



Companion Rabbit Advocates

Rabbit Diet Guide

HAY

Hay is the number one staple to any rabbit's diet and because they need to have constant access to food, hay should be provided on an unlimited basis. Unlimited hay has a high amount of indigestible fibre so will help prevent stasis by keeping the rabbit's gut moving. Courser hay will also help keep the rabbit's constantly growing teeth trim. Legume hay should be fed significantly less than grass hays.

Recommendations for an adult rabbit at normal weight and not pregnant:

Hay Type	Notes	Often	Occasional	Rarely
Alfalfa	Legume hay – very rich in calcium and protein.			✓
Clover	Legume hay – very rich in calcium and protein.			✓
Lucerne	Legume hay – very rich in calcium and protein.			✓
Meadow	Softer type of hay.	✓		
Oaten	Course, fibrous hay which is sweet tasting.	✓		
Orchard Grass	Softer type of hay.	✓		
Timothy	First cut timothy will be courser than second cut.	✓		
Wheaten		✓		

Try to purchase hay that is fresh smelling, dry (free of mould), and green as opposed to brown. Some outlets for Sydney rabbits for good quality hay for rabbits:

- Kensington Pet and Produce (<http://www.kensingtonproduce.com.au/>)
- Oxbow (<http://oxbowaustralia.com/NSW.htm>)

VEGETABLES

A mix of greens should be fed to an adult rabbit every day. Recommended is that the rabbit is fed:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of vegetables per day per 1kg weight of the rabbit; and
- At least three different types of greens in the mix per day.

It is a good idea to have one type of the green in the daily mix that contains a high level of vitamin A (although this is unnecessary if the rabbit also eats pellets daily as excessive vitamin A can be toxic). Also remember to introduce a new type of green to your rabbit's diet slowly and only one new green at a time to see how your rabbit handles it – if they get soft stools as a result of the introduction, either reduce the amount significantly or cut it out from the diet.

Vegetables which are high in oxalates and calcium should be fed in limited quantities and only on occasion. Oxalates and calcium will contribute to the increase and accumulation of calcium oxalate crystals which will form kidney stones.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of safe vegetables to feed your rabbit (use CTRL + F to look up a specific vegetable). A variety of the 'often' list as part of the rabbit's daily salad is best, with an 'occasional' or 'rarely' vegetable added in small quantities once in a while.

Vegetable	Notes	Often	Occasional	Rarely
Alfalfa Sprouts	High in calcium.		✓	
Basil		✓		
Bok Choy	Excess may cause bloating.		✓	
Broccoli	Leaves are best. High in Vitamin A. Excess may cause bloating.		✓	
Butter Lettuce		✓		
Cabbage	Good source of nutrients. Excess may cause bloating.		✓	
Capsicum	High in sugar content.			✓
Carrot	High in sugar content.			✓
Carrot Tops	High in Vitamin A.	✓		
Cauliflower	Excess may cause bloating.		✓	
Celery (and leaves)	High in Vitamin A.	✓		
Chicory	High in Vitamin A.	✓		
Comfrey	High in alkaloids. Digestive aid and appetite stimulant.		✓	
Coriander		✓		
Cos Lettuce		✓		
Cucumber	High in water content. Do not feed leaves.			✓
Dandelion	Best not to pick up from grass strips in case of contaminates. High in Vitamin A.	✓		
Dill		✓		
Iceberg Lettuce	High in water content and no nutritional value.			✓
Kale	High in oxalates. High in Vitamin A.		✓	
Mint		✓		
Oak Leaf Lettuce		✓		
Pak Choy		✓		
Parsley	High in Vitamin A.	✓		
Radicchio		✓		
Red Leaf Lettuce		✓		
Rocket		✓		
Spinach	High in oxalates. High in Vitamin A.		✓	
Tomato	High in sugar content. Do not feed leaves.			✓
Thyme		✓		
Watercress	High in Vitamin A.	✓		
Wheat Grass		✓		

Greens should be washed thoroughly before being given to your rabbit to eat.

Unsafe vegetables (non-exhaustive):

- Corn (due to the indigestible hulls which can cause intestinal blockages).
- Tomato leaves
- Cucumber leaves
- Rhubarb
- Potato and potato sprouts

For more information on safe vegetables for your rabbit including unsafe vegetables:

- <http://www.rabbit.org/care/veggies.html>
- http://www.coloradohrs.com/articles/diet_veggies_generic.asp
- Toxic plants list: <http://www.adoptarabbit.com/articles/toxic.html>

PELLETS

Pellets are optional in a rabbit's diet, but it should be balanced with the amount of vegetables include in your rabbit's daily diet (if you decide to give your rabbit a pellet-free diet, then there should be an increase of the amount of daily salad provided).

- Per 1kg, a healthy adult rabbit can get between 1/10 to 1/5 cups of pellets per day.

The two most important things in looking for a suitable pellet for your pet rabbit are the nutritional value and the ingredients which make up the pellets.

Ingredients:

Most pellets available in popular pet stores are unsuitable for rabbits despite labelling claiming that they are. The general rule is that the more colourful and 'mixed' the pellets look, the less healthy (and more unsuitable) they are for rabbits. Any mixes containing grains, seeds or artificially coloured bits should be avoided at all costs.

Nutritional value:

An ideal pellet for a healthy adult rabbit should have the following balances in nutritional value*:

	Percentage (%)
Maximum protein	12 – 14
Maximum fat	1 – 2
Minimum crude fibre	18
Maximum calcium	0.6

*Sources: <http://www.rabbit.org/journal/3-4/pellet-info.html>
<http://www.rabbit.org/faq/sections/diet.html#pellet>

You will most likely find that most of the pellets packed in popular pet stores will not contain any nutritional information so there is no guarantee they are healthy for your rabbit. In Sydney, Oxbow is the best quality rabbit pellet brand available and can be found in many veterinary hospitals – the 'adult' pellet is called Bunny Basics T and is timothy hay-based.

- For retailers of Oxbow pellets: <http://oxbowaustralia.com/NSW.htm>

FRUIT

Fruit should be only given as a treat to your pet rabbit – no more than ¼ of a tablespoon per day per 1 kg weight of the rabbit. Overfeeding fruit (or more so the high sugar content in the fruit) will cause digestive upsets and promote obesity. The rule of thumb for fruit is that the higher in sugar content, the less you should feed your rabbit the fruit.

Although all fruit will contain relatively high sugar content, some will have more than others. This following table lists fruits safe for rabbits in low, medium or high levels of sugar. The fruit with high levels of sugar should only very rarely be given as a treat.

Fruit	Sugar per 100 g	Low	Medium	High
Apple	11.8 g		✓	
Banana	20.4 g			✓
Blackberry	8.0 g		✓	
Blueberry	11.0 g		✓	

Cranberry	4.0 g	✓		
Grapes	15.5 g			✓
Kiwi Fruit	8.8 g		✓	
Mango	15.0 g			✓
Melon	6.3 g – 8.0 g		✓	
Orange	10.6 g		✓	
Papaya	8.0 g		✓	
Peach	7.9 g		✓	
Pear	11.5 g		✓	
Pineapple	12.0 g		✓	
Plum	9.6 g		✓	
Raspberry	4.4 g	✓		
Strawberry	5.1 g	✓		

For more information about safe fruits for rabbits:

- <http://www.rabbit.org/care/fruits.html>

For more information about sugar content of fruit:

- <http://www.calorie-counter.net/calories-in-fruit.htm>