

Basic Feeding for Rabbits

If you have recently acquired a rabbit & don't know how to care for it, this paper is for you. It's a short description of how to feed your rabbit (at various ages), until you can learn more about how to properly care for your rabbit. You can learn about rabbit care from books (e.g., *House Rabbit Handbook*, by Marinell Harriman), the internet (e.g., <http://www.rabbit.org>), or by talking with people from rabbit rescue groups (see a partial list at <http://www.rabbit.org>).

What you feed your rabbit depends on its age. To find out its age, go to the place where you got your rabbit & ask its age. Just be aware that they might not know or might make up an age. If in doubt, ask a local rabbit rescue group if they can determine the age of your rabbit. Note that if the mother was about 5 pounds (a common size for a pet rabbit), you can estimate a young rabbit's age with the following: 1 month old, about 1 pound; 2 months old, about 2 pounds.

Care of newborn rabbits (up to 2 months old) is described in detail in: http://curiousbunny.com/newborn_rabbits_detail.pdf.

You should not get a rabbit that is younger than 2 months old, as it should still be nursing until that age. Unfortunately, some places have rabbits available at 1 month old. If the babies are separated from their mother at 1 month, they might survive, but they will be less healthy. You should never ever get a rabbit less than a month. However, I've included its care here, "just in case."

When feeding lettuce or other greens, wash them thoroughly. **Lettuce** means: green leaf, red leaf, butter or romaine (NOT iceberg). **Greens** means any green vegetable you can buy at the grocery store (except cabbage). When adding greens, add just one type at a time, feeding it for about 3 days. If there are no problems, e.g., there are no loose stools, you can then add another type of green.

The **pellets** you use should be just pellets. They should NOT contain any seeds, nuts, grains or dried fruit.

eyes open (10 days) to 1 month

if no nursing mother, formula (Wombaroo or Fox Valley Day One 32/40, see paper above)
unlimited alfalfa hay
unlimited alfalfa pellets
unlimited water in bottle (not crock)

1 month to 2 months

same as above
add small amount of lettuce twice a day
if they get loose stools, stop giving lettuce

2 months to 5-8 months

unlimited alfalfa hay
unlimited alfalfa pellets
unlimited water (in bottle or crock)
small amount of greens twice a day (i.e., can be greens other than lettuce)
if they get loose stools, stop giving greens
(stop feeding KMR)

separate the males from the females at 2 – 3 months
spay/neuter at 3 – 8 months (ask your vet for specific age for your rabbit)

5-8 months to adult

at 5-8 months, during a 2 week period, slowly change over from alfalfa hay to
all timothy hay (or any grass hay; a mixture of different grass hays is good) (unlimited)
if they stop eating the hay, use more alfalfa & transition more slowly
at 5-8 months, during a 2 week period, slowly change over from alfalfa pellets to
all timothy pellets (or any grass hay based pellets) (unlimited)

starting at 8 months, gradually reduce the amount of pellets to about the following;
can be spread over 2 servings per day:

<u>rabbit's weight</u> <u>(pounds)</u>	<u>amount of pellets</u> <u>(per day)</u>
2 – 4	1/8 cup
5 – 7	1/8 – 1/4 cup
8 – 10	1/4 – 1/2 cup
11 – 15	1/2 – 3/4 cup

unlimited water
gradually increase greens to about 2 - 4 cups/5 pounds of body weight per day,
spread over 2 servings (morning & evening); serve 3 different types a day
optionally serve small amount of healthy treats
veggies (e.g., carrot, zucchini): 3 – 5 T (1 – 2 oz.)/5 pounds of body weight per day
fruit (e.g., apple, banana): 1 – 2 T (0.5 – 1 oz.)/5 pounds of body weight per day