Nutrition: Reptile Diet Recommendations

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

For years, incomplete knowledge of environmental and nutritional requirements has kept herptile owners from helping their pets live to their natural life expectancies. Nutritional needs of herps are determined by feeding habits, habitat, and the physiology of their digestive systems.

Commercially prepared foods are available for the herptile owner. The trick is to know enough about your particular herp's needs and to feed him the appropriate diet, including augmenting with fresh fruits and vegetables (for herbivores and omnivores), and vitamin/mineral supplements if needed.

Herbivores

All commercial diets for herbivores will need to be supplemented. In fact, the majority of their diet should consist of fresh fruits and vegetables. Remember that herbivores still need protein. Iguanas and other herbivores may especially benefit from alfalfa, which is chock full of protein, calcium, and fiber. One such appropriate food supplement is Zoo Med's All Natural Iguana Food. These pellets can be mixed with fresh vegetables to provide extra moisture and help them disintegrate before feeding. Some herps may not initially care for alfalfa, but combining it with other vegetables will not only soften it, but will also make it more palatable. Most herbivores will learn to enjoy the alfalfa.

Carnivores and Omnivores

Animal protein-based diets are available in many forms, including fresh, canned, freeze-dried, or dry. Remember to check labels and supplement your pet's diet no matter which diet form you choose. Carnivores, like herbivores, require fresh foods, such as live worms or crickets. Supplements such as Reptivite may balance out the carnivorous diet. Omnivores can also benefit from fresh fruits and vegetables.

Whether you have an herbivore, such as an iguana, or a strict carnivore, such as a monitor lizard, read about your particular herp and study what would be nutritionally best for your pet's particular species. It can be a challenge to feed a finicky herp properly, but it can be done.

We Recommend

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Alfalfa Cubes
A healthful snack for small animals that contains no coloring or preservatives.

Farm Fresh Crickets
Encourages natural feeding behaviors.

Reptivite Reptile Vitamins
Commonly used for stress-related and calcium deficiency problems.

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