



ALL ABOUT

FORTIFIED FOODS

A healthy, balanced food should be a daily staple in every small pet's diet. With so many options available in the food aisle, choosing one that's best for your furry family members can be a confusing and intimidating process for new pet parents and longtime pet caretakers alike. The following guide is designed to provide the basic information necessary to help you choose a food that meets the specific nutritional needs of your beloved pet.

Why Do Small Pets Need Fortified Food?

A measured amount of a uniform, balanced food provides key vitamins and minerals small pets need to thrive. In the wild, your pet would consume a variety of plant material each day, receiving ample amounts of micronutrients (i.e. vitamins and minerals) in the process. In captivity, it becomes your responsibility as pet parent to provide these important components of nutrition.

Premium & Nutritionally Correct Food Checklist

- ✓ Uniform pellets = complete nutrition in every bite
- ✓ Species and Lifestage Specific (Grass hay-based for adult, Alfalfa-based for young, growing, pregnant or lactating)
- ✓ Prebiotics to feed good bacteria
- ✓ Chelated minerals (e.g. "proteinates") for most efficient absorption
- ✓ Natural Preservatives (Mixed Tocopherols, Rosemary Extract)
- ✓ No refined sugars (e.g. glucose, dextrose, sucrose, corn syrup)

All Oxbow foods are formulated with the guidance of leading exotics veterinarians and nutritionists. Oxbow foods are uniform, complete, and species and lifestage specific to meet the particular needs of pets.

Learn more about Oxbow foods at oxbowanimalhealth.com.

Herbivores



For herbivores such as rabbits, guinea pigs, and chinchillas, a uniform fortified food should make up 20% of the daily diet. The majority of the diet (70%) should come from unlimited fresh grass hay. The remainder of the diet should come from fresh greens (8%) and healthy, all-natural treats (up to 2%).

Omnivores



For omnivores such as hamsters, gerbils, rats, and mice, a uniform kibble should make up 75% of the daily diet. The remainder of the omnivore diet should come from a mix of fresh veggies, greens, and fruit (20%) and healthy, all-natural treats for bonding (up to 5%).

How Much Should I Feed?

Daily food requirements vary depending on age, species, and additional factors specific to individual pets. Young, growing, and pregnant or nursing pets have higher nutritional requirements and will generally need a larger quantity of food (or more free access to food) than mature pets. Always follow the feeding guidelines on your pet's specific food package. Consult your veterinarian if you have questions about how much food your pet should eat.



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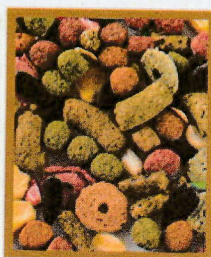
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Types of Food: Uniform Pellets vs. Mixes

One of the biggest differences you will notice when comparing options in the food aisle is the visual contrast between uniform and mix-based foods. What are the primary differences between these food types, and which is the best choice for your pet? Let's take a closer look.

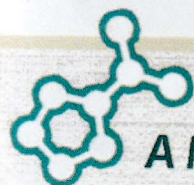
Mix-Based Diets

- Contain seeds, nuts, fruits and miscellaneous pieces which are often high in carbohydrates and simple sugars
- Typically lower in fiber than uniform pellets
- Come in bright colors to appear "fun" and appeal to young customers
- Can lead to obesity, selective eating, and GI illness



Uniform Pellets

- Prevent the selective eating behavior common amongst small pets
- Provide complete nutrition in every bite
- Typically higher in fiber than mixes
- Less likely to contain added sugars, artificial colors, or flavors



Chelated Minerals: A More Absorbable Source

In the wild, small animals receive all the minerals they need from the variety of plant material they consume. As pets, it's important that these animals have access to high quality, bioavailable minerals via their daily food. Some minerals can be more difficult than others for small pets to absorb. Through the process of "chelation," minerals are bound to amino acids or other organic compounds to form a more easily absorbable mineral complex. Chelated minerals are designed to survive digestion and are more readily absorbed than their non-chelated counterparts. Chelated minerals can typically be identified by the suffix "-ate" following a mineral's chemical name. Oxbow foods contain chelated minerals in "proteinate" form (e.g. zinc proteinate).



All Oxbow foods are made with chelated minerals to ensure maximum absorbability of important compounds.

Concentrate Selector

Rabbits, guinea pigs, and other small animals are classified as "concentrate selectors." As prey species in the wild, these animals are wired to select and eat the most energy-dense plant material available as quickly as possible. For domesticated pets, these instincts are no longer tied to survival, but they are still likely to lead to selective eating. Choosing a uniform food helps prevent this potentially unhealthy behavior.



Prebiotics vs. Probiotics

Prebiotics are non-digestible ingredients that provide food for the good bacteria in your pet's GI tract. Fermentation of prebiotics within the GI tract produces beneficial fatty acids which aid in the digestion process. Examples of beneficial prebiotics to look for in a high-quality food include inulin (chicory root), yeast culture, and hydrolyzed yeast.

Probiotics are live bacteria intended to maintain healthy levels of good bacteria in the GI tract. While probiotic supplements are popular in humans and certain pet species, these bacteria have not been proven to survive the manufacturing process in conventional foods, nor the acidic environment of the stomach. Additional research is also needed to understand which specific strains of good bacteria exist in the GI tract of different small animals. Avoid foods making health claims relating to probiotics.

Young vs. Adult – The Importance of Choosing Lifestage Specific Food

Small animals have specific nutritional needs at various stages in life. For example, young, growing, and pregnant or lactating animals have higher energy requirements and should be offered a food that is specifically designed to meet these needs. An alfalfa-based uniform pellet provides a more nutrient-dense diet that supports animals during these stages of life. For adult animals, a grass hay-based food provides appropriate levels of protein and fat to meet maintenance needs while preventing obesity.

