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**AVIAN & EXOTI CLINIC  
of the Monterey Peninsula**

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## **NUTRITION FOR THE PET RABBIT**

One of the most commonly encountered diseases of the rabbit involves abnormalities of the gastro-intestinal tract: diarrhea, constipation, obesity and hairballs to name a few. Most, if not all, of these conditions are preventable, if appropriate nutritional guidelines are followed. The most important component of the rabbit's diet is **FIBER**. The large cecum, a sac-like extension of the intestine, is critically important to the fermentation of parts of the diet. Fiber is the component that keeps the system moving, facilitating continual "feeding of the cecum". The following nutritional recommendations are designed to offer adequate amounts of fiber, prevent obesity and still provide the variety necessary to keep the rabbit happy. These guides are intended for **adult, maintenance rabbits**, not young, growing bunnies or pregnant or nursing does.

**COMMERCIAL RABBIT PELLETS:** 1/8 – ¼ cup per 5lb. Of body weight

**FREE CHOICE HAY:** We prefer to use grass hay, such as Timothy, mixed grass, or as a last resort, oat hay. Alfalfa hay is OK, but may predispose the rabbit to bladder stones and other urinary tract problems. Whatever type of hay is offered, it should be **FRESH**, not old bagged hay.

**VEGETABLES:** 1 heaping cup per 5lb. of body weight. At least 3 types should be offered to prevent boredom. Suggested varieties include kale, mustard greens, carrot tops, parsley, dandelion greens, carrots, green peppers, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage.

**FRUITS:** 1tbs. Per 5lb of body weight

**FRESH WATER:** should be available at all times.

Despite the ability of the rabbit to beg, **no sugars or prepared starches**, such as crackers and bread should be offered. Sweets and starches encourage growth of abnormal bacteria, which may result in a fatal diarrhea. Don't hesitate to call us should you have any questions or concerns regarding these diet recommendations.