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## What to Feed Your Micro-Livestock

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[Micro-farming](#) <sup>[1]</sup> is a big cycle. You want to grow food to feed your animals, who in turn provide eggs, milk and meat for your family and manure for your garden. [Your livestock](#) <sup>[2]</sup> can also help you to keep things from going to waste that would normally be thrown out, such as vegetable peels and scraps, leftovers, and stale bread.

Different animals, of course, have different nutritional needs. Many farmers like to purchase feed designed for the particular animal and then supplement with forage and other items. Others, especially those of us working on our self-sufficiency, strive to keep it all on the farm. That way we know our animals are consuming high-quality nutrients and avoiding chemicals,

pesticides, and antibiotics.

What's on the menu for your farm animals?

### GOATS:

We've all heard the saying that goats will eat anything. That isn't necessarily true and it definitely isn't safe. Goats have to be protected from themselves by being securely penned in an area free of anything toxic or anything that could cause a blockage in their hardy digestive system. Goats can be farmed for both meat and milk. Because they are ruminants, they require hay. The hay must stay perfectly dry, because moldy hay can cause severe illness or even death in goats.

- Haygrazer and peanut hay
- Alfalfa hay (very high in protein – don't overfeed alfalfa!)
- "Loose minerals" (a nutritional supplement for goats that contains salt)
- Sunflower seeds (contains copper – vital for goats)
- Forage( letting them graze on leaves and brush)
- Grains (only for pregnant or lactating goats)
- Vegetable table scraps or fresh vegetables

### Goat Food

- 160 lbs. of Steam Rolled Barley
- 160 lbs. of Oats
- 10 lbs. of Black Oil Sunflower Seeds(BOSS)
- 5lbs. of Redman Salt (if you free choice salt, then don't add it to the feed)
- 1lb. of Brewers yeast
- 25 lbs. of Wheat Bran

We feed this mix to all of our goats, dairy and meat, dry does, milking does and bucks. We have found that the mix has to be half barley half oats otherwise the girls don't milk as well.

Barley=milk. I know it is only 13% protein, but we have been using this mix for 2 years now and have had great success with it. Our kids have very fast weight gain, our milkers consistently milk a gallon + a day, and everybody stays in great condition. We also free choice water, alfalfa/grass mix hay, goat minerals, kelp, baking soda and salt. For feeding, we feed 1 lb of food to milkers for every 3 lbs of milk they produce, plus 1 lb for body condition.

Source: [Sandy Lane Dairy Goats](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

[Land of Havilah Farms](#) <sup>[4]</sup> is another excellent resource for other goat food recipes that you can make.

## Rabbits

Rabbits are the perfect “micro-livestock” for the urban farmer and country dweller alike. They take up very little space and are easy to feed. Many people feed a small amount of commercial pellet food and supplement with the following. Hay should always be available to your rabbits.

- Grass Hay
- Alfalfa Hay
- Leafy greens like collard greens, escarole, kale, lettuce and spinach
- Waste greens like carrot and turnip tops, dandelion greens and flowers
- Pea pods (minus the peas)
- Carrots
- Apples
- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Blueberries
- Peaches
- Pears
- Squash
- Papayas
- Mangos
- Tomatoes

## Rabbit Food

- 400 g. Chopped alfalfa/lucerne hay or cubes, or any other grass or clover hay
  - 150 g. All-purpose wheat flour (white) or instant masa meal
  - 100 g. any other fibrous ingredient, such as bran from wheat, oat hulls, rolled oats.
  - Plain or Trace Mineral salt
  - Water
  - optional – 1:1 mineral, vegetable oil, molasses.
1. Using a sawing motion with a cleaver, cut lucerne (alfalfa) hay across the stems to 1 to 2 cm length. If using alfalfa cubes, the material inside is already chopped, just soften cubes in the liquid part of the recipe.
  2. Measure 300 ml water, to this add 45 g molasses, 2 g salt, and 8 g oil, if you are using these extra ingredients. Mix this solution thoroughly.
  3. Put 400 g chopped hay in large bowl. While turning the hay with your hands, slowly add the liquid and 1:1 mineral, mixing thoroughly. Break up any clumps. Squeeze the hay tightly a couple times to make the liquid soak in.
  4. Add the other fibrous ingredient to the wet hay, mixing well.
  5. Then add the flour, in about 5 additions while mixing by hand. Mix until all the flour is invisible. Press down on the mixture, if it comes back up much, you may need maybe 50 ml more water, depends on dryness of hay.
  6. Press the mixture into a flat glass or pottery pan. If possible, press it flat with another pan that fits in the lower pan. The final thickness should be 4 or 5 cm thick.

7. Place pan with hay mixture in microwave oven and bake for 2.5 minutes at power level 8 in a 700 watt oven. After backing, turn the feed out onto a rack to cool. Break into chunks to put into the cages. In hot climates, the feed can be sun-baked.
8. There is very little waste from this feed. This recipe makes almost 1 kg of feed, but remember that this is "wet" feed, the normal as-fed air dry weight is the sum of the ingredients less the water, about 635 g.
9. With average alfalfa, the results on DM would be about CP= 16.6%, TDN= 68%, Ca= 0.9%, P= 0.48%, ADF= 20%, CF= 17.9%. The flour used is (air-dry basis) CP= 13%, carbohydrates= 71%.
10. If you wish to have a protein supplement, substitute some soy milk for some of the water, or use some soy flour or pea flour. Pea flour also adds starch, so reduce the amount of wheat flour. Other interesting feed mixes can be made using barley flour or corn (masa) flour.

