

## Desexing

Desexing rabbits is strongly recommended to prevent unwanted litters. There are also numerous health & behavioural benefits from desexing your rabbits including reducing the incidence of tumours & aggressive/dominance behaviour.

## Companion Animals

Rabbits are social animals & so having multiple rabbits is recommended.

When introducing a new rabbit to an existing one careful supervision is required to prevent aggression & fighting.



## Toilet Training

Rabbits can easily be toilet trained as they generally use the same area to urinate/defecate.

Place litter trays where the rabbit chooses to toilet & use a substrate such as straw, hay or shredded paper. Litter trays need to be cleaned out often to reduce negative health impacts.



## Husbandry

Rabbits should have constant access to fresh water; dripper bottles hung on the side of the cage are better than a bowl.



Rabbits should have daily exercise to reduce the risk of obesity, for mental stimulation & to maintain a healthy digestive tract. (Remember they chew, dig & jump!).

Behavioural enrichment is also important for rabbits. Cardboard boxes, tree branches, wooden toys, phone books & treat foods can all be used to entertain your bunny.

Hutches should be large enough to allow a rabbit to stand up fully & take at least 3 hops.

Wire flooring can lead to foot problems so thick bedding should be used & needs to be changed regularly.



Rabbits are prone to heat stress at temperatures greater than 28c° therefore ensure they have shade & the hutch is well ventilated.

Rabbits have the potential to live for 8-12 years when given the appropriate diet & housing conditions.

# Caring For Your Rabbit



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## Diet

### Why is diet important?

Rabbits digestive systems have evolved to digest large amounts of fibre on a daily basis (think of a wild rabbit, they only eat grass!)

In rabbits the caecum is a large fermentation vat full of good bacteria & protozoa that assist in the digestion of fibrous foods. If the food is too sugary or too high in protein the bacteria will produce excessive gas causing discomfort, gut stasis & it may result in diarrhoea.

Rabbits teeth constantly grow & hence it is important that they have things to chew. Chewing will wear the teeth down at an appropriate rate & reduce the need for dental procedures!

Things to offer include; old phone books, wooden chew blocks (not treated timber), fresh grass & grass hay.

Many health problems are related to poor diet.

### What **NOT** to feed

Cereals, corn, pellets, grains, nuts, seeds, beans, peas, bread or sugar.

Avoid legume hays - such as Lucerne & Clover as these are too high in calcium & protein for rabbits. Diets high in these components can lead to urinary problems.

Pellets are not a complete diet! Please consult your vet for info on formulated diets for your rabbit!



## What you should be feeding:

**Fibre, fibre, fibre - This is the most important** The most important food stuff to be offering your rabbit is fibre, the best source of this is fresh grass, or grass hay (timothy, oaten, wheaten, pasture, meadow, ryegrass or paddock).

**Leafy Green Vegetables** - are also a good source of nutrients for your rabbit e.g. Asian greens, cabbage leaves, carrot tops, celery/celery tops, spinach leaves, dark leafed lettuce varieties, herbs (basil, parsley, mint, dill, coriander), Brussels sprouts, kale. ***Feed 3-4 different greens in 2 packed cups per 1kg bodyweight per day.***



**Treats** - You should only feed a total of 1-2 tablespoons of treats per day.

Examples of treats include: root vegetables (carrot, sweet potato), fruit & capsicum.

Keep feeding habits & food types consistent. Rapid changes will cause digestive upsets such as diarrhoea or gas. If changes are needed, we recommend a 2-3 week transition period.



## Vaccination

In Australia, domestic rabbits require vaccination against Calicivirus. This disease has been released purposely to control the wild rabbit population & is typically fatal in unvaccinated rabbits.

Transmission between wild & domestic rabbits can occur very easily. The current vaccine is effective against the released strains of Calicivirus but may not be effective against some other strains of the virus.

Vaccination of young (kitten) rabbits should be conducted at 10-12 weeks of age with a booster 4 weeks later.

Rabbits then require a vaccination every 12 months to maintain protection against Calicivirus.



## Worming & Parasites Other

Routine intestinal deworming of rabbits is not required in Australia.

However, monthly application of Revolution is recommended to repel biting insects.

***Please ask your veterinarian which size Revolution is most appropriate for your rabbit!***