

# Food

## What do I feed my rabbit?

A quality pelleted rabbit formula should be the main part of your bunny's diet. Look for a good quality pellet and learn to read labels.

Crude Protein (or Protein)- this needs to be between 14-18% We are currently feeding a 17% feed- but also have fed a 16% with good health. Angora's need more protein than some breeds because wool is made of protein- to grow a nice coat, the bunny needs more protein!

Crude Fiber min- no less than 16%

Crude Fiber max- up to 22%

Crude Fat between 2-4%

You should also want to see a fairly low calcium level.

Smell each bag of food as you open it to see if it smells fresh and check for mold, bugs or foreign objects.



The amount fed per day will depend on the breed of the rabbit. Our dwarf breeds (Jersey Wooly, American Fuzzy Lop, Netherland Dwarf and Mini Rex) get between ¼- ½ cup twice a day for a total of ½ to 1 cup of food a day. The larger breeds (English Angora, English Lop and Champagne d'Argent) eat about twice that and will consume 1 to 3 cups of food a day to maintain condition. Each rabbit will have a slightly different metabolism and food should be adjusted individually.

## Is my rabbit too fat or too skinny?

Different breeds have different maximum and minimum weights- noticing how your bunny is fitting into the weight guidelines is a first clue, but not the only way you should judge if it is getting the right amount of feed.

Make your hand into a fist. Now feel across the back of your hand- notice how it is harder to feel the bones there? If you run your hand down your rabbits spine and you can't feel some bone definition under the fat layer they are probably eating too much. Now run your other hand over the knuckles of your hand still in a fist- do you notice how prominent the bones stick up? If your rabbit's backbone feels like this it NEEDS MORE FOOD. Finally run your hand across your fingers while it is still in a fist. Notice you can tell where each finger is- but the bones are not so prominent as the knuckles? If your rabbits backbone feels similar to this you have your food balance about right.



## Why do we feed twice a day instead of once?

We feed twice a day so that we can make sure the rabbit is eating the food we put out. The first sign of an ill bunny is they stop looking forward to feeding time and eating. Sometimes when we are going to be busy all day long we will put out the full ration at once, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

## Is this all they need to eat?

In short NO!

At least once a week they should receive a good size handful of a good quality grass hay. We usually look for hay marketed at "horse hay" Most breeders recommend Timothy as a good grass hay. We personally feed Teff or Bermuda or even any fairly soft native grass hay, or even good clean straw. You will NOT want to feed alfalfa hay as it is too rich for most adult rabbits especially when fed with a quality bunny

pellet food. Watch your hay as you feed for weeds and stickers. Pull weeds out and throw away. We like to stuff our hay into empty toilet paper tubes when we put it in for the bunnies. This helps them to keep the hay out of their coat and not waste so much of it. They also like the tubes as toys. They need hay for the extra fiber it gives them. Rabbits groom their selves much like cats BUT cannot cough up hairballs as needed like cats can. Fiber in the hay keeps the hair moving through their system and out through their waste. We feel grass hay is a very important part of a rabbit's diet. Another good idea to feed hay is to put a spring on the inside of their cage wall and tuck the hay underneath this. They can pull the hay out a little bit at a time with very little fear of them getting caught. We have grown not to like commercial wire hay

feeders as we have had several bunnies caught in them and injured.

Below are photos of our favorite hay feeders for Angora bunnies.



The feeder is made from two rectangles of cage wire, j-clipped together on the bottom edge with a wire closure on the top edge.

### Water

The most important nutrient to a rabbit is water. Your bunny needs fresh water at ALL times! IF you fail to keep water out, and the bunny will stress and possibly die. When you get a new rabbit be sure to ask what it is used to drinking out of- whether it be a ball valve bottle, a lever valve bottle or a bowl or crock. Some rabbits

will have a hard time adjusting to a water bottle if they have not been used to them and will stop drinking. When a rabbit does not drink, they do not eat and death will follow shortly. When it is hot outside our small breed rabbits can empty a 32 ounce water bottle in 12 hours.

Bowls must be monitored so they do not get tipped over and the bunny spends all day without a drink.

We use mostly water bottles because they are easier to keep clean, and bunny's with bowls or crocks often use them for playtime, or will poop in them. BUT there are some very good reasons to use a bowl or crock in your rabbitry.

**Sick bunnies NEED a crock or bowl as they will drink better from this.**

**HOT WEATHER a bowl or crock may be needed in ADDITION to a water bottle. We have known bunnies who will hang their feet in a bowl to keep cool.**

**BABY bunnies often need a bowl because bottles are harder to use (change water frequently! )**

COLD weather- crocks will be easier to thaw than bottles.

