

Bunny Basics

Diet

A rabbit's diet should be made up of unlimited grass type hay, fresh veggies and limited pellets. Only healthy treats should be fed. You may split the veggies and pellet rations into two feedings, morning and evening. Hay must be available at all times.

Hay

Hay is a very important part of a rabbit's diet. It should be piled in the litter box at all times as rabbits like to poop and graze at the same time. Hay is the main source of fiber and helps in preventing GI stasis, plus it is good for keeping the teeth trim. Rabbits will start munching on hay at about three weeks of age. Adult rabbits should be fed grass hays such as Timothy, Bunny Bunch Blend or Orchard. Baby rabbits need Alfalfa. Hay cubes should NOT be fed in place of loose hay. Only buy hay from a reliable source.

Pellets

Adult rabbits should be fed a limited amount of pellets daily. About a ¼ of a cup for 5 lbs of rabbit. Rabbits that are free fed pellets tend to become over weight and will not eat as much hay. Young rabbits should be fed a good quality alfalfa pellet up to about seven months, then they should be switched over to limited Timothy pellets. Never feed pellets that have nuts, seeds or cereal looking items added in, as these are high in sugar and carbohydrates.

Veggies

Veggies should be fed daily in the form of a bunny salad. Feed about three cups of veggies per day for a 5lb rabbit. The salad should be made up of about three different kinds of fresh, pesticide free vegetables. Rabbits should be introduced to veggies at about five months old, starting with one kind of veggie and slowly adding in others a few days apart. Unless the rabbit started eating veggies while still with its mother.

Fruit

Rabbits can have a limited amount of fruit in their diet. Only feed about a tablespoon as a treat for an average size rabbit. Some fruits can be very high in sugar, which can be harmful for a rabbit's GI track, as well as being fattening.

Treats

Never feed nuts, cereal, crackers, cookies or any other kind of snack food to your rabbits. All of these are high in sugar and carbohydrates, and should not be part of a rabbit's diet. Healthy treats can be fed such as; fresh organic herbs and rabbit safe flowers.

Water

Fresh water should be available at all times, in a clean, large, heavy crock. Rinse the water crock out every day and give it a good cleaning about three times a week to prevent algae build up.

Grooming

Rabbits are meticulous groomers, but they will need some help from you. It is very important to brush your rabbit on a daily basis to remove any loose fur, especially when they are shedding.

Trimming the Nails

Rabbit's nails grow continuously so they will need to be trimmed about every four to six weeks. It is important to know how to trim a rabbit's nails, because if you cut them down to short you may cut into the quick which will be very painful and will bleed. This can also lead to infection. We do free nail trims Wed through Sunday at our Montclair location, and Sat and Sun at our Fountain Valley location. Plus we are happy to show you how to trim nails.

Scent Glands

Male and female rabbits have scent glands on either side of the genitals. These are two small pockets which need to be cleaned about every three months or so, depending on the rabbit. When cleaning the scent glands it is important to be gentle, we suggest using a q-tip dipped in warm water and gently wipe out the debris.

Rabbit Health

We always suggest taking your rabbit to a rabbit knowledgeable vet for a well check up at least once a year. It is important to find a vet who treats a lot of rabbits and who stays up to date with the latest treatments. You can find vet referral at www.bunnybunch.org, plus a list of questions and answers to ask a vet if you are not sure if they are rabbit knowledgeable.

Spay & Neuter

It is very important to have your rabbit spayed or neutered to prevent health and behavior problems. Even if you just have one rabbit make sure you get this done. We suggest doing it about five months old.

GI Stasis

Please read our separate handout about GI Stasis. This problem can be related to diet, or can occur because of an underlying illness. If you know how to recognize it you can save your rabbits' life.

Eating, Drinking, Pooping and Peeing

It is important to know your rabbits eating, drinking, pooping and peeing habits. If your rabbit ever stops eating or drinking, or is drinking much more than normal, this could indicate a problem and you need to contact your vet right away. Check your rabbits litter box everyday to make sure there is the normal amount of poop for your rabbit in there, and that the poop is the right size and consistency. See our separate handout about poop, or check for it on our website. If your rabbit stops using the litter box, is straining to urinate or the urine is sludgy, there is a health problem and you must take your rabbit to a rabbit knowledgeable vet right away.

Ears

It is important to check inside your rabbits ears for wax or debris build up, or infection. Smell inside the ear to make sure there is not a yeasty or bad smell. Look inside the ear to make sure it is nice and clean. If you do notice anything in the ear or a bad smell, take your rabbit to your rabbit vet right away.

Feet

Check the bottom of your rabbit's feet for sore hocks. These are patches of skin where the fur has worn away, often from being on a wire bottom cage or a hard surface. They can become very sore, swollen and infected, and must be treated right away.

Fur and Skin

Check the fur and skin for white flakes or tiny black dots. If you notice either of these your rabbit probably has mites (white flakes) or fleas (black dots).

Teeth

Rabbit's teeth continually grow. The front teeth must be lined up correctly in order for them to be kept trim. The molar teeth must also be lined up; sometimes rabbits can grow molar spurs or have other tooth problems. If you ever notice your rabbit drooling or having trouble eating, this is most likely a sign of a tooth problem and the rabbit must be seen by a rabbit vet. Some rabbits have malocclusion where the teeth don't line up. In most cases the teeth will have to be trimmed or filed, in some cases they have to be removed. It is VERY important that you find an expert in this field who has a lot of experience with rabbit teeth.

Body

Run your hands over your rabbit's whole body, including head and jaw area to check for any usually lumps or bumps. Rabbits can often get abscesses which need to be treated right away. The sooner you notice a problem and get it treated the better the chance you have for a good recovery.

Living Quarters

Rabbits should live inside your house with you, as part of the family. Rabbits should never be kept in a hutch, and most cages are too small for a rabbit to live in. Keep in mind that rabbits need more exercise than a cat or dog and must have room to run around. Some rabbits live free in the house. The house must be rabbit proofed meaning all cords covered or out of reach, no poisonous plants, no animals or children that can harm them and no way to get out. Some live in a rabbit proofed room, and some live in an exercise pen and let out for exercise in a rabbit proofed room or house. Keep in mind that a smallest space a rabbit can live in is 4ftx4ft. Small rabbits need just as much room to run around as large rabbits do.

Litterbox

Rabbits will easily train themselves to use a litter box. Just provide a large litter box with rabbit safe litter, such as Carefresh and pile hay on top. Rabbits like to graze and poop at the same time so keeping hay in the litter box gets them to use it and to eat more hay.

Toys & Chews

Because rabbit's teeth are continually growing they need a lot of items to chew. Make sure whatever you provide for your rabbit to chew on is rabbit safe. Chew blocks, untreated willow baskets, willow balls, willow wreaths and untreated apple twigs all make great chews. Some favorite rabbit toys are balls with a bell inside, baby keys and rattles. Rabbits also like to have a hiding place to lie in or under such as a bunny tent or cardboard box.

bunnybunch.org Adoption Centers in Montclair (909) 626-3946 and Fountain Valley (714) 889-9755