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FEEDING YOUR PET RODENT

What do pet rodents eat?

All of the pet rodents can be fed a good, high quality rodent chow (pelleted food) available at pet stores. Many veterinarians also recommend offering hay to the rodents; check with your veterinarian about this first. The diets containing seeds and nuts **ARE NOT RECOMMENDED**. If offered these good-tasting seeds and nuts, which are high in fat, many rodents will eat these instead of the formulated pellets.



How often should I feed my pet rodent?

Fresh food and water should be available at all times.

Do I need to give my rodent vitamins?

No, pet rodents do not require extra vitamins.

Can I offer my rodent treats?

Seeds and nuts can be offered as an occasional treat (less than 10% of the daily diet). Fresh, well-cleaned vegetables and occasionally a small amount of fruit can be offered as well. Leafy

green vegetables (not lettuce or celery) can be offered, as well as yellow and orange vegetables. The total daily amount of these "people foods" should not run more than 10% of the diet. Thus, the pets should eat mainly pellets (90% of the diet), 5-10% vegetables and fruits, and occasionally a few seeds or nuts as treats. Many owners offer the food in heavy, spill-proof ceramic crocks, although feeders can be purchased and attached to the cage. Offering hay (such as alfalfa cubes or clover) free choice to the pets as a source of fiber is also acceptable (as long as your veterinarian approves).

Do guinea pigs require their own special food?

Guinea pigs, unlike most pets, do not make their own Vitamin C. For this reason they should be fed guinea pig chow (pellets), which is supplemented with Vitamin C. However, the Vitamin C only lasts about 90 days **from the time the food is made, not from the time you purchased it**. Therefore, Vitamin C should be supplied in the drinking water. A simple way to do this is to take 200-1000 mg of Vitamin C and crush it into a powder. Mix the powder in 1 liter of water. Make this fresh DAILY and use it as the pet's drinking water. Offering fresh green vegetables can be used to supply supplemental Vitamin C as well.

What about water?

Fresh water should be available 24 hours a day and is usually provided in sipper tubes available at pet stores, although it can be placed in spill-proof crocks. The water should be replaced DAILY and the tubes (specifically the end the pet drinks from) inspected daily for blockage that can develop if the pets spits food into the sipper tube.

Is there anything else?

Chew toys can be offered to help prevent overgrown incisors; anything suited for dogs, such as nylon chew bones or well-boiled meat bones, are fine. Many owners offer their pet rodents wood sticks to chew, which helps control overgrown incisors.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Rick Axelson, DVM & Shawn Messonnier, DVM
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