

Raising Your Rabbit

by DRD Rabbitry - Breeders of Mini Lops
910 West County Line Rd • Urbana, OH 43078
Dody Haughey • Ron King • Deb Pitsch
Phone: 937-215-8312 • 937-215-4361 • 937-206-4268
Website: www.drdrabbitry.com

Every rabbit breeder has a different view point on how to raise and feed a rabbit. We are not saying our way is correct, but it has worked for us for the past 5 years. Here are our suggestions:

• FEEDING A MINI-LOP

1. Feed 1/2 cup of pellets per day. You can split this up to 1/4 cup in the AM & PM. Whatever works for your schedule. If you are going to feed your rabbit 1 time a day, make sure it's a night time feeding. Rabbits are night foragers. We use Pen Pals 18% Professional. You do not have to feed Pen Pals rabbit feed, just make sure your rabbit feed lists the ingredients. You do not want to use any feed that states the ingredients are "By Products". This goes for all your pets and livestock feed. You love your pets, feed them good feed. When our Does are with litters, we add Calf Manna to their diet. Calf Manna promotes the production of milk. We give them 1 tablespoon per day in a separate bowl. If you put Calf Manna in the same bowl as their feed, they will kick out the feed trying to find more Calf Manna.

2. The amount of feed should be adjusted by the size of your rabbit. Smaller breeds (Netherland Dwarfs, Polish, etc.) should be eating approximately 1/4 cup of feed a day. Meat pens can be free-fed if desired. Always ask the breeder you purchased your rabbit from about their feeding practices and what type of feed they use. It's always best to get a small bag of their feed to mix in with your feed if it is different brands.

3. Make sure your rabbit has "fresh" water every day. A Mini Lop should drink about 8 oz. of water per day. If they aren't drinking close to that amount, check their bottle. Make sure the roller ball is working properly and the bottle hasn't turned rancid (green). Sunlight can make a bottle turn nasty. Make sure you clean the lid; it can be green there too. Water bottles offers a rabbit a fresh drink every time. Crocks collect hair, hay and feed particles. If you use crocks, make sure you clean rinse them out every day. Be careful when using crocks in the winter. Rabbits with floppy ears can get the ears froze by getting them wet in their crocks.

4. We feed a small amount of hay every other morning. If you see the rabbits aren't eating their pellets, back off on the amount of hay you feed. You will hear a lot of different ideas about feeding hay. We feel that if a rabbit was living in the wild they would be eating grass. Our rabbits really enjoy their hay and we wouldn't deny them of this pleasure.

5. Do not feed your rabbits treats. It is recommended that you feed your rabbit 1/3 of a banana a week to maintain its intestinal tract. Do not feed your rabbits citrus. "Baby" carrots are OK, but not too much. Citrus, apples and carrots contain too much water. Rabbits cannot get rid of water out of their system and it produces gas. This gas can kill your pet.

6. We feed Omegablume and a conditioner to all of our rabbits that are over 3 months of age. A top-dress improves your rabbit's coat and body condition. Again, this is a suggestion to feed your rabbit and not a requirement. I have listed the conditioner formula at the bottom of this handout.

• HEALTH

1. Watch your rabbit's manure. If its droppings start to get small, dry and string together, they are developing fur block. Treat immediately - DO NOT WAIT. It doesn't take a rabbit very long to get extremely sick. Treatment is Papaya Enzyme tablets and hay. You can buy Papaya Enzyme tablets @ Wal-Mart or anyplace that sells vitamins. GNC stores carry bigger bottles of Papaya than Wal-Mart. Give 1 Papaya tablet per day for 4 days. Papaya breaks down hair in the rabbits intestines. Bananas also help tremendously keeping your rabbit's intestinal tracts regular. You can also give your rabbit banana baby food if they won't eat the bananas. We give our rabbits (1) Papaya tablet everyday to keep fur block from developing.

