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Chinchilla Nutrition

Never let chinchillas go without timothy hay. They should always have an ample supply available. Hay provides the much needed fiber for their digestive tract to function properly. Other grass hays (oat hay, orchard grass hay) also provide a large amount of fiber, but these can be more difficult to find. A lot of fiber means firmer poop, fewer fur balls, and an overall healthier pet.

Alfalfa hay is only a treat. Alfalfa contains too much calcium, protein, and carbohydrates, which can lead to obesity, kidney and bladder stones, and gastro-intestinal upset.

Pellets are not a necessity. Although most pets love their pellets, it should be offered only as an added supplement to their diet. Timothy hay pellets (versus the common alfalfa hay pellets) are preferred, and should only be given in small amounts. Give a maximum of ¼ cup pellets per 4 pounds (1.8 kg) of body weight daily if your pet is not overweight. Just remember that feeding too many pellets can lead to obesity and dental problems.

If your pet is under 6 months old, pregnant, or nursing, alfalfa hay may be fed to provide your pet with the extra calcium, protein, and carbohydrates needed for growth and extra nutrition. After your pet reaches 6 months of age or the female weans her young, stop giving the alfalfa hay.

Greens are a must. Feeding a variety of leafy greens along with the unlimited hay prevents boredom and provides essential nutrients. Greens should be introduced into the diet slowly, so as to not irritate the chinchilla's gastrointestinal tract. If a chinchilla hasn't had a certain type of green before, give only a couple of strands the first few days. After that, you can increase the amount daily. Below is a list of greens that are good for chinchillas.

Kale	Cilantro	Parsley	Red leaf lettuce	Carrot tops
Mint	Spinach	Mustard greens	Green leaf lettuce	Turnip greens
Basil	Spearmint	Collard greens	Romaine lettuce	Radish tops
Dill	Arugula	Dandelion greens	Celery tops	Endive

No pesticides! It is very important to purchase organic fruits and vegetables (no pesticides) and rinse dirt/debris off before feeding to your chinchilla.