

## Commercial Pellets

A variety of high-quality commercial rabbit foods are available. Commercial rabbit food is either pelleted (compressed at a relatively low temperature) or extruded (pasteurized at a high temperature). According to a nutritionist at Kaytee Products, extruded food is easier to digest. Pelleted food may be either alfalfa-based or timothy-based. All currently available extruded foods are alfalfa-based.

It is not unusual for rabbits to gain weight after they are neutered. **If your rabbit is becoming overweight**, your veterinarian may recommend limiting commercial food to about 1/8 to 1/4 cup per day per five pounds of rabbit. When buying commercial food, check the label for fiber (at least 16%), protein (not more than 16%), fat (not more than 2-3%), and calcium (not more than 1%). Manna Pro **Double Duty** and Purina **High Fiber** are excellent alfalfa-based pellets, though you may have to work to locate these. Kay-Tee **Rainbow Exact** and Martin Super Premium Rabbit Nutrition (available only in Canada at this time) are extruded foods. Both American Pet Diner and Oxbow offer timothy-based pellets. Either a timothy-based pellet or Kay-Tee Rainbow Exact is recommended for bunnies with bladder sludge, high calcium levels, or renal disease.

**Never** feed your rabbit the “gourmet” pellets that contain dried fruit, nuts, and/or seeds. These are high in fat and are known to cause health problems. Many contain corn, beans, split peas and/or Canadian Peas (these look like white peas), any of which can be deadly to your rabbit.

Because of a rabbit’s delicately balanced GI system, a new brand of pellets should be introduced gradually. Purchase the new brand before you are completely out of the old and mix the new pellets with the old ones starting with a ratio of one part of the new to three or four parts of the old. Gradually decrease the amount of old pellets until you have your rabbit completely switched to the new brand.

Regardless of the brand of pellets you feed, never feed old, moldy, or expired pellets or ones that have been wet since they may contain microscopic amounts of mold. If possible, buy pellets in the original manufacturer’s bag rather than from bulk bins in a feed store. This reduces the risk of contamination, ensures that you are getting the formula you want, and allows you to see the expiration date. If possible, purchase only a two-month supply of pellets at a time.