Yes, this feed is using wheat flour, which should be reserved for human consumption, but for now this is the easiest milled grain to obtain that is ground finely enough for rabbits (100% passing 0.3 mm sieve, 40% passing 0.1 mm sieve).

Don't use "whole wheat" flour, the bran has been ground too fine. You may add whole bran separately along with the white flour; bran has an appropriate particle size for the rabbit.

Source: [Make Your Own Rabbit Food](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

### Chickens

Chickens are raised for meat and egg production. It's important to note that laying hens need more calcium than non-layers. All chickens need plenty of fresh greens, weeds and grass every day. Aside from this, the following items are great organic chicken food options.

- Forage
- Earthworms (grow your own – they can eat such things as hair, paper and potato peelings!)
- Alfalfa
- Duckweed
- Comfrey
- Leafy greens
- Lime sand
- Brewers Yeast
- Sunflower Seeds
- Sesame Seeds
- Watercress
- Grit (made from tiny bits of granite)
- Quinoa
- Corn

### Homemade Poultry Feed Mix

- 2 parts whole corn
- 3 parts soft white wheat
- 3 parts hard red winter wheat
- ½ part Diatomaceous Earth (not the kind you put in your pool)
- 1 part hulled barley
- 1 part oat groats
- 2 part sunflower seeds
- ½ part peanuts
- 1 part wheat bran
- 1 part split peas
- 1 part lentils
- 1 part quinoa
- 1 part sesame seeds
- 1/2 part kelp

Mix the feed by hand so that it is thoroughly mixed. It doesn't hurt to run your hands through it before feeding in case something settles.

Source: [How Stuff Works](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

A word on grit: According to "[The Basics of What Chickens Need](#) <sup>[7]</sup>" grit is "angular, hard crushed rock, preferably from granite, used by the chickens in place of "teeth" — seashells and bone CANNOT substitute for grit; for confined birds, grit should be offered several times a month at least; it should be of the right size for the age of the bird.... birds allowed to free range don't need to be offered grit — they find their own ideal sizes and types to suit themselves."

One reader explains her feeding method: "We put plain layer feed in their coop. We make a mixture for feeding outside the coop of Scratch feed, layer feed, sunflower seed, flax seed, ground egg shells, ground nuts (what ever we have at the time when we mix the scratch), homemade seasoned bread crumbs. Plus I make them what I call mush on occasion (oats, rice, tri-colored pasta, various diced fruits and veggies depending what we have and homemade raisins)"

A great treat for both your poultry and your garden soil is to grow a cover crop over the winter. [Mother Earth News](#) <sup>[8]</sup> recommends growing a cover crop over the winter to improve the condition of the soil. Some options are legumes such as cowpeas, vetches and clover; and non-legumes like millet, rye, sorghum, sudangrass and buckwheat. Once the cover crop has matured, release a happy flock of poultry to process the garden and eat their fill of fresh healthy food.

Growing and making the food that your livestock consumes allows you the ultimate control over your own food change. Not only are you more sustainable this way, but you can avoid the harmful elements found in some feed store brands. [Natural News](#) <sup>[9]</sup> recently broke the story that the FDA has allowed arsenic to be present in commercial chicken food for years. This, of course, is consumed by the chicken and eventually makes its way through the food chain into our own diets.

Plan your garden with your livestock in mind to create an endless circle on your homestead.

Sources:

[Nutritional Needs of Goats](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

[Feeding Goats](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

[Raising Meat Rabbits](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[What do Chickens Eat?](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

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[2] Your livestock: [http://readynutrition.com/resources/how-micro-livestock-can-be-used-for-suburban-and-rural-sustainability\\_08042011/](http://readynutrition.com/resources/how-micro-livestock-can-be-used-for-suburban-and-rural-sustainability_08042011/)

[3] Sandy Lane Dairy Goats: <http://www.sandylanedairygoats.com/feedrecipe.htm>

[4] Land of Havilah Farms: <http://landofhavilahfarm.com/loh-feed-regimen.htm>

[5] Make Your Own Rabbit Food: <http://pan-am.uniserve.com/pg000062.htm>

- [6] How Stuff Works: <http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/home/organic-chicken-feed-cheap.htm>
- [7] The Basics of What Chickens Need: <http://www.lionsgrip.com/intro.html>
- [8] Mother Earth News: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/cover-crops-zm0z11zsto.aspx>
- [9] Natural News: [http://www.naturalnews.com/032659\\_arsenic\\_chicken.html](http://www.naturalnews.com/032659_arsenic_chicken.html)
- [10] Nutritional Needs of Goats:  
<http://www.tennesseemeatgoats.com/articles2/nutritionalneeds.html>
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[http://wildmountainfarms.com/Mountain\\_Horses/goat\\_feeding\\_requirements.html](http://wildmountainfarms.com/Mountain_Horses/goat_feeding_requirements.html)
- [12] Raising Meat Rabbits: <http://www.raisingmeatrabbits.info/feeding-rabbits.html>
- [13] What do Chickens Eat?: [http://www.small-farm-permaculture-and-sustainable-living.com/what\\_do\\_chickens\\_eat.html](http://www.small-farm-permaculture-and-sustainable-living.com/what_do_chickens_eat.html)

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