

Is It Safe For A Ferret To Eat Fortune Cookies?

Will eating fortune cookies harm a ferret? What should you do if your ferret eats a fortune cookie?

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Q: How bad are fortune cookies for ferrets? Our guy Buzz loves to play with them in their wrapper and hide them, he doesn't hide much else in fact. Today he got one open in a hiding spot and ate some. How bad is this for him, and what can we do besides give a laxative?

A: I do not recommend giving fortune cookies to ferrets. If a ferret eats the plastic wrapper, this could cause a blockage in its gastrointestinal tract. Those plastic wrappers are not kind to the delicate tissues of the intestinal tract and, in a worst-case scenario, the plastic could "saw" through the intestine, causing a fatal peritonitis in the ferret's abdomen.

The fortune cookie itself can cause serious disease. The ferret gastrointestinal tract is designed to digest animal protein, not plant material and sugars. This can lead to an upset of the bacteria in the intestines, which can lead to diarrhea and abdominal pain. If not treated, this can further lead to anorexia, dehydration, loss of electrolytes and whole body weakness.

Giving a laxative to a ferret that eats fortune cookies will not help the situation. In fact, it might only make the loose stools even worse and increase the fluid and electrolyte loss. If an older ferret ate this sugary treat and the older ferret had an insulinoma, the fortune cookies could cause a serious setback to insulinoma treatment.

So what do you do if your ferret eats some fortune cookies? First, if the fortune cookie was wrapped, look for the wrapper. If you cannot find it, assume your ferret has eaten that. This will be important information to tell your veterinarian. In dogs, medications can be given to cause the dog to regurgitate anything it has eaten that can be dangerous. Veterinarians usually do not force ferrets to regurgitate because their gastrointestinal transit time is so fast — by the time you reach the doctor, the object that was eaten probably already passed through the stomach.

If your ferret ate just the fortune cookie part, nothing may happen to him or her. Or there may be a day or so of diarrhea. But if your ferret already has a medical condition, you may want to call your veterinarian to advise him or her about what happened. Your veterinarian might suggest increased water intake if diarrhea starts, especially if you normally feed dry food to your ferret.

Not much can be done once a ferret eats a fortune cookie and/or wrapper. That is why prevention is always so much better than treatment. A ferret that eats one of these fortune cookies will not have good fortune!

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