

Rabbit Care and Diseases

Lifespan and housing

Rabbits live on average 7 to 10 years.

Rabbits can be caged for part of the day, but should not be kept in the cage all day long. A metal cage is best, kept in an area that is not too damp or humid, and between 60 and 70 degrees.

Rabbits can be litter box trained. Use a pelleted litter. Never use clay or clumping cat litter!

Diet

Rabbits are herbivores. They should be fed a diet consisting mostly of **hay and greens** (grass hay such as timothy hay is best). **Hay** should be available at all times in the rabbit's cage. Do not feed straw!! **Providing grass hay in the diet is a major key in preventing many diseases in the pet rabbit!**

Greens that can be fed to rabbits include broccoli, dandelion greens, parsley, romaine lettuce, brussel sprouts, collard greens, mustard greens, bok choy, basil, kale, or carrot tops. The darker green the vegetable is the better! Make sure to wash the greens before feeding them. It is usually best to feed 3 different varieties of greens per day, and feed 1 cup per 2 pounds of body weight daily.

Treats that can be fed include kiwi fruit, carrots, raspberries, pear, pineapple, strawberries, blackberries, melons, and squash. These are to be treats only, so use them sparingly! Do not feed more than 1 tablespoon per day! Feeding too many treats will lead to obesity and other medical problems.

Commercial rabbit pellets are unnecessary if the rabbit is eating a diet of hay and greens. If you want to feed pellets to your rabbit, feed no more than 1 tablespoon twice daily.

Do not feed commercial packaged treats! These are too high in starch and fat, and will lead to obesity and serious GI diseases.

Cecotropes

Rabbits produce a type of fecal dropping called cecotropes. These are rich in organisms that have come from an area of the GI tract called the cecum. These organisms contain nutrients such as amino acids, fatty acids, and vitamins. Rabbits must eat these cecotropes and digest them in order to extract the nutrients from them. Rabbits will eat their cecotropes directly from the anus, so you will not see these special droppings in their cage. If you do see cecotropes in the cage (they are elongated, green in color, and coated in mucus), this can be an indication of a serious medical condition.

Common diseases

Uterine cancer

Broken back

Dental disease

Respiratory disease

Bladder stones