

## Dietary Recommendations

**GENERAL:** A rabbit's diet should be made up of high quality pellets, fresh hay (alfalfa, timothy or oat), water and fresh vegetables. Anything else is a treat and should be given in limited quantities.

### **IMPORTANT - all diet changes must be made gradually**

- Pellets should be fresh and relatively high in fiber (18% minimum fiber). Do not purchase more than six weeks worth of food at a time, as it will become spoiled.
- Hay should be available 24 hours a day. Hay is essential to a rabbit's health. Hay provides roughage, which reduces the danger of hairballs and other blockages. Apple twigs also provide good roughage.
- Salt licks are NOT necessary.
- No nuts or seeds as these are bad for a bunny.
- Variety is key for vegetables. When shopping, look for both dark leafy vegetables and root vegetables. Also try different colors as these provide your rabbit with different essential vitamins. Stay away from beans and rhubarb, spinach, cabbage and kale. For a vegetable list, see the back of this sheet.

### **Babies and teenagers:**

- birth to 3 weeks - mothers milk
- 3-4 weeks - mothers milk, nibbles of alfalfa hay and alfalfa pellets
- 4-7 weeks - mothers milk, access to alfalfa hay and alfalfa pellets
- 7 weeks to 7 months: unlimited alfalfa hay and alfalfa pellets (plus 12 weeks see below)
- 12 weeks - introduce vegetables (one at a time, quantities under 1/2 oz.)
- **NO FRUITS!**

### **Young adults: 7 month to 1 year**

- introduce grass and oat hays, decrease alfalfa
- decrease pellets to 1/2 cup per 6 lbs. body weight
- increase daily vegetables gradually
- fruit rations no more than 1-2 oz. per 6 lbs. body weight (because of calories)

### **Mature adults: 1 to 5 years**

- unlimited oat and timothy hay (no alfalfa)
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup pellets per 6 lb. body weight, preferably **timothy-based pellets**, such as Oxbow Bunny Basics T
- minimum 2 cups chopped vegetables per 6 lbs. body weight
- fruit only as treats!

### **Senior rabbits:**

- if sufficient weight is maintained, continue adult diet
- frail or older rabbits may need unrestricted pellets to keep weight up. Alfalfa can be given to underweight rabbits, only if calcium levels are normal. Annual blood workups are highly recommended for geriatric rabbits.

**Note:** when you feed a lower quantity of pellets, you must replace the nutritional value without the calories, which is done by increasing the vegetables. Also, a variety of hay and straw must be encouraged all day long. We do this by offering fresh hay a couple of times per day.

## Suggested Vegetables

Select at least three kinds of vegetables daily. A variety is necessary in order to obtain the necessary nutrients. Pick one each day that contains Vitamin A, (indicated by an \*). Add one vegetable to the diet at a time. Eliminate if it causes soft stools or diarrhea.

Alfalfa, radish and clover sprouts  
Basil  
Beet Greens (tops) \*  
Bok Choy  
Asian Broccoli (mostly leaves/stems)  
Brussels Sprouts  
Carrot and carrot tops\*  
Celery  
Cilantro  
Clover  
Collard Greens\*  
Dandelion greens and flowers  
Endive\*  
Escarole  
Green Peppers  
Kale(!)\*  
Mint  
Mustard greens\*  
Parsley\*  
Pea pods (the flat edible kind)  
Peppermint leaves  
Raddichio  
Radish tops  
Raspberry tops  
Romaine lettuce (no iceberg or light-colored leaf)  
Spinach(!)\*  
Watercress  
Wheat grass

\*contains Vitamin A

(!) Use sparingly. High in either oxalates or goitrogens and may be toxic in accumulated quantities over a period of time

## Suggested Fruits

Sugary fruits such as bananas and grapes should be used only sparingly, as occasional treats. Bunnies have a sweet tooth and if left to their own devices will devour sugary foods to the exclusion of healthful ones.

Apple (remove stem and seeds)  
Blueberries  
Melon  
Orange (including peel)  
Papaya  
Peach  
Pear  
Pineapple  
Plums  
Raspberries  
Strawberries