

Chinchilla Diet Plan

Foods that will keep your chinchilla in top shape.

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Isabelle Francais/Bowtie Inc.
Pet chinchillas need a steady, balanced diet.

Some companion animal species thrive on a varied diet, but others perform better on a more constant fare. The chinchilla fits into the latter grouping. With its sensitive balance of intestinal microflora (microbes that reside in the intestines and play a critical role in digestion), this rodent's overall health may be seriously compromised by any practice that upsets the steady grind of microbial activity. A rapid change in diet and the offering of too many treats (commercial snacks, fruits, vegetables) are two such ill-advised practices.

A sound dietary plan includes commercial pellets made specifically for chinchillas, ample quantities of timothy hay (along with some alfalfa), and fresh water. Ken Korecky, president of the Exotic Nutrition Co., warns that some chinchillas are quite finicky when it comes to eating and are susceptible to eating disorders induced by stress and dental problems.

Depending on the quality and quantity of alfalfa hay consumed (which is typically rich in calcium), you may want to sprinkle a powdered calcium supplement on the feed a few times per week. Extra vitamin C may also be added. Consult an animal nutritionist or veterinarian for further advice on supplementation strategies.

To maintain maximum freshness and preserve the nutritive value of the feed, store your chinchilla's pellets in a cool, dry environment. Before offering hay, be sure it is dry, smells fresh and shows no signs of mold growth. Chinchillas typically consume a few tablespoonfuls of pellets per day and will nibble on the hay at their leisure. Try to feed your chinchilla at around the same time each night.

If the diet must be changed, slowly incorporate the new feed. The process of adding the new pellets and reducing the old pellets should be done proportionately, and it should take at least a week or two to complete the conversion.