

Trick or Treat For Chinchillas?

A guide to chinchilla supplements and treats.

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A chinchilla's diet is rich with fresh pellets and hay, but sometimes pet owners want to jazz-up the diet with supplements and treats. Before you give these extras to your chinchilla, observe your pet for signs of malnutrition, and consult your veterinarian.

Supplements

Consider giving your pet chinchilla supplements if it has any of the following conditions: rough, brittle coat; diarrhea; decreased activity; or weight loss. Watch your chinchilla for signs of stress or illness: it stops eating and drinking; it stops playing with its toys. These signs could indicate a need for supplements.

Always contact your veterinarian before feeding your pet chin supplements. Your veterinarian knows your chinchilla's conditions and will know whether or not it requires supplements.

Joseph Bock, DVM, Adobe Animal Hospital in Boulder, Co., said, "Supplements veterinarians might recommend are B vitamins and vitamin C with omega-3 fatty acids."

"We try to encourage mostly hay mixtures and pellet feeds with vitamins. We will give small amounts of fruits and vegetables, dandelions, and skim or powdered milk." Bock said.

Always keep supplements separate from usual feed because chinchillas often only eat the supplements and not the regular food. Supplements only need to be given three or four times a week.

Treats

It seems tempting to spoil your chinchilla with treats every day, but too many can be dangerous. Give treats two to four times a week. Good treats are natural fruits and vegetables—mostly plant proteins. Stay away from sugars, dried fruit, and too many fats like those in nuts and seeds.

Do not overfeed treats. Chinchillas will get spoiled and eat only treats instead of staple foods like hay and pellets. A chin that gets too many treats will suffer diarrhea, bloating and impactions. Obesity is also a risk.

Fresh hays and commercial diets usually have enough nutrients but small amounts of treats are OK in limited quantity. Supplements are used during times of stress or illness. Remember to always consult your veterinarian before feeding supplements or treats.