

Proper nutrition is needed for good health & a long life for your rabbit. Rabbits need hay, a good high fiber pellet (free of nuts/seeds/dyed bits), fresh vegetables, and clean water. If your rabbit is allowed to go without food for too long, a serious condition called enteritis can occur. This is a shutdown of the intestinal tract caused by lack of food to digest.

## HAY

Your rabbit should have a generous amount of hay available at all times. It's nutritious and a vital source of fiber. You can make a big hay "nest" in the liter box and they'll be a happy camper. This will also help potty train and minimize hay mess. Don't worry - they won't eat anything soiled. Commonly found hays are timothy, oat, oat/barley, and alfalfa. Alfalfa is good for growing buns up to one year of age, but is too high in calcium and fats for adults. You can often find fresher and cheaper hay at a feed and tack store that carries it by the bale. Ask if they sell it by the flake or in bags which are a good-sized part of a bale. Keep it cool and dry in a trash can or storage container stored where it won't get wet or moldy. Never feed moldy hay to a rabbit, it can make them sick and/or cause death.

## PELLETS

Avoid fiesta blend pellets containing corn/nuts/seeds/etc. These are similar to us eating nothing but junk foods. They lack the proper nutrients needed by your rabbit and over the years can cause serious health problems resulting in obesity, compromised organ function, and cause a shortened lifespan. (Be aware that some pet foods contain a preservative called ethoxyquin, (or BHT) which is a known cancer-causing agent.) A good pellet has a minimum fiber content of 25% and a maximum protein content of 14% (this is for the average sized pet rabbit, French Lops and the other Giant breeds require an 18% protein). Pellets should be fed in limited measured amounts daily, varying by the weight of your rabbit, it's breed, or health issues (This is also for the average rabbit breeds, French Lops are free fed unless weight issues arise). Oxbow Brand makes an excellent pellet with formulas specialized by age. (Bunny Basics T for adults and Bunny Basics 15/23 for juveniles.) Two other widely used formulas are Purina Lab Rabbit and American Pet Diner. (APD also has 2 pellets: timothy and alfalfa). Brown's brand is also an okay brand. I myself recommend the Purina 18% feed for the rabbits I sell locally.

## FRESH GREENS

Never introduce veggies before the age of 6 months. A daily serving of fresh veggies rounds out bunny's nutritional needs. Always rinse produce before feeding, even if it's

organic. Start slowly, one small serving of one veggie at a time, adding more over a period of weeks. This will not only lessen the chances of loose stools from the introduction of fresh food to the diet, but will also tell you what your rabbit prefers and what might upset his tummy. Current guidelines suggest three different veggies per day, alternating combinations weekly to ensure a good coverage of vitamins. Carrots and fruits have higher sugar levels in them so feed sparingly (one carrot, a slice or two of banana/apple/etc.). Your local Farmer's Market is a great source for rabbit veggies not just human. It's fresh picked so it lasts longer, and it's usually a fraction of grocery store prices. Apple seeds are poisonous to rabbits so always make sure you never give them the entire core. No Iceberg lettuce or any other light leaf lettuce, potato or potato peels, rhubarb, beans, corn or anything spoiled. Rabbits can not expel gas so anything that could give a human gas is off limits to rabbits. A good feeding rule is: if you wouldn't eat it, don't feed it to your rabbit!

### WATER

Always clean, always cool, always available. Use a heavy un-tippable crock or a water bottle - or both if you decide. Never allow your bun to drink water with algae in it. Check the sipper bottle each time you refill it to make sure it's delivering. Also make sure to disinfect and wash bottles and dishes regularly.

### FRUIT

Banana, Mango, Pineapple, Peach, Apple, Cherries, Kiwi, Watermelon, Cantaloupe, Berries, Orange and other citrus and Papaya. avoid giving them seeds or pits as most are not good for rabbits. Pineapple, mango, and papaya all contain a natural enzyme called Papain which helps to break down and prevent hairballs. Remember, ALL FRUITS SHOULD BE GIVEN IN MODERATION.

### TREAT FOODS

Most treat foods sold for rabbits are largely sugars and fats and should be avoided. Yogurt drops, seed/nut bars, corncobs, wafer snacks etc. are garbage foods (rabbits should not be given lactose). Stick to dried fruits with none of the extra sugar or sulfites. Carefresh has a dried apple treat. Brown's has a crunchy alfalfa heart-shaped biscuit. Remember, moderation is the key for any snack food.