



Home Care for Pet Rabbits

Caging and Bedding

- Rabbit cages should have a flat bottom to prevent foot injuries and should be large enough for the rabbit to hop around in any direction. Rabbits need lots of space to stretch their legs, so your rabbit should have at least a few hours outside his/her cage in a pen or rabbit-proof room.
- Bedding should be unscented, dye-free paper bedding. Avoid wood chips/shavings.
- Rabbits are easily litter-trained! Pick a litter box that is large enough for your rabbit and use a recycled paper-based or straw-based litter (e.g. Carefresh, Yesterday's News, Oxbow Ecostraw). Do not use clumping cat litter or wood shavings.

Food and Water

- 75-80% of a rabbit's diet should be high quality grass hay, such as timothy hay or orchard grass hay. Hay should always be available to your rabbit.
- Pellets should be plain, timothy-based pellets and not mixed with any seeds, nuts, or dried fruit. Pellets should be measured, and rabbits should get about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup per 5 pounds of rabbit each day.
- Rabbits should receive leafy greens every day (20-25%). Some greens should be fed in limited quantities; see provided greens list for more information.
- Fresh water should always be available in either a bowl or a bottle, depending on what your rabbit prefers. Water should be changed daily.

Toys & Enrichment

- Rabbits enjoy playing with and chewing on toys, but it is important that they are made from safe materials. Toilet paper rolls, cereal boxes, and cardboard egg cartons make great toys (especially if you hide some treats inside and stuff them with hay!).
- Many rabbits enjoy toys that make noise, such as rattles or rings of plastic keys sold for babies; just make sure that your rabbit isn't chewing on or ingesting pieces of the toy.
- Your rabbit may also enjoy natural wood blocks or branches to chew on. Be sure to obtain them from a source that doesn't use pesticides.
- Rabbits are social animals and many rabbits benefit from having a friend. Some rabbits can be aggressive when first introduced to an unfamiliar rabbit, so be sure to ask your veterinarian or local rabbit rescue group for advice before bringing another rabbit into your household.

Veterinary Care

- Young rabbits should have annual veterinary exams to evaluate their overall health and well-being. Older rabbits or rabbits with known medical problems may need to be seen more frequently.
- Rabbits should be spayed and neutered to decrease behavioral problems and to prevent health problems as they get older. Eighty percent of intact female rabbits will develop uterine cancer by 3 years of age.
- Some rabbits require regular dental care. Your veterinarian should always evaluate your rabbit's dental health at your visit.

- Signs that your rabbit is sick include a decreased appetite, decreased fecal output, lethargy, sneezing or nasal discharge, excessive salivation, sores on the feet, or a head tilt. Rabbits are very good at hiding signs of illness until they are very sick, so please contact your veterinarian right away if you have any indication that your rabbit may be sick. Not eating for more than 12 hours is always an emergency!

Rabbit Diet

Rabbits are herbivores, meaning they eat only plant material. Herbivores must have food moving constantly through their digestive system to avoid health problems. They require a high fiber, low carbohydrate, and low-fat diet. This is accomplished by feeding your rabbit a diet that consists of high-fiber grass hay, a fortified pellet diet, and fresh produce.

Our recommendations for a balanced rabbit diet are:

Hay

- Your rabbit should always have fresh grass hay available and hay should make up 75-80% of his/her diet. The most common grass hays available in pet stores are timothy and orchard grass. Alfalfa hay contains too much calcium and protein for an adult animal and should only be fed to young rabbits (<6 months) and lactating females.

Fresh Produce

- We recommend offering your rabbit a daily salad that consists of leafy greens and herbs. Some types of greens should only be offered in limited quantities (see provided greens list for more information).

Pellets

- For adult rabbits, we recommend a timothy-based pellet without added fruits, nuts, or seeds, such as Oxbow's Essentials – Adult Rabbit. Most adult rabbits do well with ¼ cup/5 lbs/day, but your veterinarian may recommend increasing or decreasing the amount, depending on your rabbit's weight. We recommend feeding your rabbit a measured amount of pellets every day so that you will notice as soon as possible if their appetite has decreased.

Treats

- The rabbit gastrointestinal system is not designed to handle foods that are high in fat or sugar. We do not recommend feeding yogurt drops or other commercial rabbit treats that are high in sugar. Breads and cereals should also be avoided. Good treats for rabbits include a small piece of cucumber, bell pepper, sweet potato, or other vegetables. Your rabbit can also have carrots and fruits, but only in very small quantities (~½" piece a few times a week).

Water

- Rabbits should always have access to water, either in a water bottle or a heavy flat-bottomed bowl. Some rabbits have problems with moist dermatitis under their chins when provided with water in a bowl; these rabbits may do better with water in a bottle. Regardless of how it is provided, water should be changed daily.