 – 2oz. of treats per day for every 6 lbs. of body weight. Here is a list of some appropriate treats for rabbits:

Apple (no seeds)	Cranberry	Papaya (no seeds)	Raspberry
Banana	Kiwi	Peach	Strawberry (leaves too)
Blueberry	Mango	Pear	Tomato (leaves are toxic)
Carrot	Melon	Pineapple	Watermelon

Commercial Rabbit Food

For many years it was believed that rabbits could live a healthy life solely on commercial pellets. Unfortunately this led to many house rabbits becoming obese. Now it is widely accepted that rabbit pellets should only be fed in small amounts, if at all. What you want to look for if you decide to include some pellets in your rabbit's diet are Timothy-based pellets with high fiber content (at least 20%). Good quality pellets can add some needed whole grains to your rabbit's diet; however, you should not be feeding more than ¼ cup of pellets per day for every 5 lbs. of body weight. Like fresh hay, you should avoid pellets made with Alfalfa hay due to their high levels of calcium, protein and fat.

Recommended pellets:

Oxbow Bunny Basics/T - <http://www.oxbowanimalhealth.com>

Sweet Meadow Timothy Pellets - <http://www.sweetmeadowfarm.com>

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