

## Ferret Bites To Protect His Food

**A young ferret is very protective of his food.**

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**Q:** I just got a 12-week-old ferret. He seems to be in pretty good health. When I first got him, he was very thin at 14 ounces. He had all four of his baby canine teeth. I also have two other ferrets that are about 18 weeks old. I got the three of them so they could bond.

If I offer a choice bit of food, a mealworm, the 12-week-old ferret smells it, chirps (not dooks, more like a bark), grabs the food and runs off to eat it. If he misses the food, he bites me. If I touch him while he is off eating his treat, he bites. If he is eating in his bowl, he bites if I get too close.

What do you think caused this behavior? Has he had to fight for his food? He came in to the pet shop with two other ferrets that were larger than he, but supposedly the same age. Based on my other ferrets' behavior and size, he was much smaller, maybe as much as 4 to 5 ounces. Will he stop doing this?

**A:** Most animals will fight for a high-quality treat, and your ferret seems to think a mealworm is a very high-quality food item. Dogs often fight over a bone or rawhide just like kids fight over a coveted toy.

What you describe is a recipe for being bitten because the mealworm is a similar color to your fingers and ferrets aren't known for having the best eyesight.

You can continue to offer tasty treats be either using small tongs or just dropping the worm in front of your ferret. Don't worry too much that he is protective of his food, as it may have come from past experiences.

Try to leave your ferret alone while he is eating. In time he may relax, especially if you walk by and drop something extra special in the dish while he is eating his regular food.

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