

Angora Rabbit Care Sheet

By Sharon Dalrymple

Email: sharon@woodlakewoolies.com, Website: www.woodlakewoolies.com

Phone: 719-495-3778

Angora Rabbits can live a long and healthy life if they are properly taken care of. Because they are a long haired rabbit, they have a few special needs. I have been raising them for over 10 years and found the following works well.

<u>Daily care</u>	<u>Weekly care</u>	<u>Every 12 weeks</u>
¾ cup rabbit pellets, 16-18% protein	4 papaya enzyme tablets – given at one time	Pluck and groom
Grass hay, not alfalfa. Small piece of fruit or vegetable	Exercise	
Fresh water		
Mineral salt spool		

Diet: I have found that you **cannot free feed pellets** to an angora rabbit. It makes the rabbit overweight and more prone to wool block which can be fatal. Unlike a cat which can vomit a fur ball, an angora rabbit cannot. They are constantly grooming themselves and ingest a lot of hair in doing so. If it accumulates too much they feel full and stop eating and drinking. Rabbit pellets have a lot of protein in them. Too much protein in their diet can contribute to wool block which is why I have found grass hay (low in protein) to be the best. You can 'free feed' grass hay as much as you want. Alfalfa hay is not good because it contains much more protein.

Hay is important to their diet. It aids in digestion. A small piece of fruit or vegetable is ok as long as you don't feed too much as it can cause diarrhea. Bananas can constipate your rabbit so a small piece should be given only as a special treat. Fresh water is a must as they do drink a lot. A mineral salt spool in their cage is also a must. Some rabbits will lick them only occasionally and others will lick them a lot, especially in hot weather.

Papaya enzymes given once a week is also very important. They aid in their digestion and keep them from getting wool block. I have read studies done by veterinarians that have shown this to be true. They also discovered that papaya enzymes can be given twice a week but more than that did not make any difference. I give 4 at one time once a week, but you could give 4 twice a week if you like. Just drop them in their pellets. Rabbits love them!

I have also found that exercising your rabbit at least once a week also aids in their digestion by getting things moving in their system and keeping a good body weight.

Grooming or plucking your rabbit every 12 weeks is very important for their health. They 'blow' their coat every 12 weeks so it's important you take that off them so they don't ingest any more hair that they have to when they groom themselves. By plucking, I mean taking the hair off down to the skin by using a dog comb or your fingers. I usually will leave a Mohawk down the back for some warmth but I still take out most of the density even there. I find by using a coarse coat dog comb first to take off most of the hair helps a lot. The rest will easily come off when you pluck it with your fingers. When I turn them over to pluck their stomach I use this time to trim their toenails.

It's important to keep track of when you pluck your rabbit last. By plucking every 12 weeks you're ensuring that the hair will all be growing back at the same rate which will aid in your next plucking. If the coat isn't taken off at the same time, you will end up with different growth rates which will make it very difficult to pluck. That's why you should not groom your rabbit every day. Once a week to check for mats is ok but remember, every time you touch your rabbit and groom him, he will lick himself/herself afterwards to 'clean' himself. Every time he/she does, they're ingesting hair.

Try to pay attention to your rabbit's routine. Pick the same time each day to feed. There should not be any pellets left over from one day to the next. If there is, feed only enough to equal ¾ cup, and look for unfinished food the next day. If there is, this could signal the onset of **wool block**. It's very important to catch it as soon as possible. What I first will do is take away pellets and offer only fresh greens or fruit for a day. If the rabbit will eat this then it's a good sign that there's no blockage. If your rabbit continues not to eat, which will turn into not drinking because it feels full from a blockage, it's very important to get fluids into your rabbit. I use a 3 cc syringe to force feed Gatorade which has electrolytes in it to help re-hydrate your rabbit and hopefully to get it to pass its stool. I will force feed as much Gatorade as my rabbit can take... sometimes 30 cc's or more! It needs fluid to soften the stool. This method has worked well for me over the years but there is always the rabbit that no matter what you do, will unfortunately die from wool block complications. This is rare but it can happen. By paying attention to your rabbit's habits and following the above instructions, you should enjoy your rabbit for many years. The average lifespan is 6-8 years but I've had many people tell me stories of theirs who have lived 10 plus years!

So don't let wool block frighten you, just be aware of the symptoms so you can ensure your rabbit a long, healthy life.

Now go and enjoy your new friend!

Sharon Dalrymple