Hint: Dollar tree has large soup mugs with flat bottoms that can be clipped by the handle to the wire of the cage making them harder to turn over.

## A Treat for a Playful Bunny

“Mom, I’m bored!!!” Have you ever said that? Did you know that if your rabbit could talk, that’s what they might say too? Rabbits are very active animals, with lots of natural instincts, and without some play things and fun exercise times, your rabbit could get bored!

Rabbits in the wild, burrow to make their homes. They like to dig, while building tunnels for their home and foraging for food. Try using large cardboard tubes to create a tunnel for your rabbit to run through. If you stuff the end with a little bit of crumpled newspaper, they’ll have a blast “digging” through the paper to get out of the other end! They also like to shred things up, and an old phone book can make the perfect shreddable toy! It can be a messy play time, so make sure you clean up afterwards, but your bunny will have a blast! (Make sure they’re not eat a lot of the paper though!)

Rabbits need to chew on stuff. Give them a piece of wood to chew on. You can buy wood chew toys in the pet department, or you can do like we do and cut our own. We use pruned branches from pear, mulberry or apple trees (unsprayed) and the rabbits really enjoy them. **SOME FRUIT TREES ARE NOT SAFE** to give to bunny’s as chew toys- **DO NOT GIVE THEM** any type of fruit tree wood that has a pit in the fruit, such as peach, apricot, or cherry.

For toys sturdy dog or pet toys work well. Squeaky toys are quickly devoured, so are not a good choice.

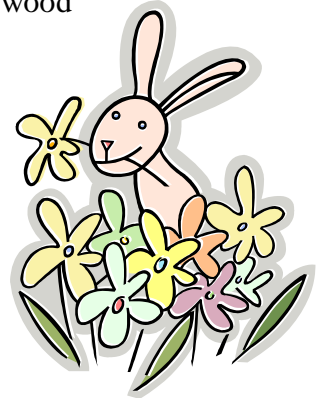
My bunnies like cat jingle balls, but be careful to get sturdy ones and watch them for “chew wear” because you don’t want them to get choked.

Empty soda bottles are also a big favorite- make sure to peel off the label, and for interest, you can put something in them (like a bit of feed) to make them rattle. Our boy’s especially love these.



Empty thread spools, whiffle balls, unscented pine cones and dog toys with the heavy cotton rope on them have also been enjoyed by my rabbits.

Just be sure not to give them toys they could stick their heads through and get choked, or easily eat. Chances are, if your rabbit has played hard and had a good time, it’s going to want a snack! You can give you rabbit a treat for many reasons. Sometimes, it’s just fun to add something a little different to their diet. If they don’t normally get it, it really is a treat to them. If you give them healthy treats that are safe for them, it can help keep them healthy too! And some treats help keep their hair thick and glossy.



Here is a list of some things that are good for your rabbit to have as a treat now and then. Do NOT overdo- a small amount is plenty:

### Good treats

- Old fashioned oatmeal- dry
- Cheerios
- Shredded Wheat (non frosted)
- Calf manna(1 tsp)
- Sweet Potatoes (raw)
- Spinach (raw)
- Pumpkin
- Apples and pears (no seeds)
- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Blueberries
- Papayas
- Pineapples
- Peaches (no pit)
- Tomatoes
- Peas
- Beans
- Kale
- Carrots and carrot tops
- Mustard Greens
- Dandelion Greens
- Sugar Beets
- Parsnips
- Parsley



And here is a list of some things that aren't good for you rabbit. Make sure that if you're rabbit is out playing in the yard, that you watch it carefully.

You don't want it to eat something that could be toxic to it! (There are other things not on this list that aren't good for your rabbit. If you're not sure if it's safe or not, DON'T let them eat it!)

### Bad for Bunny

- Acorns
- Almonds
- Apple Seeds
- Apricot Pits
- Asparagus Fern
- Carnations
- Cherry Pits
- Clematis
- Daisy
- Eucalyptus
- Gladiola
- Iceberg Lettuce
- Iris
- Ivy
- Jack-in-the-Pulpit
- Jonquil
- Lily of the Valley
- Milkweed
- mistletoe
- Oak
- Peach Pits
- Pear Seeds
- Peony
- Philodendron
- Plum Pits
- Poinsettia
- Rhododendron
- Rhubarb Leaves
- Tomato Leaves
- Tulip Bulbs

