

Feed is Feed... Or is it?

Rabbits need a balanced diet just like humans do. They need Proteins + Carbohydrates + Fats + Vitamins + Minerals + Water (most important)

PROTEINS: Necessary for growth, disease resistance, milk production, general health and reproduction.

VITAMINS: A, D,E,K.

MINERALS: Necessary for bone development.

WATER: Controls body temperature and absorption.

Feed your rabbits on a regular schedule. Once or twice per day.

HOW MUCH FEED IS ENOUGH?

Small breeds—2-3 ounces feed per day.

Medium breeds—3 1/2 to 4 ounces per day.

Large/Giant breeds—4—8 ounces per day.

(A quick measuring guide: A tuna can holds 5 ounces of pellets.)

RABBIT PELLETS—Use good quality commercial pellets. Pellets should be firm and not broken into small particles. The particles (fines) will not be eaten and will be wasted.

Keep your feed dry, out of excess heat, and free from insects and rodents. This can be done easily by storing in a container like a garbage can with a tight fitting lid. Do not store your feed for more than 3 or 4 weeks. It loses its nutritional value if it is stored longer than that. Do not let stale or moldy feed accumulate in feeders. If feed is dusty, try to sift it before feeding. The dust may harm your rabbit's respiratory system.

SOME DIFFERENT FEED FORMULAS WE FOUND: Starter Formulas, Standard Formulas, Show Formulas, and Wooly Rabbit Formulas. There are also Rabbit Enhancers,

PROTEIN—Is the source of growth and energy in the feed. Chose a feed too low in protein and your rabbit will lack fleshing, too high and your rabbit could experience diarrhea or cause your rabbit to be flabby. Rabbits kept outside need a 2 percent higher protein level than rabbits kept in a heated area. **NOTICE SOME TAGS ONLY SAY NOT LESS THAN A CERTAIN PERCENT. A GOOD QUALITY FEED SHOULD GUARANTEE IT TO BE WITHIN 1 to 2 PERCENT.**

FIBER—Satisfies the bulk and forage requirements. A diet too low in fiber can cause sever diarrhea, lack of appetite, and increased chewing on objects.

FAT—Is the least important of the three factors. It is considered a conditioner. It adds luster and gloss to the fur and helps retard shedding.

MAKE SURE YOUR FEED LABEL HAS:

PROTEIN—Feeds can range from 14--20% protein, depending on the type of feed (Some sources say ideal protein is 14—15%, other sources say 16—18% 4-H source)

FIBER—Varies from 12—22% Some sources say it should not be less than 18% minimum. The higher the better.

FAT—Should Not Exceed 3%.

CALCIUM—One source said should be less than 1%.

HAY—Feed a small amount of good, clean hay every day. It should not be dusty or moldy. Roughage, especially hay, will reduce problems with hairballs and other blockage. Grass or timothy hay is best for rabbits over 6 months of age. Hay can improve your rabbit's life expectancy.

SALT—Commercial rabbit feeds contain 0.5 percent salt. Small salt blocks are available to put in hutches.

WATER—Is the most important item in your rabbit's diet. If adequate water is not supplied, your rabbit will not eat like it should, will not gain/grow adequately, and could become dehydrated. Fresh water is extremely important—Never let your water sit more than a day without changing it. This keeps it from stagnating. Fresh clean water should be supplied to your rabbit 2 or 3 times per day. Remember to keep your water crocks and bottles clean. You can disinfect them with a mixture of household bleach and warm water. **QUICK FACT**—A doe with a litter drinks 1 gallon of water per day.

VEGETABLES—Sources vary on the amount of fresh vegetables you can feed your rabbits. When feeding vegetables, add a new vegetable one at a time and see how your rabbit reacts. If it acts lethargic or has loose stools, quit the vegetable immediately. Some suggested vegetables were broccoli, Brussels sprouts, pea pods, carrots, celery to name a few.

A FEW DON'TS—DO NOT change feeds abruptly. Mix 90% of old feed with 10% new and gradually increase the % of new until your rabbit adapts.

DON'T feed young rabbits cabbage or lettuce (they cause stomach and gas pains).

DON'T feed green grass, corn, beans, and rhubarb. They can all cause rabbits to become sick.

Some sources say DO NOT purchase a feed that is supplemented with bits of dried fruit and seed.

DO NOT feed any hay with golden rod in it. It is toxic to rabbits.

DON'T feed rabbits anything sugary.

DON'T feed human treats such as cookies, crackers, bread, pasta, or chocolate.

DON'T put off learning what plants in your area can be poisonous to your rabbits.

Some sources say DO NOT feed dwarf rabbits alfalfa hay or pellets with more than 16 % protein. Too much protein can cause problems.

Breeders Tips: We have no proof to back any of these claims; they are simply tips we have heard from rabbit breeders over the years.

We have had breeders say that they put a small amount of rolled oats on top of the feed as a treat, to enhance appetites,.

Other breeders have mentioned they put a small amount of black sunflower seeds in with pellets for a good fur coat and extra energy in an adult rabbit's diet. (a teaspoon may be enough)

Restricted-feeding is occasionally done to prevent breeding stock or show animals from becoming too fat. Too much fat interferes with reproduction and condition.

Check occasionally to see if your rabbit is being fed enough or too much. Feel the skin covering its ribs and backbone. If it feels too thin, increase its food.

When rabbits need more feed. Pregnant and lactating does need more feed than usual. As soon as you know your doe is pregnant, gradually increase her feed. (Do not feed her so much that she becomes too fat, however.) Cut back on feed 24 to 48 hours prior to kindling.