



7826 NE Sandy Blvd., Portland, OR 97213-6467 P. 971-361-2209 F. 971-361-4359
www.avianexoticvetcare.com

Nutrition

Unlimited Good-Quality Hay

- *Dental health.* Unlike a dog, your rabbit's teeth grow continuously throughout its life. Teeth that are too long lead to abscesses, decreased ability to chew, and even death. Your rabbit keeps its teeth short by constantly chewing on things, such as hay and toys. Therefore, it is important to provide your rabbit with as much fresh hay as it wants.
- *Fiber.* Hay is rich in fiber, which is essential to your rabbit's intestinal health because it keeps the intestines moving and promotes the growth of good bacteria. Because hay consists mostly of fiber, eating large amounts will not make your rabbit fat.
- *Grass hays.* Acceptable types of hay include Timothy grass, Bermuda grass, Brome, oat, and orchard grass. Alfalfa hay is acceptable in small amounts and as an occasional treat, but it contains too much protein and calcium to be fed in large quantities.
- *Fresh.* It is important to provide fresh hay every day. Old hay has decreased nutritional value, and most rabbits will not eat it.

Complete and Balanced Pelleted Diet

- *Pelleted.* Pelleted means that all pieces in the diet look exactly the same and are formed into pellets. This is recommended over a nonpelleted diet (in which the pieces look different, or the pellets are mixed with seeds, colored balls, etc.). Nonpelleted diets allow your rabbit to be a picky eater and to eat only specific pieces. If the entire diet is not consumed, this can lead to dietary imbalance and health problems. With feeding of a completely pelleted diet, your rabbit will eat the entire meal and will have less chance of dietary imbalance.
- *Timothy hay based.* A Timothy hay-based diet is best for your adult rabbit. Alfalfa hay-based diets should be fed only to young or lactating rabbits. Alfalfa is too rich in protein and calcium for adult rabbits and can cause obesity and bladder stones.
- *Amount.* Your rabbit should NOT be allowed to eat as many pellets as it wants. This would likely lead to obesity and medical problems, including chronic soft stool or diarrhea. As a general rule, a rabbit weighing 5 lb should not get more than $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pellets per day. Depending on your rabbit's health status, activity level, and current weight, it may need even less than this. Consult your veterinarian to see if your rabbit has a good weight.

Fresh Vegetables

- Vegetables supplement your rabbit with vitamins that are lost in pelleted diets during processing, such as B vitamins.
 - *Amount.* Your rabbit should eat about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables per day for every 2 lb of body weight.
 - *Variety.* Variety is important to provide a balanced diet. Feed at least three different kinds of vegetables each day.
 - *Timing.* Feeding in the morning and at bedtime (times when the rabbit is most active) is ideal.
 - *Acceptable vegetables.* Usually dark green vegetables are ok. Your rabbit might enjoy these foods: bok choy, broccoli (stems and leaves), brussel sprouts, celery, carrots (limited; see later), carrot tops, cilantro, collard greens, dandelion flowers and greens (pesticide free), endive, green bell peppers, kale (limited), mustard greens, parsley, red and green leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce (iceberg or head lettuce should be avoided), and watercress (limited).

Information cited from:

Mayer, J and Donnelly, T., eds. Clinical Veterinary Advisor: Birds and Exotic Pets. Elsevier, Philadelphia, PA. 2013. ISBN: 9781-4160-3969-3

Treats

- Feeding treats is not essential for your rabbit's health. It is important to limit the quantity of treats that you feed your rabbit because overfeeding of treats will lead to obesity. Treats should make up less than 10% of your rabbit's daily diet. This usually equals about one treat per day.
 - *Carrots*. Although your rabbit will love carrots, carrots are too high in sugar to be part of its daily meal. However, you can feed your rabbit baby carrot-sized pieces as an occasional treat.
 - *Fruits*. Although your rabbit will love fruit, fruit is too high in sugar to be part of its daily meal. You can feed your rabbit a pea-sized piece as an occasional treat. Be careful when feeding fruit, though. Your rabbit may be sensitive to certain kinds of fruit and may get a stomachache or have diarrhea as a result. Acceptable fruits include apple (no seeds), banana, berries, papaya, and oranges (no peel).

No Human Food

Human food should be avoided. Not only will it make your rabbit overweight, it also might be toxic. Foods rich in sugars and starches can cause overgrowth of bad bacteria in your rabbit's intestines, leading to death. If your rabbit accidentally eats human food, please consult your veterinarian to see if medical attention is needed.

Water

Always provide fresh clean water. Your rabbit will drink more water than a dog of the same body weight. So you should always make sure your rabbit's bottle or bowl is full.

AUTHORS: Alexandra Moesta and Christina Chan

Information cited from:

Mayer, J and Donnelly, T., eds. *Clinical Veterinary Advisor: Birds and Exotic Pets*. Elsevier, Philadelphia, PA. 2013. ISBN: 9781-4160-3969-3