

Is your rabbit getting his 5-a-day?



Most of us understand the importance of a balanced diet for human health and happiness but did you know the right food is key to keeping your pet rabbit in tip-top condition too?

Vets report that four out of five rabbits coming into practice have a health problem that is directly related to poor diet, such as obesity, overgrown teeth and constipation. The good news is that many of these are easily prevented once we understand a bit more about what our pet rabbits should be eating and why.

Food for thought

Consider a day in the life of a wild rabbit... He spends 70% of his time searching out or foraging for food, eating grasses, hay, herbs and bark - all high fibre foods. He can't climb trees to reach fruit and he doesn't actually dig up carrots either. His territory is the size of around 30 tennis courts meaning he gets a lot of exercise each day searching out food over that area. The rabbit's whole existence has evolved around this high fibre diet.

Just like in the wild, pet rabbits need extremely high levels of fibre in their diet to keep them fit and healthy.



Digestive health

- Constant nibbling on hay and grass helps keep your rabbit's digestive system moving. Without this indigestible fibre, there is a risk of constipation, a potentially fatal condition in rabbits.
- Fibre also helps maintain the right balance of 'friendly' bacteria in your rabbit's digestive system. Lack of 'digestible fibre' will upset the cycle and can lead to bloating and even anorexia.

Dental health

- Nibbling all that hay and bark each day in the wild is good for a rabbit's teeth which grow constantly, up to 12cm in a year! It's important that your rabbit's teeth are worn down by eating the right food otherwise the teeth grow too long and become very painful.

Emotional health

- Foraging for grass, herbs and hay is what keeps a rabbit busy in the wild so let's face it - our domestic pets must get very bored sitting in a hutch for most of the day! Help keep your rabbit occupied by hiding hay, healthy herbs and the occasional greens around his hutch. Of course it's essential to give lots of exercise outside the hutch too.

The right feeding plan

As you can see it's really important to find a feeding plan that will give your rabbit the right levels of fibre, vitamins and minerals needed for a healthy, balanced diet. Avoid muesli-type food which can be high in starch and sugar, as rabbits, just like children, have a tendency to leave behind the elements that are really healthy in favour of the sweet bits!

The Excel Feeding Plan from Burgess Pet Care is the UK's No.1 vet recommended range of food for rabbits and is based on all the natural foods your rabbit would eat in the wild.

If you are at all unsure about what to feed your rabbit you should contact your vet who will be able to advise you on the most appropriate diet.

