

Rabbit Care Guide



Oxbow has provided this basic care guide to help you keep your pet rabbit healthy and happy. Read below to learn what to feed your rabbit, as well as other important facts that will make you a confident pet owner.



Feeding Your Rabbit

Your rabbit is a herbivore, which means he eats only plant material. Herbivores need to have food moving constantly through their digestive systems to avoid health problems. A diet of mostly grass hay provides the fiber necessary to accomplish this. Add fortified pellets daily to round out your rabbit's healthy diet. Your rabbit must have the right mix of hay, pellets, and treats to avoid health problems.



Hay

Grass hay is absolutely vital to the digestive health of your rabbit. It helps prevent obesity, dental disease, diarrhea and boredom. Your rabbit should have unlimited access to quality grass hay. Unless the hay in your pet's habitat is soiled, do not replace it. Replacing it could encourage picky eating! Your rabbit should eat a pile of hay the size of his body every day.

Rabbits less than a year old can receive alfalfa hay in addition to grass hay. After one year, alfalfa hay should be used only as a treat. Pregnant and nursing animals or rabbits recovering from illness have higher nutritional requirements and may benefit from alfalfa in their diets.

Hay Selection

- Grass hay should make up the majority of your pet's daily diet.
- Resist offering the same type of hay. Offer a variety of hay for optimum health.
- Hay is a product of nature, so it's normal for each bag to look and feel different.

Use the Oxbow Hay Variety Guide found on every bag to help determine your pet's taste and texture preferences. Mix and match among the following, all-natural, farm-fresh grass hays: Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, Oat Hay, Botanical Hay and Organic Meadow Hay.

Fortified Food

A complete fortified pellet helps you make sure your pet is getting all the vitamins and minerals required for a healthy diet. A high-fiber, age-appropriate pellet such as Essentials Adult Rabbit Food or Essentials Young Rabbit Food is best for your rabbit.



Pellet Selection

- Choose an age-appropriate pellet created especially for rabbits. Oxbow designed Adult Rabbit Food for rabbits over one year and Young Rabbit Food specifically for rabbits under one year.
- Avoid mixes with nuts, corn, seeds and fruit. Rabbits have a habit of selecting these tempting morsels and leaving the healthy pellets.



Treats and Veggies

Treats are a great way to bond with your rabbit. You love giving treats and he loves eating them! However, the main purpose of a treat should be to encourage interaction between you and your pet. Offering too many treats can encourage your pet to refuse basic foods and rob him of nutrition. Contrary to popular belief, rabbits don't need a steady supply of carrots and other sweet treats such as yogurt drops and seed sticks. Offer all-natural treats, such as Simple Rewards, only after your pet eats basic foods.

Leafy greens are healthy and natural food choices for your rabbit. They are also a good source of water and offer a variety of textures. However, leafy greens should be given in moderation-no more than the size of your rabbit's head every day. Greens such as romaine, bib and red leaf lettuces are good choices for your rabbit. Avoid iceberg lettuce as it might cause digestive upset. As with any new food, be sure to introduce new greens and vegetables slowly to avoid upsetting your pet's digestive system and causing diarrhea.

Feed your rabbit about one cup (or the size of his head) of healthy greens per day.

All About Rabbits

Rabbit Behaviors

Rabbits are inquisitive and curious by nature. They don't usually like to be picked up or carried. The best way to interact with your rabbit is to get down on his level and play with him on the floor. Be sure you are always present when your rabbit is out for playtime. Rabbits can be mischievous and can get hurt if left alone!

Some rabbit behaviors can seem rather strange. You might notice your rabbit eating his own poop, for example. This is a natural behavior and essential for good health, because it provides extra vitamins and nutrients.

Housing Your Rabbit

You can keep your rabbit inside the house and easily train him to use a litter box. However, your rabbit will also want a place to call his own. Choose a large crate or cage with a solid floor that is tall enough to allow your rabbit to stand on his hind legs and stretch out. Inside your rabbit's home, include a hay habitat such as Oxbow's Timothy Club Bungalow or Tunnel, a litter box lined with Eco-Straw™, and some toys. Grass hay and clean water should always be available. Place your rabbit's home near household activities, but away from drafts.

Once your rabbit is litter trained, you can allow him to hop around outside of the cage. Be sure you rabbit-proof the area, as rabbits love to chew. Check cords and make sure outlets are covered. Place houseplants out of reach, because some can be poisonous. Be prepared for your pet to chew on just about anything, including curtains, carpets and furniture.



Make sure you have these supplies for your rabbit:

- Fortified age-specific food:
Oxbow Essentials Young Rabbit (rabbits under one year of age)
Oxbow Essentials Adult Rabbit (rabbits over one year)
- Two or more varieties of Oxbow's farm-fresh hay
- Oxbow treats for healthy bonding and enrichment
- Water bottle and heavy water dish
- Heavy food bowl
- Large cage with solid flooring
- Hay habitat such as Oxbow's Timothy Club Bungalow or Tunnel
- Litter box
- Oxbow's Eco-Straw™ litter

Your Rabbit's Health

Many rabbit health problems are a result of nutrition and digestive issues, dental issues or obesity. Contact your veterinarian if you notice the following symptoms:

- Loose or soft stools
- Blood in the urine
- Small, dry or infrequent stools
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Hunched in corner
- Overgrown front teeth
- Bald patches in the fur
- Sores on the feet
- Abnormal eating or drinking



Rabbits naturally shed. Every year, they have an average of two big sheds. Your pet might be more prone to hairballs at this time, so make sure he has plenty of hay available to keep his digestive system moving.

Regular veterinarian visits are a crucial part of keeping your pet healthy and happy. At each visit, your pet will be weighed and examined. Be prepared to answer basic questions about the animal's diet, behavior and health. If you have questions or concerns, make a list ahead of time so you will remember what to ask.

Spaying or neutering your rabbit is important to help him live a longer, healthier life. An experienced rabbit veterinarian can recommend an appropriate age.

For more information about rabbits, read Oxbow's Small Paw Prints newsletter at www.oxbowanimalhealth.com.

Oxbow offers healthy treats and supplements for rabbits, including: Organic Barley Biscuit Treats, Simple Rewards Treats and Natural Science Supplements.



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