

## Treats to Avoid

For most rabbits, bread, cereals, grains, and nuts should **not** be offered, even as occasional treats. These foods are high in carbohydrates and can easily upset the delicate balance in a rabbit's GI tract. Carbohydrates can also lead to excess cecal production, soft stools, and unhealthy weight gain.

If your rabbit is losing weight due to a serious illness such as kidney failure or cancer, or if you have adopted a severely malnourished rabbit, your veterinarian may recommend feeding a small amount of oats or bread to help your rabbit reach and/or maintain a healthy weight. Oats, bread, and other food high in carbohydrates should be offered **only** if your veterinarian recommends it and under her supervision.

Yogurt is recommended by some veterinarians to restore the balance of bacteria in the GI tract of a rabbit taking antibiotics. While some rabbits tolerate yogurt well, a rabbit's GI system was not designed to process dairy products and many yogurts contain added sugar. A better way to restore balance of GI flora is with probiotics such as Acid-Pak 4-way, Equine Probios, or BeneBac (available from your veterinarian) or with acidophilus capsules or powders (available at health food stores or in the herb section of discounts and drug stores).

Many rabbit owners offer Papaya Tablets as a treat, believing that they will also help prevent the buildup of hair in the GI tract during heavy shedding. While fresh pineapple and fresh papaya do contain enzymes (bromelain and papain) that **may** help break up masses of food/hair in the GI tract, most Papaya Tablets contain a lot of added sugar and should be avoided.

Avoid "treat sticks" sold by pet stores. These contain seeds and grains, and often held together by honey — all ingredients that can contribute to GI problems. Many healthy treats are also available from pet food companies. Take time to read the labels and avoid products with sugar, honey, or corn listed early in the ingredients list.

