

# BUNNIES 101

## DIET:

- 80-90 percent of a bunnies diet should be fresh timothy grass hay, orchard hay, or oat hay.
- For bunnies under 6 months, there is some debate about feeding alfalfa hay alongside young rabbit pellets (which are alfalfa based). We find that they thrive the best on normal hay and young rabbit pellets. Alfalfa hay is very protein and mineral rich, and can be hard for them to process as the only hay source when they are young/weaning.
- Bunnies need access to hay 24/7 to keep their digestion moving. The fiber is an essential piece to their specific digestive health.
- If your bunny does not eat hay well, it can signify diet imbalances, disease, and possible dental issues which should be considered asap.
- Rabbits need  $\frac{1}{4}$  a cup of good quality rabbit pellets ([Oxbow](#) and [Sherwood](#), and [Small Pet Select](#)) are all reliable brands that we trust)
- Rabbit pellets of quality will never have dried fruits, seeds, or nuts, brightly colored pieces, dairy, excessive oil, corn, or oats
- Rabbits need unlimited clean water (bowls hydrate them MUCH better than bottles).
- Use a large dog bowl compared to commercial “small animal bowls” to ensure best hydration.
- Avoid fruits, seeds, and nuts in diet, as well as cruciferous vegetables. Fruits are high in sugar and can promote GI dysbiosis (imbalance of gut bacteria), especially in rabbits with a more sensitive stomach.

## Yes or No: Vegetables for bunnies

Vegetable	Yes/no	How much?	Reason	Benefits
Arugula	Yes	½-1 cup daily if fed alone	n/a	Low in oxalates and high in fiber, vitamins and minerals.
Asparagus	No	n/a	High sugar content which can cause GI dysbiosis.	n/a
Avocado	NO, TOXIC	None, even a small bite can kill a bunny	n/a	Contains a compound toxic to many animals called “persin”. This is found in all parts of the avocado plant. Toxic changes noted to the heart, kidneys, and liver especially if ingested.
Basil	Yes	½-1 cup per bunny	n/a	Rich in antioxidants, Vitamin K, and has anti-inflammatory properties. Contains natural acids which can act as mild homeopathic pain relief.
Bell Peppers	No	n/a	High in sugar and hard to digest. Can cause GI dysbiosis due	n/a

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			to excessive natural sugars.	
Broccoli	No	n/a	Hard to digest and can cause gas buildup.	n/a
Cabbages	No	n/a	Hard to digest and can cause Gi upset and gas	n/a
Carrots	No	n/a	Too high in sugar and can cause GI dysbiosis and gas buildup	n/a
Carrot tops	Yes	n	Make sure no carrot is cut off on carrot tops	High in fiber, satisfying for rabbits to chew on, high in Vitamin A and K, full of antioxidants
Cauliflower	No	n/a	Hard to digest and cause gas buildup	n/a
Cilantro	Yes	½-1 cup per bunny	n/a	Anti-inflammatory/appetite stimulating properties. High vitamin/mineral content, high in fiber.
<b>Chive</b>	<b>NO, TOXIC</b>	n/a	In the allium	n/a

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			family, which makes it TOXIC to rabbits. Contains compounds that can rapidly destroy rabbit red blood cells.	
Collard greens	No	n/a	Difficult to digest and high in oxalates.	n/a
Cucumber	Yes	Small ½-1 inch slice	Don't overfeed, can cause fullness without proper nutrition	Highly hydrating and cooling.
Dandelion greens	Yes (only for rabbits with no kidney or urinary issues)	½-1 cup per bunny if fed alone	High in oxalates and can act as a mild diuretic, <b>not</b> appropriate for bunnies with kidney/urinary issues	Wild food, high in Vitamin A, C, and K. Full of minerals, full of antioxidants
Dill	Yes	½-1 cup per bunny if fed alone.	n/a	Helps stimulate digestion and reduce bloating, high in vitamins, flavonoids, and minerals. Can provide homoeopathic pain relief and anti-cramping effects.
Echinacea	Yes	½-1 cup per bunny if fed alone	n/a	Helpful for immune health and digestive health. Echinacea is a

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				popular herbal remedy used to boost the immune system in holistic medicine. Has anti inflammatory and antioxidant properties and is being studied for benefits during cancer and heart disease treatments as a supplement.
Eggplant	NO, TOXIC	n/a	All parts toxic to rabbits, contains a toxic compound solanine	n/a
Fennel	Yes	1/4 cup	n/a	Natural anti-gas remedy, rich in potassium and low in oxalic acid. Has an anise flavor that rabbits love and is full of vitamins and minerals. Feed the GREEN part!
Garlic	NO, TOXIC	n/a	Toxic to rabbits due to being in the allium family. Contains	n/a

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			compounds that can rapidly destroy rabbit red blood cells.	
Geranium	No, possibly toxic	n/a	<p>There is mixed evidence regarding toxicity of geraniums in rabbits. Some say they are ok in limited quantities and others say they are highly toxic. We would recommend not feeding this to your rabbit to be safe.</p>	n/a
Lavender	No, possibly toxic	n/a	Some evidence of toxicity associated with the natural oils in lavender plants.	n/a
Leek	NO, TOXIC	n/a	In the allium family, which is toxic to rabbits	n/a
Lemon balm	Yes in small amounts	2-3 tablespoons	In excess, natural oils in lemon balm can cause GI upset	Noted for calming properties as well as anti-gas properties

