



Small Paw Prints

Premium Education for the Pet Owner

Volume 1 • Edition 4

It's a Dirty Job

Teaching you about the importance of maintaining your pet's living space

As many small animal owners know, small companion pets can be trained to use a litter box. Simply line your litter container with one-half inch of litter material and place a handful or two of hay at one end of the box.

If your animal's cage has a wire grated bottom, a litter container can provide for a soft resting place. Removable litter containers make for a neater cage that is easy to clean. Your pet, especially rabbits, like to have space to turn around when using the toilet; a rectangular box works well for that.

Which litter is best?

Small companion pet litter has improved greatly in the last several years, but not all are safe and comfortable for your pet.

Items to avoid include: cedar or pine shavings and chemically treated litters. They have a strong aromatic scent that may be harmful to your pet's respiratory system. Wood shavings often contain rough edges, stick easily to coats, and dry relatively slowly. Urine sits at the bottom of the litter box rather than being absorbed. Soft, fluffy litters or pellets made of non-wheat straw may also have an unwanted effect on the digestive tract if ingested.

The best choice currently on the market is a wheat straw-based litter. Naturally mold resistant, wheat straw litters have proven to be safe and hygienic for rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas, small rodents, reptiles, tortoises, iguanas, cats, and birds. Ask about wheat straw litter at your local pet store.

Should you put food in the litter box?

Grass hay should be available free-choice every day, and feeding hay in the litter box has proven to be an effective and widely adopted practice. Small herbivores are intelligent animals and can readily distinguish between what is food and what is not. In addition, litter containers seem to provide a psychologically consoling area of the cage. Rabbits and other small animals are most comfortable when feeding and bathroom routines are constant. For this reason, changes in the diet or housing should be done gradually and with a patient hand.

Ask the Doc

Q: Why is it important to monitor my animal's droppings?

A: So much can be told through the quality and quantity of an herbivore's droppings. It is one of the first indicators of underlying health conditions. Noticing changes early can help detect potential problems, aiding in a quicker diagnosis and recovery. If you have questions about how your animal's droppings should look, ask your veterinarian on your next visit. Typically, what it boils down to is... it's a gut thing.

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.



WHY IS WHEAT STRAW IN THERE?

Make an informed decision when choosing your pet's litter material, as you would when choosing their food, by understanding the purpose of the ingredient.

Wheat straw pellets expand and separate when wet, which makes spot cleaning easier. If ingested, the particles fall apart and pass easily. The fiber is untreated and not only safe for ingestion, but beneficial to digestion. Wheat straw in the litter pan is not easily kicked or thrown out by active pets.

Wheat straw naturally absorbs smells, rather than masking urine with synthetic, unnatural ingredients. It also absorbs from the bottom up, which keeps your pet cleaner and more dry.

How long will a bag of Eco-Straw last?

One bag of Eco-Straw will cover approximately 780 cubic inches of litter space, in a standard size litter box, eight times (1/2" deep).

If you do not have a standard litter box, use the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Length} \times \text{Width}}{2} = \text{Coverage} \qquad 780 \div \text{coverage} = \# \text{ cage changes}$$

Kids' Corner!

How does Eco-Straw work?

What you will need:

- Clear Pan
- Eco-Straw
- 1 cup of water

Place one inch of Eco-Straw in the clear pan.



Pour the water onto the litter as if an animal would soil it.

Observe how the litter works. Notice that the moisture is drawn down into the litter and away from your animal. Also notice how the Eco-Straw starts to break down right away, which is good in case of ingestion into the digestive system.

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:

Eco-Straw

Oxbow Eco-Straw uses special technology to compress wheat straw into pellets that are twice as absorbent as newspaper-based litter (Eco-Straw will absorb up 300% its own weight). All-natural, 100% plant fiber pellets expand and separate, allowing wet areas to be scooped daily, reducing waste. The litter lasts longer than traditional wood shavings and is less messy. Because Eco-Straw is made from natural fiber, it's safe if consumed—a beneficial addition to a pet's healthy habitat!

Unique Qualities:

- Super Absorbent
- Non-Toxic, No Odor or Dust



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