



Feeding Your Rabbit

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

EXTENSION



The two primary keys to rabbit nutrition are providing plenty of fiber, primarily in the form of hay, and being consistent in what you feed. Rabbits should be fed according to their age and reproductive stage of life.

During growth, protein and calcium are needed for building bones and muscle development. As an animal ages, requirements for protein, calcium and energy decrease. Excess protein and calcium are excreted by the kidneys and can result in renal disease.

Mature rabbits have lower caloric needs for maintenance. An over consumption of calories often results in excessive weight gain. Fat tissue is deposited internally long before you see it near the surface. The unseen internal fat surrounding the intestines and heart can interfere in proper digestions, and causes other organs, such as the heart, to work harder.

Grass hay, a source of long-strand fiber, is absolutely vital to the digestive health of rabbits. It prevents obesity, dental disease, boredom and diarrhea. Grass hay should be available to rabbits at all times. “Free-choice” means a rabbit can choose when to eat the hay – at any hour of the day.

Alfalfa hay is a wonderful source of protein and calcium, but contains levels too high to be fed on a daily basis to adult rabbits. However, it can be fed in limited amounts to growing and lactating rabbits.

The following grass hays can be fed “Free Choice” to rabbit: Timothy, Orchard Grass, Brome, Oat Hay, or Prairie Hay.

Good quality hay can be found at horse barns, feed stores, pet stores, race tracks, or call your local extension office for a local listing. Numerous pet stores and on-line sources are sources of quality hay, including Oxbow Pet Products.

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| <p>Growing show rabbits Free choice pellet</p> <p>Minimum 16.0% Crude protein Minimum 18.0% Crude fiber</p> <p>Start reducing pellets to pet rabbits starting at 6 months of age.</p> <p><i>Always have high quality grass hay available</i></p> | <p>Nursing and pregnant does Free choice pellets for nursing does</p> <p>Minimum 16.0% Crude protein Minimum 18.0% Crude fiber</p> <p>Watch pregnant does so they do become overweight.</p> <p><i>Always have high quality grass hay available</i></p> | <p>Adult pet rabbits More than 1 year of age</p> <p>Maximum 16% Crude protein Minimum 20% Crude fiber</p> <p>Limit pellets to 1/4 cup per 5 lbs of body weight.</p> <p><i>Always have high quality grass hay available</i></p> |
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If rabbits are housed outside, feed free choice pellets during months when temperature is less than 50 degrees.



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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