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Feeding Your Rabbit



Your rabbit's health almost entirely depends on the food that you feed it. An incorrect diet can be a contributing factor in all of these common problems in pet rabbits:-

- Dental disease
- Obesity
- Diarrhoea
- Fly strike
- Gut stasis
- Snuffles

It may be surprising but some of these conditions can be fatal. It's hard to believe that you can significantly reduce the risk of your rabbit developing these conditions just by feeding it the right diet.

The correct diet for your rabbit can be broken down into many components, as listed below:-

1. Caecotrophs are a natural part of your rabbit's diet. These are the faecal pellets passed by the rabbit in the early morning which are softer and sticky. The rabbit seeks out these droppings and eats them to be digested a second time. These are normal and should be left that day for the rabbit to eat.
2. 90% of your rabbit's diet should be made up of good quality hay and grass. There should be enough hay available for the rabbit to eat throughout the whole day. The easiest way to ensure an endless supply is to use the hay as bedding. If possible your rabbit should be allowed to graze outside each day. Grass clippings are inappropriate as they ferment rapidly and cause digestive disturbances. Grass can be hand picked daily from your garden and placed in the rabbit's hutch. The grass should be changed on a daily basis or sooner if it's starting to wilt.

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3. Included in this 90% would also be a variety of garden weeds, green leaves and tree leaves which are found in hay anyway. In addition you can give any amounts of dandelion, ground elder, sow thistle, plantain, groundsel, chickweed, raspberry, bramble, fruit tree, hazel or strawberry leaves. Good illustrations of edible wild plants for rabbits can be found in "rabbit nutrition" by Virginia Richardson (Coney publications Ipswich).
4. The final 10% should be made up of the following:-
 - A variety of leafy green vegetables and herbs. By feeding a wide range of vegetables and plants reduces the likelihood of future problems. It is advised that at least 3 kinds of vegetables are fed daily. Add one vegetable to the diet at a time and eliminate it if it causes soft stools or diarrhoea (see list on page 3 for vegetables and herbs available for your rabbit).
 - A small amount of dry diet such as Burgess Supa rabbit excel once a day, preferably in the morning. This diet is recommended as it is an extruded food where all the pieces of the mix look the same and ensures that the rabbit gets a properly balanced diet. Other diets that are muesli based are not recommended as the rabbit will pick out only the pieces they like (called selective feeding).
 - The last part of your rabbits menu is fruit (see list on page 3 for fruits available for your rabbit).
5. Food to avoid when feeding your rabbit is raisins, beans, seeds, chocolate, peas, cereals, oats, refined sugar, corn, nuts and wheats.

When changing your rabbit's diet it is very important not to change or alter the diet suddenly. Make gradual changes over a period of at least 2 weeks so that your rabbit's digestive system has time to adjust.

If you are concerned about your rabbit's diet or that it may be under or over weight then contact the surgery and one of the nurses will be able to advise you on the most appropriate action to take.

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White Hills Surgery, Sibford Road, Hook Norton, Banbury, Oxon. OX15 5DG

Tel: 01608 730085 (Farm, Equine & Accounts) 01608 730501 (Small Animal)

The Spendlove Centre, Enstone Road, Charlbury, Oxford. OX7 3PQ. Tel: 01608 811250

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Vegetables and herbs list that CAN be fed to your rabbit

Alfalfa	Celery
Chinese cabbage	Leeks
Basil	Mint
Broccoli	Parsley *
Brussel Sprouts	Watercress *
Carrots (tops and roots)	Spinach *
Lettuce	Kale *
Coriander	

* You should only offer one of these per day as they are too high in vitamin A and calcium



Fruit list that CAN be fed to your rabbit in small amounts



Banana	Kiwi
Cucumber	Melon
Raspberry and leaves	Nectarine
Strawberry and leaves	Peach
Apple	Pear
Pineapple	

Vegetables, plants, herbs and fruits that CANNOT be fed to your rabbit

All plants growing from bulbs or tubers, including Daffodil, Snowdrop, Tulip, Anemone, Arum, Hyacinth and Iris.

Buttercup	Honeysuckle	Lupin
Cowslip	Ivy	Oak – acorn
Dock	Laburnum	Poppies
Foxglove	Lobelia	Rhododendron
Frozen or wet greens/vegetables	Lily of the valley	Tomato leaves
Holly	Lords and Ladies	Wisteria

Dried peas, corn kernels and locust bean seeds should also be avoided as they may cause obstruction.

A full list of all fruits and vegetables that can and can not be eaten by your rabbit is available at the surgery.

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