

Ferrets And People Food

Is it OK to give a ferret occasional treats of coffee, cereal and ice cream?

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Q: How bad is coffee for a ferret? My little girl ferret sees the coffee mug and comes flying across the room for a sip or two. I really think she likes the half-and-half in the coffee. She also likes cereal and vanilla ice cream. None of these are fed daily, only once in awhile.

A: All of these foods are not good to give your ferret. A ferret's gastrointestinal system is not designed to digest the ingredients found in these foods. Therefore, at the very least, these foods can cause an upset stomach or even a severe diarrhea that can lead to debilitation due to loss of fluids and electrolytes.

Your ferret probably feels fine after these foods, and that is why you continue to give these to her. But if she does eat those foods, is she filling up on these and not eating the balanced ferret diet that she should be eating? Also, we still do not know the cause of insulinoma in ferrets. It may be diet related in some way, and feeding these processed foods might contribute to the propensity for a ferret to develop insulinoma. The caffeine in the coffee certainly can cause problems in your ferret, and what would seem like a sip or two to you may equate to your ferret downing a few cups of coffee in one sitting.

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