



FEEDING FERRETS

Ferrets are obligate carnivores (meat eaters). However what we generally consider “meat” is only the muscle of an animal and only makes up part of a ferrets natural diet. Predators eat not only the muscle meat of their prey, they also eat the liver, kidneys, and intestinal tract, and crunch up bones as well. A diet limited to muscle meat alone can cause harmful and eventually fatal nutritional imbalances.

Characteristics of a good ferret diet

There are some good quality commercial ferret foods available in Australia. You can also offer a constant supply of high quality commercial kitten food or whole prey items such as day old chicks/quails, mice and rats.

A good diet for a ferret should be:

- high in energy
- high in protein
- low in fibre



Finicky ferrets

Ferrets, like some cats, become hooked on a particular flavour or brand of food and are very hard to change, even if the diet they prefer is nutritionally inadequate. It is important to start your young ferret on a good diet that is not likely to become unavailable in the future. The best insurance is to feed a mixture of several kinds of premium quality ferret and kitten foods, as well as whole prey and chunky meats so that the ferret becomes used to a variety of food items, and does not insist on one. If one food is temporarily unavailable, the ferret will be accustomed to the other ingredients of his diet and will not notice a big change. Any time you have to drastically change the diet of a ferret, diarrhea and other digestive upsets are likely to follow. The more gradually a change in diet is made, the less upsetting it will be.

If you do have a finicky ferret, then there are a variety of ways to “tempt” them to eat a more appropriate diet. Suggestions are: warming and moistening dried food with meat stocks or gravies to initially get the ferret to try the new diet or warming whole prey items slightly.

Dishes

Ferrets are natural diggers and like to dig their food out of the container, especially if it is filled to the top. The best way to prevent this is to use a deep crockery bowl, or a plastic dish clipped





high enough on the side of the cage to make it awkward for the ferret to dig in it. If you have multiple ferrets, it is better to use several dishes than to try to provide enough food in a single large container. If your ferrets are fed whole prey, then 1-2 whole prey items per day is generally adequate.

Water

Ferrets on dry diets must have a constant supply of water. In warm weather they drink much more. Ferrets that have no water for 24 hours will generally stop eating. Water bottles are a convenient way to keep clean water available, but many ferrets prefer to drink from a dish and will drink much more from a dish than from a bottle. Kits and juveniles will usually play in a dish of water left on the cage floor, contaminating it with food and litter so make sure it is heavy enough so that it is not knocked over easily.



Human grade raw meaty bones may be offered to help keep their teeth clean. It is important to only offer human-grade raw meat/raw meaty bones as some pet meat products can contain preservatives that can be detrimental to pet health.

Never feed cooked bones as these may splinter and cause internal damage or become an intestinal obstruction. Raw meaty bones **must** be large enough so that your ferret cannot fit the whole bone in its mouth or try to swallow the bone whole. Please check with your vet first that raw meaty bones are suitable for your ferret (e.g. some ferrets with dental disease may have difficulty chewing on raw bones).

Ferrets are inquisitive animals and they like to chew, so be careful of objects around the home or in their cage that may tempt them. Swallowed objects can become hazardous by way of intestinal obstruction. Also ensure they cannot eat anything that may be toxic for them such as Xylitol (a sugar substitute found in some products such as sugar free chewing gum, lollies, baking goods).

If you have any further questions about your ferret please get in touch with us 😊

