

Nutrition in small animals during pregnancy and whilst feeding



A Supreme Petfoods factsheet

Nutrient requirements vary not only between different animals, but also within animal species, and at different lifestages. During gestation (reproduction) and lactation (rearing of young), the Supreme range has been formulated to allow growth, breeding and maintain body weight without causing obesity, deficiency or disease.

Breeding rabbits

How much dry food should be fed to an average 6-9 week old rabbit in the region of 0.5-0.75kg body weight?

The energy requirement of young, growing rabbits is approximately 120-160 kcal/day. Russel Junior contains 241 kcal per 100g, so a rabbit would need between 50 and 65g per day. However, this depends on their levels of exercise, and whether they are eating hay and barley straw. The protein content and fibre level of the concentrate should each be 16%. If your feed has a higher protein content, simply reduce the quantity of the concentrate and increase the amount of dried forage, and the protein content of the diet will be diluted.

Throughout weaning, growth and adult life, your rabbits should be fed a complete rabbit mix, such as Russel Junior for growing and dwarf rabbits, followed by Russel Original or Russel Carrot and Leek. They should be fed

following the specific guidelines on the pack. Split the amount into two feeds, morning and night, and do not be tempted to fill the bowl up until all the mix has been eaten, thus preventing selective feeding. A course mix provides a variety of ingredients and different textures to assist dental wear. If your rabbit feeds selectively, Science Selective is an extruded biscuit that provides all the necessary nutrients in each bite.

Breeding guinea pigs

Great care must be taken in feeding the sow following mating. If she becomes too fat, or excessively thin there may be problems at the time of birth, so correct nutrition is essential. During the early part of the pregnancy there is no need to increase the amount of food fed, but the guinea pig must be fed the best quality food available, such as Gerty Guinea Pig.

As the pregnancy progresses, the level of nutrition should be maintained, however if the guinea pig consumes too much at this stage there is a danger that the young will develop too quickly, which may lead to difficulties at birth. It is also important that the sow doesn't become too obese, as this may make her susceptible to pregnancy toxemia. She must be allowed access to plenty of good hay and grass, and a quality dry

food, which is rich in protein and calcium, such as Gerty Guinea Pig. Calcium is particularly important as any deficiency during pregnancy and lactation may lead to eclampsia. Sufficient levels of vitamin C must also be consumed, otherwise the sow and the developing fetuses may suffer from myodystrophy. During the last eight days before birth, the sow should be permitted to have unlimited access to food. Raspberry leaves are often fed by breeders during gestation and are said to ensure ease of parturition. If in the later stages of pregnancy the sow's appetite wanes, it is advisable to add glucose to the drinking water to prevent pregnancy toxemia.

During pregnancy, the sow will need additional vitamin C in their diet, and if they are not receiving enough tissue stores can become depleted. Youngsters born to vitamin C-deficient mothers may have paralysed hindquarters and swollen painful joints. Fresh greens are a good source of vitamin C.

After the birth, the sow will nurse her young, usually once or twice a day. During this time the sow must receive sufficient fluids, or she will be unable to produce enough milk to rear her young. An unlimited supply of fresh, clean drinking water must be provided.

