



Small Paw Prints

Premium Education for the Pet Owner

Volume 1 • Edition 2

Become a Hay Expert

Teaching you about the importance of hay

Grass hay, a source of long-strand fiber, is absolutely vital to the digestive health of your small herbivore. It prevents obesity, dental disease, boredom and diarrhea.

Hay selecting tips for small herbivore pet owners:

- **Volume:** Hay should make up the majority of your pet's daily diet.
- **Variety:** Resist offering the same hay. Mix it up.
- **Variability:** Hay is a product of nature; it will look and feel different.
- **Values:** Pair with a company that is committed to your pet's health.

Good Hay is the Way to Good Health

VOLUME
About 75% of your pet's diet should be "free choice" hay, including Oxbow's Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, Brome Hay or Oat Hay. We recommend offering a daily handful of hay that is the size of your pet.

VARIETY
Offering a variety of hay supports one of your many responsibilities—encouraging hay intake. Hay varieties help meet the nutritional needs and taste preferences of different species, personalities, life stages and sizes of animals. Other than keeping your small animal from getting bored, it also promotes healthy eating behaviors. Most grass hays have similar nutrients and can be used interchangeably, but they offer different flavors, colors and textures. Western Timothy with Oat Hay is one of our favorite combinations!

VARIABILITY
Alternating hay varieties ensures that your pet won't refuse hay if the color or texture of their current favorite changes, which happens naturally from time to time. A change in color doesn't necessarily indicate a change in quality.

VALUES
Oxbow hay is grown, harvested and hand-sorted with the benefit of decades of experience and under the principles of a strict quality control program. Small herbivore care is our specialty!



What is "free choice?"

"Free choice" means that guinea pigs, rabbits and other small herbivores can choose when to eat the hay you provide—at any hour of the day or night. Keep a variety of hays stocked in a feeder or box at all times.

To assure freshness, wait until your pet nearly finishes one batch of hay before restocking. Unless the hay is soiled, do not replace it. Replacing often encourages picky eating! Successful hay intake may require some fun from time to time. Add a flavorful hay such as Oxbow's Botanical Hay. This enticing blend unites Western Timothy Hay with a rich array of fragrant herbs.



Ask the Doc

Q: Do I have to feed hay?

A: Feeding hay to an herbivore is not an option; it is a necessity. A high quality grass hay should be available at all times. Hay not only provides the roughage essential to maintaining proper teeth wear, but it is vital to maintaining a healthy, functioning gastrointestinal system. Herbivores need a diet high in fiber and low in carbohydrates to prevent diarrhea and other digestive complications.

Yes, you have to feed hay.

Micah Kohles, DVM knows you have important questions about your pet's health. For more answers to customer-submitted questions regarding pet health, or to ask a question of your own, visit the Vet Speak section at www.oxbowanimalhealth.com.



ADF FIBER IN THERE?

Make an informed decision when choosing your pet's food by understanding the purpose of each ingredient.

Acid Detergent Fiber (ADF) is the type of fiber considered most beneficial to small herbivores such as rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas and hamsters. In fact, ADF is essential to your small animal's health.

What is fiber?

Fiber is found primarily in plants in two main categories: 1) non-digestible and 2) digestible. Your herbivore requires a high percentage of non-digestible fiber. Even though his body does not digest it, healthy bacteria living in the digestive tract can. This breakdown produces volatile fatty acids, vitamins and other nutrients, which is a very good thing. Digestible fiber consists of plant carbohydrates that contribute significantly to the energy content in feed.

Why is it called ADF fiber?

ADF comes from the method used in laboratories to determine the amount of non-digestible fiber in feed. The ADF percentage is a true indication of the quantity of non-digestible fiber—higher ADF is better.

Why is ADF important?

Small herbivores with imbalanced beneficial fiber-digesting bacteria in the digestive tract are prone to intestinal diseases and malnutrition. These bacteria need ADF to remain alive and healthy. Also, ADF is insoluble in water and can increase fecal output, fecal size and food passage through the digestive tract. These aspects of ADF could help prevent intestinal blockages. A lack of ADF might result in gastrointestinal problems, including bloat, GI stasis and *E. coli* infection.

What is the difference between Crude Fiber and ADF?

While the term "Crude Fiber" includes non-digestible fiber (ADF), it also includes some structural carbohydrates. Therefore, crude fiber does not indicate how much non-digestible fiber is in your small animal's feed. ADF is the preferred measurement of beneficial fiber.

Have a Hay Day!

All small herbivores need hay in their diet. Here are some fun ways to feed hay:

- Place hay inside a toilet paper tube
- Hide treats in the hay
- Place hay in animals' litter boxes
- Fill a baby pool with hay and let your pet play
- Tie the hay in a bundle (using animal safe string) and hang from the cage
- Purchase and fill a hay ball or hay manger from your local pet store
- Make a hay salad, using different varieties of grass hay
- Sprinkle chopped hay on your pet's pellets
- Fill your pet's hidey house full of hay

Encouraging your pet to eat more hay will lead to a healthier, happier pet. Be Creative!



Kids' Corner!

Botanical Hay

Without a little variety in any diet, mealtime can get boring. Oxbow's Botanical Hay is a flavor-packed hay with extra personality.

This enticing blend unites Western Timothy Hay with a rich array of the following fragrant herbs: chamomile, lemon balm, lavender, and red clover blossoms. Alternate Botanical Hay with other Oxbow grass hays, or mix it in with other hays to create appetizing, long-strand fiber meals.

Unique Qualities:

- Fragrant Mix of Herbs
- Irresistible Flavor



Small Paw Prints was created because Oxbow Animal Health is committed to sharing its experience about small animal nutrition with pet owners throughout the world. Enjoy this and other editions of Oxbow's *Small Paw Prints* at a pet store or veterinary clinic near you. Collect them all at:

www.oxbowanimalhealth.com