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Lemongrass	Yes, but feed sparingly.	A few tablespoons or less	Natural oils of lemongrass can cause GI irritation if given in excess.	Positive effects to the immune system and GI health when fed in moderation.
Lettuces (excluding iceberg lettuce)	Yes	½-1 cup per bunny if fed alone.	n/a	Helpful for hydration due to high water content
Parsely	Yes	½-1 cup per bunny if fed alone.	n/a	Source of Vitamin C and Vitamin A.
Potatoes	No	n/a	Too starchy and hard to digest in rabbits. Natural sugars can cause GI dysbiosis in rabbits. Raw potatoes toxic due a compound called solanine	n/a
Peas	No	n/a	Unfortunately common to feed rabbits commercially, but is dangerous considering the high amount of starches and carbohydrates which can lead to GI dysbiosis.	n/a
Radish tops	Yes (not for	½-1 cup if fed alone	High in oxalic acid. Avoid feeding to	High in minerals such as iron, potassium,

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	rabbits with kidney or urinary issues)		rabbits with kidney or urinary issues. Make sure you just feed the tops and no small slices of the radish itself!	and magnesium, and Vitamin A, C, and K,
Radishes	No	n/a	Compounds in radishes can be irritating to the digestive tract of a rabbit.	
Radicchio	No	n/a	Known to cause digestive upset due to rabbits not being able to digest it well.	n/a
Rhubarb	NO, TOXIC	n/a	Extremely high in oxalic acid which can be toxic to the kidneys. Causes mouth irritation due to fine crystalline shards in the natural fibers of the plant. Lethargy and respiratory depression may also be noted.	n/a

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Squash /pumpkin	No	n/a	Hard to digest and high in sugars. Can cause GI dysbiosis and gas buildup.	n/a
Spinach	No	n/a	Too high in oxalates which can cause kidney/ urinary issues	n/a
Thyme	No, can be toxic	n/a	Generally it can be ok to feed in small amounts, but contains a compound that can be toxic to rabbits called "thymol". If you do choose to feed thyme to your rabbits, only do 1-2 small finger sized sprigs. Thymol toxicity in rabbits usually has symptoms involving the central nervous system such as paralysis, muscle twitching, and drowsiness.	n/a
Tomato	No	n/a	High in natural sugars which can cause GI dysbiosis. This is not something a rabbit would ever naturally eat either.	n/a

Turnip	No	n/a	Too starchy and hard to digest in rabbits. Can cause dysbiosis and excessive gas formation.	n/a
Zucchini	No	n/a	Too starchy and hard to digest in rabbits. Can cause dysbiosis and excessive gas formation.	n/a

## HOUSING:

- Adopted bunnies should live indoors only, with an exception for supervised outdoor time if they are RHD vaccinated.
- Outdoor living threatens their lives with severe weather, possible predator stalking, parasitic infections, viral/bacterial infections and more. Domestic rabbits are NOT like wild rabbits.
- Temporary enclosures should be large enough for them to hop forward 3 times, stand on their hind legs, and comfortably turn around as a BARE MINIMUM.
- Hutches, plastic tray cages, and small crates are not a recommended home but can work in emergency situations.
- Bonded pairs should have access to a minimum floor space of 4x6, whereas single bunnies need a minimum of 4x4
- Exercise pens at least 36 inches tall are the most recommended for indoor setups. One exercise pen will typically make a 4x4 area.
- C and C grates/ panel cages may also be used in place of an exercise pen.

Emergency cage setup example:



Permanent setup example:



## LITTER TRAINING:

- Use a medium sized cat litter box (open sides) per bunny.
- Lining with potty pads helps for easy cleanup
- Aspen or paper shavings, or *kiln dried* pine pellets are best.
- Cedar or pine shavings are hepatotoxic due to aromatic oils
- Bunnies potty train extremely easily if spayed or neutered.
- Placing hay in the corner of the litter box or in bags/baskets above it encourages box use, as bunnies pee and poop while they eat.

## TREATS/TOYS:

Yes:

- Natural grass/hay/some wood chews
- Hay mats and hay houses
- Snuffle and foraging mats
- Hay based treats from a reputable brand such as Oxbow, Sherwood, Small Pet select
- Rabbit safe herbal blends

No:

- Salt licks
- Dyed toys
- Edible houses or bowls
- Anything with seeds/dried fruit/corn
- Anything with sugar, excessive wheat etc
- Yogurt drops



## VET CARE:

- All bunnies should be spayed and neutered.
- Females over 3 years that are not spayed have a 80+ percent chance of developing reproductive cancers, which can easily metastasize.
- Neutering males helps them be more comfortable by reducing testosterone, not having so many urges to hump, stops inappropriate urination/spraying etc.
- Bunnies should be RHD (rabbit hemorrhagic disease) vaccinated on schedule every year
- If you have cats in your home, make sure your rabbits are up to date on their pasteurella vaccine. Pasteurella is a bacterium that can be transmitted to rabbits via cats if they are in contact. The bacteria stays in the body for life and can lead to severe upper respiratory infection and subsequent flare ups.
- Most rabbits have E. Cuniculi, a parasite that they can contract that stays in their body for life. It is known to cause central nervous issues such as seizures, balance issues, and kidney issues such as excessive urination, excessive drinking, and issues with the litterbox.
- It is important to address any symptoms of E. cuniculi ASAP to start treatment.
- Serology testing for E.cuniculi/pasteurella at a check up with an exotics vet is highly recommended to confirm if they are positive for either of them.
- Rabbits can get blood work done just like any other animals
- Frequent nail trims, teeth checks, and brushings are important for bunnies
- Common signs of illness in rabbits are unwillingness to eat, lethargy, or small/ abnormally shaped stools. If you notice any of these symptoms it is important to have it addressed ASAP as rabbits can medically go downhill very fast.

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