



# Caring for your PRAIRIE DOG

## Total prairie dog wellbeing

From daily enrichment and balanced nutrition to physical exercise and loads of love, we focus on every aspect of small pet care to help you create a full, healthy and joyful life for the prairie dog you love. In this care guide, we'll cover the basics of what you need to keep your prairie dog happy and healthy.



## Hay

Fresh, high quality grass hay should make up at least 70% of your prairie dog's diet and should always be available. Health benefits of hay include:

- Hay provides long strand fiber that supports digestive and dental health in herbivores.
- Pet parents should offer at least two different grass hays to promote foraging instincts. Oxbow's Western Timothy, Orchard Grass, or Organic Meadow Hay are ideal choices.
- Eating multiple varieties of hay daily provides enrichment and prevents picky eating.



*Did you know* that your prairie dog's teeth never stop growing? Hay stimulates chewing and dental wear, helping decrease the risk of dental disease.



Alfalfa is more nutritionally dense than grass hay and can be beneficial for young, pregnant, nursing, ill, or senior pets. For healthy adults, offer alfalfa only as an occasional treat.

**FIND OUT WHAT MAKES OXBOW HAY SPECIAL:**



## Fortified food

Providing a daily recommended amount of a high-fiber, age-appropriate fortified food provides your prairie dog with essential vitamins and minerals not provided by hay.



**OFFER** Oxbow's Adult Rabbit foods as an ideal food. Rabbits and prairie dogs have similar vitamin and mineral needs, similar digestive systems, and often live in the same environments.

**AVOID** mixes with nuts, corn, seeds, or fruit. Also avoid overfeeding healthy fortified foods. **Obesity is a common problem in prairie dogs. They are expert beggars, which can lead to overfeeding.** Remember, it's not mean to ignore their pleading. Instead of a snack, offer them an enriching toy!

**LEARN MORE ABOUT SELECTIVE FEEDING IN SMALL ANIMALS:**



## Greens

Fresh greens are an important part of your prairie dog's daily diet. Greens help keep your pet hydrated and are a healthy source of vitamins and minerals as well as enrichment.

**OFFER** Dark green leafy vegetables (like kale, parsley, cilantro, collard greens, and bok choy), carrots, sweet potato, zucchini, and squash.

**AVOID** Spinach, dried corn, seeds and nuts (these are high in fat), potatoes, onions, and chives.

## Treats

Treats (including fruits) are great for building the bond between you and your pet but should only be offered in moderation. All Oxbow treats are designed to be as wholesome as they are delicious.



**Did you know?** Prairie dogs go through a rutting period that can cause drastic personality changes for several months of every year. They often become less social or defensive during this period. Speak with your veterinarian to learn more.



## Housing your prairie dog

As prey species by nature, all prairie dogs need a safe place to spend time and avoid stress. Here are some tips to help create the ideal living space for your prairie dog:

- Choose a spacious, well-constructed, multi-level habitat with a sturdy floor and full shelves to mimic a burrow. Set it up near household activities but away from windows and heating and cooling ducts.
- Outfit your prairie dog's habitat with multiple hides or hammocks, bedding, a variety of natural chews, grass hay, a food bowl (or two), and two sources of fresh water.
- No habitat is large enough to meet your pet's exercise and enrichment needs. Create a pet-safe area outside their habitat for play and interaction with you. Watch for dangers like electric cords and other hazards.
- Prairie Dogs love to dig! Provide a dig box or plenty of tunnels and hides for essential enrichment.

## Your prairie dog's health

You should visit a qualified exotics veterinarian at least once a year for checkups on your pet's diet, behavior, and health.

- Be prepared for your pet's visit by making a list of any questions or concerns you may have ahead of time and bring examples of your pet's nutrition, habitat, and husbandry-related items.
- Ask your veterinarian for recommendations related to the care, nutrition, and enrichment of your prairie dog.
- Many health problems are preventable with proper diet and care.

**FIND A QUALIFIED EXOTICS VETERINARIAN NEAR YOU:**



## REASONS TO CONTACT YOUR VET:

- Loose, soft, or lack of stool
- Small, dry, or infrequent stools
- Blood in the urine
- Sneezing or trouble breathing
- Overgrown front teeth
- Sores on the feet
- Observed difficulty with chewing
- Bald patches in the fur
- Abnormal eating or drinking
- Hunching in a corner or lack of activity (lethargy)

## Enriching your pet's world

All prairie dogs are wired to engage in a set of core instinctual behaviors each day. These behaviors include chewing, playing, hiding, and exploring. Intentionally encouraging these behaviors in healthy ways is called enrichment.

- Support chewing, hiding, playing, and exploring each day to support your pet's mental and physical health.
- Providing daily enrichment is a fun, interactive way to build your bond with your prairie dog.
- Offer a variety of natural chews, places for rest and relaxation, and engagement and exercise accessories.
- Oxbow's Enriched Life accessories are designed to help make enrichment fun, easy, and safe!

**GET MORE ENRICHMENT INSPIRATION FOR YOUR PET:**



## Supplies for your prairie dog

- Fortified age-specific food:** one of Oxbow's three premium formulas for rabbits under one year of age, one of Oxbow's four premium formulas for adults, or Oxbow's Essentials Senior Rabbit Food.
- Two or more varieties of Oxbow's hays**
- Oxbow treats** for healthy bonding and enrichment
- Water bottle, no-tip water dish, and no-tip food bowl**
- Multiple **Enriched Life natural chews and accessories**
- Large **play yard** for safe exercise outside the habitat
- Multi-level habitat** with solid, non-slip flooring
- Multiple **hiding spaces**
- Litter box** with **Oxbow's Eco-straw litter**
- Bedding material**, such as **Oxbow's Pure Comfort**. Avoid aromatic cedar and pine shavings that may contain resin and could irritate your pet's lungs and skin.
- Natural Science supplements** as needed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PRAIRIE DOG CARE AND BEHAVIOR, VISIT [WWW.OXBOWANIMALHEALTH.COM](http://WWW.OXBOWANIMALHEALTH.COM)

**OXBOW ANIMAL HEALTH**

[WWW.OXBOWANIMALHEALTH.COM](http://WWW.OXBOWANIMALHEALTH.COM)



[info@oxbowanimalhealth.com](mailto:info@oxbowanimalhealth.com)



[pinterest.com/oxbowpet](https://pinterest.com/oxbowpet)



[@oxbowanimalhealth](https://www.instagram.com/oxbowanimalhealth)



[/oxbow-animal-health](https://www.linkedin.com/company/oxbow-animal-health)



[facebook.com/OxbowPet](https://facebook.com/OxbowPet)



[youtube.com/oxbowanimalhealth](https://youtube.com/oxbowanimalhealth)