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THE HEALTHY DIET FOR PET RABBITS

Many common problems in pet rabbits are caused by incorrect diet. Rabbits' teeth grow continuously and need to be worn down by coarse, fibrous food. They are not mini humans and should not be fed muesli type foods ad lib. These allow selective feeding and result in the consumption of the rabbit's daily calorie requirement in about ten minutes, leaving teeth idle (and growing!) for the rest of the day. It is also essential that obesity is avoided as fat rabbits cannot reach round to recycle droppings, a process which is vital for proper digestion.

HAY:

Fresh hay must be available at all times and is the most important part of the diet. Preferably, Timothy or mixed grass hay should be given, as Alfalfa hay can contain too much calcium.

CONCENTRATES:

These should be a complete food, consisting of a single type of pellet. This avoids selective feeding, which inevitably creates an imbalanced diet. (Imagine feeding children a huge finger buffet!) The chosen diet should have a minimum of 18% fibre and no more than 40g per kg of rabbit should be fed. Both food and rabbit should be weighed to ensure accuracy. Overweight rabbits should be fed for their estimated lean bodyweight. The idea is to feed a basic amount thus ensuring that your rabbit has to turn to hay for the remainder of its requirements. You are not being a bad owner by doing this!
Burgess Supa Excel is recommended.

GREENFOODS:

Try to select tough, fibrous greens, which will help tooth wear and provide a range of nutrients. Give a variety and at least three types daily. Remember white, flaccid or pale leaves, such as iceberg lettuce and white cabbage, are useless. You can include spinach, kale, carrot and beet tops, dandelion leaves, broccoli, mustard greens, sprouts, parsley, green cabbage leaves, grass and many other weeds. Raspberry canes are a particular favourite.

One large cupful for every 2kg of rabbit is recommended.

OTHERS:

We all deserve a wee treat every now and again but these should not end up being the main part of the diet. A tablespoon per 2kg rabbit is adequate. Avoid sugary foods, even though rabbits have a sweet tooth, like grapes, bananas and chocolate. Do not give pasta, bread crackers and grainfoods. High fibre fruits such as pears, apples, peaches, pineapples and strawberries are great. Root or non-leafy vegetables including carrots, pea pods, courgettes, green peppers etc are also fine.

Don't overdo them and don't leave them lying uneaten getting mouldy!

FOR FURTHER ADVICE SPEAK TO ONE OF THE VETS!