



Small Paw Prints

Premium Education for the Pet Owner

Volume 1 • Edition 5

Congratulations, Graduate

Teaching you the importance of life-stage diets

Life-stage diets are important when it comes to meeting the best nutritional requirements of animals at different ages or physical conditions.

Younger animals, as well as those in an altered physical state (i.e. lactating animals), require more protein, energy and nutrients like those found in alfalfa-based pellets, but these would not be appropriate for healthy, adult animals who thrive best on timothy-based pellets.

Alfalfa vs. Timothy

While both Alfalfa and Timothy provide the necessary fiber for a small herbivore's digestive system, each hay has different qualities, beneficial to specific animals.

Alfalfa

Alfalfa Hay is a high-fiber legume hay with the same long-strand fiber found in grass hays, but with more protein, energy and calcium. This hay is perfect for young or lactating animals that need concentrated nutrition. The succulent taste of alfalfa stimulates the appetite of ill or post-surgical animals. Once an animal reaches adulthood or completes recovery, this nutritious forage should be replaced with a grass hay. Alfalfa Hay, mixed with any other Oxbow grass hay, creates a rich, flavorful and nutritious treat.

Timothy

Western Timothy Hay is the ideal long-strand fiber source for keeping small animal digestive tracts functioning properly. With high fiber, low protein and low calcium content, timothy is widely recommended by veterinarians. Oxbow Animal Health was the first pet food company to introduce timothy hay as a staple in the small animal diet. It is now an industry standard.



How do I transition from alfalfa pellets to timothy?

As a guideline, here is a 3 week transition schedule:

Week 1:

In a bowl, place 1/4 of the new pellet and 3/4 of the food you have been using. Mix them together and feed for one week.

Week 2:

Change your proportions by mixing 1/2 of each new and past. Feed this for one week.

Week 3:

Mix 3/4 of the new food with 1/4 of the past food. Feed this for one week.

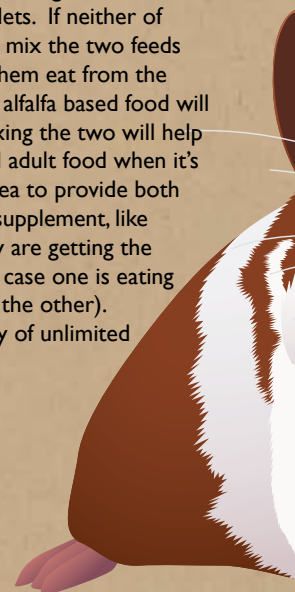


Ask the Doc

Q: I have 2 Guinea Pigs in the same enclosure. One is 3 months old and eating alfalfa-based pellets and the other is 5 years old and eating timothy-based pellets. Is there any way to keep them from eating each other's food? Is it bad if they do?

A: While it is not terrible if your animals eat each other's food, the difference in their age-related nutritional needs means it's best for them to eat their own pellet. One idea to control who eats what is to take one of your animals out of the cage for some bonding, during which time they could also be fed. At this time, you can feed the other animal, or take her out at a separate time to bond and feed her. You can also feed them in separate cages to ensure they get only their individual pellets. If neither of these ideas work for you, simply mix the two feeds together (50% of each) and let them eat from the same bowl. The small amount of alfalfa based food will be a treat for your adult and mixing the two will help the younger one transition to all adult food when it's time. It would also be a good idea to provide both animals an additional vitamin C supplement, like Oxbow's Daily C, to ensure they are getting the correct amount of vitamin C (in case one is eating more of the pellet mixture than the other). As usual, always provide a variety of unlimited grass 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.



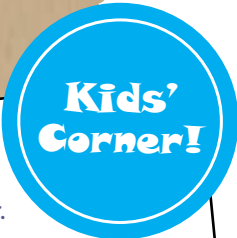
LIMESTONE IN THERE?

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

Limestone: Minerals, such as limestone, are elements found in nature. Limestone is a stone containing calcium and bicarbonate. When pulverized and incorporated into animal food, bicarbonate aids digestion, working as a natural pH buffer to neutralize acid.

The calcium component is needed for bones/teeth, blood clotting factors, nerve impulses, muscle contraction (especially heart muscle), cell membrane stability, enzyme activation, and electrolyte balance.

Calcium should never be eliminated from a diet for any reason. By feeding guinea pigs a measured amount of life-stage specific pellets in conjunction with low-calcium grass hay, cavies will consume sufficient, albeit low, levels of calcium necessary for proper nutrition and body function. When animals reach adulthood, their need for calcium decreases and any excess calcium they ingest is excreted in feces and urine. Adult guinea pigs and rabbits with high calcium diets may encounter thick, creamy urine and bladder stone concerns.



Congratulations, Grad!

Transition: Passing from one condition, place, etc. to another.

Transitioning your pet's diet is very important. Think about some transitions you have made in your life.

Schools:

Bikes:

Food:

Infant (0-1)

No School
Tricycle
Milk

Toddler (1-3)

Preschool
Training Wheels
Baby Food

Young (3+)

Grade School
Bicycle
Adult Food



Now, think about other transitions you have made in your life and draw a picture.

Bunny Basics/T

All rabbits need high fiber to keep their digestive systems working properly, plus basic vitamins and minerals to maximize their health.

The "T" stands for timothy grass. Bunny Basics/T combines needed fiber with stabilized nutrients to assure a well-balanced diet when served with Oxbow loose grass hays. Oxbow Animal Health's founder and owner, John Miller, created the industry's first timothy-based pellet for small herbivores, the basis of Bunny Basics/T.



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

