

Pet rabbit

(*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

- **Life span:** 8-13years
- **Diet:** Pellets, hay, grass, weeds, vegetables, little bit of fruit, herbs
- **Sexual maturity:** Male: 5-8 months; Female: 4-5 months
- **Age to neuter:** Male: 3-4 months; Female: 8-10 months
- **Gestation length:** 29-35 days
- **Heart rate:** 130-325 bpm
- **Respiration rate:** 30-60 bpm



The dwarf rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) is an extremely delicate animal and its correct management, especially with regards to food, will be essential for overall well-being, development and for the prevention of diseases. For this reason it is important that the rabbit receives an appropriate diet from an early age and this can be set up by consulting a veterinarian who deals with the medicine of unconventional animals; if you have a rabbit that currently does not receive a correct diet, with the help and guidance of a veterinarian, you can always intervene (depending on the case) by gradually modifying it.



Rabbits are strict herbivores and as such will primarily consume grass and hay, with the addition of vegetables and fruit. As a pet, a diet must be offered that reflects the natural one as much as possible, with foods rich in fibre and mineral substances essential for the proper functioning of the gastro-enteric system, and for the constant wearing of the teeth (which are continuously growing), but must not be excessively calorific.

Grass and hay: These must always be available and can be purchased in specialised shops or, with some precautions, fresh harvests. Peculiar characteristics of a good quality hay are the color (which must be green), the scent (which should suggest the absence of mold) and the composition (it must come from a polyphite meadow, i.e. it must be made up of several types of plants). Dandelion, borage, alfalfa and clover are some of the wild plants that can be offered. Particular attention must be paid to those plants that can be found frequently in our gardens and at home and which are toxic for the rabbit such as oleander, poinsettia, ferns; the wild plants towards which the rabbit must be kept at a safe distance will be among others: oak, poppies, potatoes and horse chestnuts.

Pellets: Available in shops are specific pellets available for Rabbits which should be given be in very small quantities (1-2 teaspoons per day) or as a treat, this is in to avoid excessive weight gain as they are very calorific, and as they encourage incorrect tooth wear. When purchasing, you must pay attention to the fibre content, which must not be less than 18%, and the absence of coccidiostats!

Vegetables: They are another essential element in a rabbit's diet. Those which are in season will be preferred (as those grown in greenhouses will not have the same organoleptic characteristics), they must be fresh (not cold from the fridge!) and well washed. But **pay attention to the quantity!** Vegetables rich in fibre such as celery and fennel must be supplied daily, while, alternating them during the week, we can choose for example between peppers, red raddish, artichokes, endive, carrots (preferably only the green part); less frequently, on the other hand, cabbage, broccoli, spinach and other vegetables rich in oxalates, which can contribute to the formation of stones in the urinary tract.



Foods not to be given will be legumes, popcorn corn (as it could cause intestinal obstructions if not properly chewed), garlic and onion, eggplant, potatoes (both the tuber and the plant) and the tomato plant.

And now let's move on to fruit! Pineapple, orange, watermelon, banana, cherries (without stone), strawberries, grapes (without seeds), mandarin, apple, melon, peach, pear, can be given, alternating them, about 2 times a week. Always pay attention to the quantities (as they are rich in sugars and therefore much favored by the rabbit, but dangerous for its health) and preferring those of the season.

Forbidden foods! Reiterating the fact that rabbits are strict herbivores, they will be harmed by, for example, biscuits, sweets, bread, pasta, crisps, dog and cat food, included in a long list of foods that should also never be given to them. To this list, are added snacks and "tailored" seed mixes for rabbits: these are very fatty foods, low in fiber, which do not allow for a correct and homogeneous wearing of the teeth, the sale of which is due to the transposition of a type of diet intended for breeding rabbits or for rabbits bred for the meat industry, to pet rabbits.

We must always remember that just because a food is not bad for us, it is not necessarily not harmful for our little friends.



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Rabbit: Daily feeding guide



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5% PELLET (1-2 tsp/day):

Not essential!!!

Must be good quality (Oxbow, Burgess, Supreme)

Recommended during phases of growth and reproduction

Feeding in excess leads to dental disease and weight gain

25% VEGETABLES:

All vegetables!

Especially those rich in fibre (Fennel, Celery)

Carrots sparingly: high in sugar

Rarely: kale, broccoli, spinach (oxalate +++)

75% GREEN GRASS and HAY:

Rich in fiber!

Help to wear teeth down (teeth grow continuously)

Maintain intestinal function

As well as grass, wildflowers

Deciduous branches (hazel, birch, willow).

FRUITS and TREATS:

Apples, pears, grapes

Give a small daily amount as a **treat**

If a lot is given the sugar will disrupt intestinal balance, cause harmful fermentation and bloat, and predispose to **weight gain** and **obesity**.

NEVER ADMINISTER!!!

Bread, pasta, biscuits, cereal & seeds mixture, chocolate, popcorn. Seeds, potatoes, green parts of aubergine.



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