



Small Paw Prints

Premium Education for the Pet Owner

Volume 1 • Edition 1

Mealtime Planning

Teaching you how to develop a healthy meal plan for your pet herbivore

If there's one place in life where being spontaneous is NOT good, it's at mealtime for your pet. The digestive system of a guinea pig, rabbit, hamster, or other small plant-eating animal (herbivore) is surprisingly sensitive. If an animal doesn't have access to the right mix of hay, nutrients and treats, it can suffer from any number of ailments—or even die! Read on to learn how to plan meals carefully and preserve the health and life of the fuzziest, cuddliest member of your family.

Three Steps to Healthy Herbivore Meals

- 1. All Hail Hay!**
Hay provides fiber in a herbivore's diet, which is critical for cleaning out the digestive system and supplying nutrients. Hay also includes digestible fiber for calories and energy. Hay should make up 75% of your small animal's diet. Be sure to feed a variety of different hays for good health and to keep mealtime interesting!
- 2. Add Fortified Foods for Complete Nutrition.**
In addition to a variety of hay, your small animal counts on you to supplement their diet with nutrients that closely match what they might get in the wild. Choose all-natural fortified foods in a complete pellet or kibble designed for your pet's life stage and species. Fortified foods should make up 25% of your pet's diet.
- 3. Treats are Terrific!**
Like humans, herbivores get bored with the same old thing! That's why it's a good idea to add culinary surprises to daily meals. Treats also help you bond with your pet, but remember that too many will make them refuse basic foods and rob them of nutrition. Offer all-natural treats, such as Oxbow's Simple Rewards, several times a day after your pet eats its basic foods.



What is a Herbivore?

Herbivores are animals that eat only plants. This includes guinea pigs, rabbits, chinchillas and other common small animal pets. Their digestive systems are designed to break down plant matter—but not designed for fats, sugars or starches. Herbivores mainly need fiber, such as that found in hay, but they can't digest it. The good bacteria in their intestine digests the fiber for them. Too much starch and sugar destroys the good bacteria. They also need a small amount (not too much!) of fat to help them build muscle and absorb vitamins. It's okay for herbivores to get small amounts of natural sugars in fruit-based snacks, but too much sugar will cause diarrhea and other health complications.



Ask the Doc

Q: What's a Trichobezoar?

A: A trichobezoar is the technical term for a hairball. It is normal for small animals to have some hair in their stomachs, but rabbits are especially susceptible to trichobezoars because they have small, nondistensible stomachs, can't vomit, and groom extensively. Hairballs are more likely to occur with low-fiber high-carbohydrate diets, obesity, lack of exercise, inadequate water and stress. These factors can lead to abnormalities in the digestive system (gastric stasis), which can be life threatening. To decrease the chance of developing trichobezoars, feed your pet free-choice hay, nutrient-balanced pellets, fresh greens, appropriate treats and lots of fresh water.

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.



SOY IN THERE?

Make sure you understand the ingredients in the foods you choose for your pet! It could mean the difference between a long healthy life and a shortened life of illness and discomfort.

Soy: Good Digestion & Complete Protein

Soy is an important ingredient in small animal foods that provides beneficial fiber and protein to assure your pet's good health.

Soyhulls are a fiber source with a curved shape to keep vitamins distributed evenly. Fiber provides herbivores with an energy source, increases intestinal mobility and prevents diarrhea. Soyhulls are ideal because they stay fresh longer and will not irritate an animal's intestine like other fibers. It also does not absorb water from the intestine, unlike beet pulp which can cause intestinal blockage and threaten your pet's life!

Soymeal is the highest-quality complete protein source available. It helps maintain muscle, skin strength and elasticity and produces red blood cells. It also provides high energy! Best of all, soymeal doesn't have the drawbacks of some protein sources in other brands. Cottonseed meal, for example, can lead to infertility. Cornmeal is incomplete protein and can lead to intestinal upset and nutritional deficiencies.

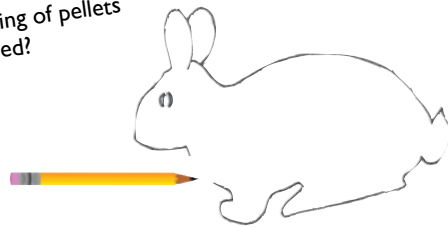
Oxbow pet feeds include only the best ingredients. Read more at www.oxbowanimalhealth.com.

Kids' Corner!

Rabbit Food Pyramid

Rabbits need a balanced diet, mainly consisting of pellets and hay, but how much does your rabbit need?

Instructions: Make a line drawing of your rabbit's silhouette. Include their head, body, ears, and tail.



Color the body green for hay.

Your rabbit should eat a pile of hay the size of their body every day

Color the head blue for greens.

Rabbits can have a pile of greens the size of their head every day

Color the ears red for pellets.

A limited amount of pellets should be fed, around 1/4 cup per 5 pounds of body weight

Color the tail orange for treats.

Treats should make up a very small portion of your rabbit's diet.

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

OAT HAY

Oxbow's Oat Hay is harvested before the oat develops into a seed—the way small herbivores need it and like it! Oat Hay, like all grass hay, meets the nutritional needs of herbivores with high fiber and low protein.

This appealing alternative contains savory husks full of both flavor and fiber, making it a favorite for many pets. Blend Oat Hay with other Oxbow grass hays to create a nutty-tasting and nutritious combination.

- Unique Qualities:
- Crunchy Texture
 - Nutty Flavor

