

# Chinchilla Nutrition

## Pellets

Chinchilla pellets provide all the nutrients your pet needs to grow and maintain its health. You should only buy high quality chinchilla pellets; those that do not contain any treats or extra pieces other than pellets or list corn as an ingredient.

Be sure to check the mill or expiration dates, you want the freshest pellets possible and many feeds found in pet stores have a 2 year shelf life so definitely do not buy it if there is less than a year left. It is not advisable to buy pellets out of bulk bins because light destroys nutrients, you don't know how old it is, and there is no way of knowing if it's been contaminated. Chinchillas usually eat about 2 Tablespoons of pellets per day but there is no need to limit their pellets as they will not overeat on healthy food. 5 pounds of pellets will last one chinchilla about 3 months; you should not purchase more than what you will use within 3 months at a time.

## Hay

Hay should make up the majority of your chinchilla's diet. Grass hays such as timothy, brome, orchard, bluegrass, and coastal or Bermuda grass should be given daily-as much as your chinchilla will eat. You can also give some alfalfa hay, but introduce it slowly if your chinchilla is not used to this type of hay. Hay cubes are also acceptable and can provide interest to the diet. Look for nice quality green hay; never feed brown or moldy hay to your chinchilla.

## Treats

Treats are unneeded and should be given only sparingly if at all. Sugary treats such as raisins and fattening nuts should be avoided. Healthier alternatives are organic rose hips, organic black sunflower seeds, plain shredded wheat, or a plain cheerio. Remember no more than one a day! While not usually considered a treat, small chew sticks will be as enthusiastically enjoyed as the treats above.

## Water

Filtered or distilled water is best for your chinchilla. Tap water can contain parasites, chemicals, and sediments that while may not affect you, may have a much larger effect on a small chinchilla. Chinchillas drink on average 1.2 oz of water per day so there is no need for a huge water bottle.

Q. What brand of chinchilla food is best?

A. There are several quality chinchilla feeds available; any of the following are recommended: Oxbow Chinchilla Deluxe, APD, Kline, Mazuri, Tradition, Mana Pro Sho, Purina Advanced

Nutrition Rabbit. The “best” is the one from the list you can get reliably and fresh. Any food that contains treats in it is unacceptable. Please note, this list is recommended chinchilla pellets available in the US, if you live elsewhere please contact a reputable breeder in your area to consult with on pellets available in your area.

Q. I see one food on the list is rabbit food, what’s with that?

A. High quality rabbit pellets can be fed to chinchillas provided they contain similar ingredients at a similar nutrition level. Note not all rabbit feeds can be fed to chinchillas! I recommend a chinchilla pellet over rabbit pellets because they tend to be harder but if your choice is a lesser quality chinchilla pellet or high quality rabbit pellet, go for the rabbit pellet. Once again, this is concerning feeds in the US, never feed pellets that have added hormones.

Q. Help, I ran out of pellets, what do I do?

A. If you happen to run out of pellets, your chinchilla will be okay for a day or two on just plain hay just get more pellets asap. Do not buy some other pellets to use for a few days, any new foods should be introduced gradually. It is always a good idea to get more food ahead of time in case something would come up that prevents you from getting to the store or delays shipping.