

Hay!

Dr. Chloe Long

It's brown, it's dry, and it comes in bales- it's hay! Did you know that hay is the number one, most important part of a degu's diet? While you might think that eating nothing but hay all day is booooo-riiiiiing, to a degu it's positively divine! Not only do most degus really enjoy tucking into a good quality hay, but it's essential (and I mean really important) for their health.



Wild degus come from Chile and are native to the semi-arid scrublands, where for much of the year their diet consists of dried vegetation and herbs. Because of this, degus have evolved special adaptations to allow them to live in this sort of place and to eat the sort of dried plants that grow there. The three most important adaptations degus have to deal with a high-fibre diet are:

- 1) Continually growing teeth (that's molars and incisors), which means they can deal with regular wear caused by all that chewing (nom!).
- 2) A gut with a high turnover, allowing them to process and pass through all that bulky fibrous material and extract maximum nutrition from it (ever wondered why degus need to poo so much? Now you know!).
- 3) The behavioural need to eat (snack) continuously, all day long, and forage, too!

With our pet degus, it's important to try to copy this wild diet as best we can, to make sure our degus stay healthy. While it might be tempting to replace your degus' hay with more 'interesting' hard feeds, by doing so you could be harming them. If your degus don't eat enough hay every day, they can suffer from problems relating to overgrown teeth (very common in degus), poor digestion, obesity, and behavioural problems- and that's just a few! You may not have realised how essential hay was to your degus before!

So remember, give your degus plenty of fresh, good quality hay every day, (as much as they like!), cut down on the hard feed and treats (hard feed is recommended at 10 g per degu per day for an adult degu), and make sure they have fresh water, get plenty of exercise and occasional vegetables- that's the recipe for healthy, happy degus!

You can learn more about the degu diet on this page of Degutopia's site:
www.degutopia.co.uk/degudiet.htm

Find out more about degus by visiting Degutopia's website:
<http://www.degutopia.co.uk>



~Dedicated to the health and well-being of degus everywhere~