



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

Basics

- Rabbits are social creatures and crave company and attention.
 - Consider getting your rabbit a companion of the opposite sex.
- Rabbits communicate through marking:
 - They (most commonly intact males) spray urine on objects in their territory and also spray lower-ranking males and females whom they are courting.
 - They leave fecal balls around their homes to mark their territory.
 - They rub their chin on things in their homes to mark them as their own.
- Digging and chewing are natural behaviors. Provide rabbits with appropriate digging and chewing outlets to prevent them from destroying valuable items.
- Rabbits eat their own fecal balls to maximize the quantity of nutrients they absorb from their food. Do not interrupt this behavior.
- Rabbits groom themselves every day and can get hairballs.
- If you have rabbits outside, make sure they have protection from predators and from the elements. Also, allow them access to a large area in the yard, so they can graze and exercise.
 - Rabbits cannot tolerate temperatures outside of 40° F to 85° F.
- Rabbits can be kept outdoors, indoors, or both outdoors and indoors. Wherever you keep them, make sure that all of their basic needs are met, and that you spend plenty of time with them.
 - They need a secure cage that has a litter box, a hide box, a food bowl, a hay box or rack, and a water bowl or bottle.
 - The cage needs to be as big as possible. It should allow your rabbits to perform at least four hops and should be tall enough for them to stand up.
- Provide toys to chew and dig on. Acceptable toys include sisal, wooden toys, toilet paper and paper towel rolls, paper wads, paper sacks, cardboard or plastic tunnels, towels, small toys for tossing, and food dispensing toys.
- Rabbits need four basic things in their diet:
 - *Unlimited amounts of fresh, high-quality grass hay.* Acceptable types include Timothy, Bermuda, Brome, oat, and orchard grasses. Alfalfa hay should be fed only occasionally and in small amounts to adult rabbits.
 - *A complete and balanced pelleted diet that is Timothy hay based.* Alfalfa-based pellets are provided for young or lactating rabbits only. Alfalfa contains too much protein and calcium for adult rabbits and leads to obesity and bladder stones.
 - *At least three different types of fresh vegetables.* Acceptable vegetables include bok choy, broccoli (stems and leaves), brussel sprouts, celery, 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 and head lettuce should be avoided), and watercress (limited). An average rabbit eats 2 cups every day.
 - *Unlimited amounts of fresh water*

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 should be limited to only one treat per day. Too many treats cause obesity and health problems. Carrots and fruits count as treats.
- Human food should be avoided because it can be toxic.

AUTHORS: Alexandra Moesta and Christina Chan

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