



## Rabbit nutrition

An appropriate diet for a rabbit supports normal gastrointestinal motility, provides dental wear and ensures adequate nutrition. Pet rabbits should eat *ad libitum* quality hay and grass, and fresh leafy green vegetables can be offered once or twice daily. A measured amount of concentrate pellets or nuggets may also be given on a daily basis, but cereal type mixes should be avoided. Any changes to a rabbit's diet must be made gradually over several days or weeks, as sudden changes can cause diarrhoea.

**Hay and grass** are an important source of both indigestible large fibre particles that promote the gut motility and provide optimal dental wear and short fibre that provides nutrients. Not all types of hay are ideal for rabbits: while Meadow and Timothy hay are considered ideal for pet rabbits, alfalfa hay is high in calcium and may predispose to sludgy urine in some rabbits and should be avoided. If a rabbit is not used to eating grass, it should be gradually introduced to avoid upsetting the gastrointestinal tract.

**Pelleted food** is better than offering cereal mix to a pet rabbit. Rabbits should receive a measured amount of approximately 25 grams concentrate/kg bodyweight per day. When given unrestricted access to pellets, rabbits may consume more food than is required for maintenance and this can eventually lead to obesity.

A variety of **vegetables** such as broccoli, celery, cabbage, spring greens, kale, carrot tops, garden weeds (such as groundsel, dandelion) and herbs should be offered twice daily, along with *ad libitum* hay. Carrots should be offered only occasionally as treats.

**Fruits** are not part of a rabbit diet and they are high in sugar, which can promote excessive fermentation and dental problems. You should avoid giving fruits on a daily basis, however, they can be offered in small quantities as a treat or to stimulate the appetite of an anorexic rabbit.

**Water** is important and rabbits tend to decrease their food intake if they don't receive enough water to drink. Rabbits should have a constant access to fresh water, offered in water bowls.

For more advice please contact CityVets on 01392 250066.