

A Glance At Rabbit Diet

Know what foods to feed pet rabbits.

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“Fresh” is one word to keep in mind when it comes to your rabbit’s diet: fresh water, fresh hay and fresh vegetables, supplemented by high-fiber, low-protein pellets. Don’t offer your rabbit water you wouldn’t drink or vegetables you wouldn’t cut up and make into a salad for yourself.

The diet of a 5-pound rabbit should consist of “a quarter cup of pelleted food five days a week, with ‘free choice’ hay (timothy hay, grass hay or brome hay) at all times, and vegetables should not exceed 10 percent of daily intake,” said Gregory A. Rich, DVM, of the West Esplanade Veterinary Clinic in Louisiana, “And twice a week, hay should be the only component of the rabbit’s diet. Hay helps prevent obesity. The stomach feels content.”

Rabbits, like people, love foods that aren’t exactly good for them. Make sure the treats and portions you offer a pet rabbit are reasonable because a poor diet can lead to serious health problems, such as gastrointestinal stasis (a deadly blockage attributed to, among other things, a diet lacking in fiber) and obesity.

Speaking of treats, if you polled rabbit owners, you might be surprised to learn that many rabbits prefer bananas to carrots. But avoid overfeeding this high-sugar treat. Instead, only offer pet rabbits a half-inch slice. Resist the tendency to feed human-sized treat portions. A rabbit will do fine with five raisins as opposed to a handful, or a couple of baby carrots instead of a full bowl.