



# Rabbit - Information pack

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## Diet

A rabbit's diet is an extremely important element in keeping them fit and healthy. Most issues with pet rabbits are related to their diet being unsuitable and not meeting their nutritional requirements. Their diet should consist of primarily hay/ fresh grass (around 80%), with the remainder being made up of a good quality complete pellet food, leafy greens and vegetables. Fresh water should always be provided.

Rabbits need a high level of fibre in their diets and are classed as herbivores. To ensure that they extract the nutritional value of their food they re-ingest it, meaning it goes through their digestive system twice. Caecotrophs (sticky droppings) are passed first which the rabbit will eat, you usually won't see this happen. They can then extract essential nutrition as the digestible fibre passes through for the second time which is excreted as the hard droppings we are used to seeing.

Muesli style rabbit food can be a problem as it can lead to selective feeding, the rabbits tend to pick out the bits they like which leads to an unbalanced diet. Treats can be given, but in moderation and should ideally be healthy treats with a low sugar content

### Good examples of treats :

Cabbage, kale, cauliflower leaves, broccoli, dandelion leaves, parsley, carrot tops, apple (remove the seeds)

As a general rule many fruits and vegetables are safe provided that they are given in small amounts. It is worth noting that there are some that should not be fed such as tomatoes, rhubarb, potatoes, cucumber, lettuce and corn.

Hay is the most important and is also what keeps rabbits teeth nice and short (their teeth grow constantly). If they don't spend enough of their day eating, their teeth will overgrow, and if they stop eating they can become ill very quickly. Rabbits should be constantly eating, moving and pooping. Any change in any of these and they need to be seen by a vet as soon as possible.



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## Housing

In the wild, rabbits live in warm dry burrows underground that allow them to run over a very wide area, with lots of things to keep them entertained. This needs to be taken into consideration when keeping them as pets to ensure that their housing is suitable for them.

Rabbits need plenty of space to run, explore and to be able to stretch up on their hind legs. They need interesting accommodation to keep them active, which reduces the risk of boredom and obesity. It is also important to ensure they have an area that is free of draughts.

You can also find additional information here :

<https://www.rabbitawarenessweek.co.uk/environment/>

## Health check

Rabbits should have at least annual health checks, as this is where problems can usually be detected early. It is recommended to vaccinate rabbits against Myxomatosis and Viral Haemorrhagic Disease (VHD) even if they are indoor rabbits.

It is recommended to neuter both male and female rabbits to prevent unwanted pregnancies, eliminate cancer of the uterus and to calm both sexes down. Many rabbits that live together bond better once they have been neutered, and are generally healthier and happier animals. Rabbits are social animals and ideally should be kept in pairs or more. Rabbits enjoy playing and foraging, therefore it is important to provide plenty of enrichment and stimulation for them.

It is important to keep on top of their grooming and general wellbeing, to ensure their coat stays healthy and nails are not overgrowing. We can help with this.

We can discuss any of this information in more detail via a telephone consultation, home visit or our messaging service.

Feel free to get in touch.