2. Worm your rabbits 2 times a year. We worm our rabbits in April and August. You can buy wormer that you put in the rabbits water at any rabbit equipment dealer or TSC. We use Wazine or Piperzine - 2 tablespoons per gallon. The rabbit should drink (1) 16 oz. bottle of wormer. Rabbits should be at least 4 weeks of age. Do not worm pregnant moms or moms that you will breed within 2 weeks. Repeat worming in 2 weeks.

3. Check your rabbits toenails at least once a month. Trim with dog or human toenail clippers when needed.

• **HEALTH (continued)**

4. Check your rabbit's body for any kind of sores or problems. Check their vent (private) area. Make sure it isn't red and swollen. If it is, apply Neosporin or Pen-G with a Q-tip to the area. You can be disqualified at a rabbit show for vent disease. Do not allow your rabbit to sit in shavings in their pens. Shavings can cause vent disease. Pen-G can be purchased at TSC.

5. Keep your rabbit's cage, feed pans, resting mats clean. It will keep your rabbit cleaner. Some bucks have to have a clean food bowl and resting mat every day. Just buy an extra one and switch them out. Humans like to eat from clean dishes and drink from clean glasses, so do rabbits.

6. When the weather gets extremely warm, place a frozen 2 liter bottle in with your rabbit. The rabbit will lie close to the bottle to stay cool. Even if the rabbit doesn't lay beside the bottle still use them. The ice will cool the cage. Do not blow a fan directly on a rabbit. You can have air circulation in the rabbit's area, but not on the rabbit. Take frozen bottles to the fair for your rabbits. They cannot survive at the fair without them. It gets over 100° in the rabbit barn.

• **MISCELLANEOUS**

1. Use a resting mat in your rabbit's cage. It keeps them from getting sore hocks. You can buy a resting mat at TSC or a rabbit show.

2. You can give your rabbit a small piece of pine wood to chew on. Make sure the piece of wood is bigger than the holes in the cage or it will keep falling out. Rabbits like empty paper towel rolls to play with. Make sure the rabbit isn't eating a paper towel roll everyday though. It can stop up their digestive system. We give our rabbits empty plastic water bottles to play with. You just have to watch and make sure they don't chew them. They also like to play with plastic measuring cups. It would be boring to sit in a cage all day, give your bunny something to play with. Don't hang items from the top of their cages, they can get their paws stuck and pull their toenails out. Missing toenails is a disqualification.

• **GETTING READY FOR THE FAIR**

1. Practice setting up your rabbit regularly. Take them out of their cage and carry them. Put them on a carpet square and practice posing them. You don't want to get to the fair and have an unruly rabbit because you didn't work with it enough. Judges do not like unruly rabbits.

2. Make sure your rabbit's tattoo is plain and visible. If it has faded, have it touched up before you go to the fair.

3. Get your show box or tote ready for the fair in plenty of time. Don't use a show box or tote that is bigger than your cage area. Be courteous and keep your tote in your area. Don't push other 4-H member's show boxes out of their area under the cages. Remember to include a broom and dustpan to clean your area. You will need a shovel for the last day of fair to clean up.

4. It is best to take your own water to the Fair. Changing a rabbit's water can make them extremely sick. Your rabbit will already be stressed out by being away from his / her cage at home. The heat, new surroundings and lots of people are hard on animals. The least amount of changes possible will make your rabbit's Fair experience easier.

• **CONDITIONER FORMULA** (mix in a large container).

12 parts barley, 2 parts (old-fashioned cooked – not instant) oats, 1 part black oiled sunflower seeds.
Feed 1 teaspoon conditioner formula every other day – feed 1 tsp Omegablume every other day.

• **INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET**

1. An excellent rabbit web-site on the Internet is Rabbit Talk in Ohio. This web-site has a lot of information from breeders on raising, showmanship techniques and problem solving discussions. Numerous rabbit breeders and judges are members of Rabbit Talk. I would highly suggest any 4-H / FFA rabbit member to visit this web-site and become a member. There is no cost to sign up.

<http://www.rabbittalkinohio.net/>