

What are the basics of a good house rabbit diet?

A rabbit's diet should be made up of good quality pellets, fresh hay (timothy or other grass hays), oat hay, water and fresh vegetables. Anything beyond that is a "treat" and should be given in limited quantities.

What makes a good pellet?

Pellets should be fresh, and should be relatively high in fiber (18% minimum fiber). Do not purchase more than 6 weeks worth of feed at a time, as it will become spoiled. 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. Alfalfa pellets are fine for younger rabbits but timothy pellets are preferred for older rabbits.

What kinds of veggies should I feed my rabbit?

When shopping for vegetables, look for a selection of different veggies—look for both dark leafy veggies and root vegetables, and try to get different colors. Stay away from beans and rhubarb. Introduce new veggies slowly. Here's a suggested veggie list.

Is feeding hay important?

Hay is essential to a rabbit's good health, providing roughage which reduces the danger of hairballs and other blockages. Apple tree twigs also provide good roughage. Find out where to buy hay here.

What quantities of food should I feed babies and "teenagers"?

This is based on the average sized rabbits, not the giant breeds like French Lops.

Birth to 3 weeks—mother's milk

3 to 4 weeks—mother's milk, nibbles of alfalfa and pellets

4 to 8 weeks—mother's milk, access to alfalfa and pellets

7 weeks to 7 months—unlimited pellets, unlimited hay (plus see 6 months below)

6 months—introduce vegetables (one at a time, quantities under 1/2 oz.)- This is due to under development of their digestive system and the issues feeding veggies can cause before that age.

What quantities of food should I feed young adults? (7 months to 1 year)

introduce timothy hay, grass hay, oat hay, and other hays; decrease alfalfa

decrease pellets to 1/2 cup per 6 lbs. body weight

increase daily vegetables gradually; make sure your rabbit can tolerate

fruit daily ration no more than 1 oz. to 2 oz. per 6 lbs. body weight (because of calories)

What quantities of food should I feed mature adults? (1 to 5 years)

Unlimited timothy, grass hay, oat hay, other hays including brome, Bermuda, etc.

1/4 to 1/2 cup pellets per 6 lbs. body weight (depending on metabolism and/or proportionate to veggies)

Minimum 2 cups chopped vegetables per 6 lbs. body weight; always introduce vegetables and greens slowly to make sure your rabbit can tolerate

fruit daily ration no more than 2 oz. (2 TBL) per 6 lbs. body weight.

What quantities of food should I feed senior rabbits? (Over 6 years)

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, only if calcium levels are normal. Annual blood workups are highly recommended for geriatric rabbits.

If I feed fewer pellets, how do I compensate?

When you feed a lower quantity (or no) of pellets, you must replace the nutritional value without the calories, which is done by increasing the vegetables. Also, a variety of hay must be encouraged all day long, we do this by offering fresh hay a couple of times a day.

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Sources: HRH, various articles from the HRJ, RHN
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Milo & Me

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened."
— Anatole France