

Feeding Your Ferret

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Ferrets are carnivorous animals and must be fed a premium dry ferret or kitten food with a meat-based protein and high-fat content. Because ferrets metabolize food so quickly, they need to eat frequently throughout the day and probably will consume between seven and 10 small meals daily. For this reason, fresh food and water must be available to them at all times.

Ferrets too young (up to 10 weeks of age) to digest hard food require a moistened diet. Aging ferrets may require adult formulas, but a veterinarian should be consulted before switching foods.

Anytime new foods are introduced they gradually should be mixed with the original diet until the ferret adjusts to its new diet.

Heavy ceramic or weighted food and water bowls are recommended because ferrets like to tip things over. A 16-ounce water bottle should be secured to the outside of the cage with the spout facing in.

Ferrets love to snack on foods, including some fruits and vegetables; however, they digest fiber poorly. Treats should be chopped into tiny pieces and given in small amounts (not exceeding 1 teaspoon per day). Some acceptable snacks are melon (no seeds), sugar and salt-free Cheerios, broccoli or cucumber (without skin). Cooked egg and cooked meat scraps are healthy treats and may be fed in larger amounts. Ferrets should not be fed dog food, sweets, salty foods, milk products, vegetarian cat food diets or bones.

Some ferrets may require extra fat in their diets, especially during the dry winter months in colder climates. A ferret or cat fatty acid supplement based on a veterinarian's recommended dosage will suffice. Laxatives also may be necessary when a ferret has eaten something that could cause an obstruction. Laxatives also can prevent hairballs during their shedding seasons. Again, dosage should be recommended by a veterinarian.