

Rabbit Handbook

Feeds and Feeding

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Proper feeds and feeding methods are important to success with rabbits. The beginning rabbit grower should use the kind of feed to which the rabbits are accustomed. Feed should be changed gradually. *Sudden change makes rabbits sick and may kill them.*

The best way to change feed is to give a small amount of new feed half an hour after their regular ration. Gradually increase the amount, watching for ill effects (soft droppings, bloat, etc.). If no trouble appears within 2 or 3 weeks, use the new feed for the entire ration.

Green feeds and fresh leaf feeds are not recommended, because the supply may deplete, making ration changes necessary. Feed quality may be poor at times in these rations, and it may be difficult to supply the variety needed for good nutrition.

Animals fed exclusively on green feed never have the good condition or development needed for show animals. Therefore, commercial rabbit feed is generally the best and most practical feed.

Feeding Schedules

Feeding regularity is more important than the number of times the rabbits are fed daily. Because rabbits eat mostly at night, feeding them in late afternoon or evening is preferred. Morning feeding is less satisfactory. Offer feed at the same hour every day. If you use commercial feed, follow the manufacturer's directions for feeding.

Mature does without litters, mature bucks and growing young should receive 3 to 6 ounces of feed daily. Feed does with litters all they can eat. Mature rabbits of medium breeds, weighing about 10 pounds, remain in good condition with about 6

ounces daily of a complete pelleted ration. Feed smaller breeds 3 to 4 ounces, depending on their size. Amounts may vary depending on the animal's condition. Those too fat need less feed; thin ones need more.



Water

Providing enough clean, fresh water is vital for the rabbit producer. The amount of water needed depends on the rabbit's size; type of food; watering frequency; environmental temperature; water quality, availability and temperature; and individual variations.

A doe and a litter drink about 1 gallon of water a day. You can use either crocks or an automatic water system such as dewdrops or water bottles. Tin cups are not advisable, as they are easily tipped over and are hard to keep clean.