

## Don't Shortchange Your Ferret's Nutrition

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*



Ferrets have a very short, simple digestive tract which limits the amount of food they can eat at any one time. They eat small, frequent meals, compared to other animals of their size. Because of the relative inefficiency of their digestive system, they need to get the most out of every meal.

As carnivores, ferrets cannot survive without meat in their diet, but a diet limited to meat alone would cause harmful and eventually fatal nutritional imbalances.

In the past, dog and cat kibble were often used to feed ferrets, but did not provide adequate nutrition. Specially formulated ferret diets are now available - high in energy, high in protein, and low in fiber. There is no longer any reason to substitute dog or cat foods.

Most ferrets do not like to be switched from one type of food to another. They become very attached to specific food formulas and their favorite flavors. To avoid supply problems, select a name-brand ferret food, such as our [Signature Series® Premium Ferret Diet](#). Packed with protein from high quality chicken, lamb, & egg, Drs. Foster and Smith Premium Ferret Diet is formulated especially for the obligate carnivore nature of ferrets. Plus, crunchy, round, naturally-flavorful morsels appeal to even the pickiest fuzzy. Other suitable ferret foods from well-known suppliers include, [Marshall Premium Diets](#) and [ZuPreem Premium Ferret Diet](#). If a core diet change is ever necessary, the more gradually it is made, the less upsetting it will be to your pet.

Pelleted food should always be protected from moisture. It is good practice to buy small packages of food and store the contents of opened bags in [plastic bins](#) with snug fitting lids. Food should never be left where it will get damp and mold, making it

unpalatable, or worse, toxic.

Ferrets on dry diets must have a constant supply of water. The volume of water required is about three times the volume of dry pellets eaten. In warm weather, your pet will likely drink much more. Ferrets prefer to drink from a dish, but kits and juveniles will usually play in it if left on the cage floor, contaminating it with food and litter. The [water dish](#) is best clipped onto the side of the cage.

### Read the Labels to Determine the Best Foods for Your Pet

The ingredients of commercial animal diets must be listed on the container or package label in order according to the amount of each in the food. Good, quality ferret diets should list meat, poultry or fish meal, or animal by-products as the first ingredient. Look for a label that also lists other animal products, such as liver meal, eggs, or blood meal.

**Protein quality** is very important. Good quality protein costs more. To properly evaluate protein in a feed, compare the guaranteed analysis to the ingredients list. Protein from poultry or meat meal is highly digestible. Ferret diets should contain over 30% crude protein of high digestibility.

**Crude fat** includes all the fat in the diet, from both plant and animal sources, but not all types of fat are equally digestible. Ferrets need animal-source fats, and prefer the flavor. Complete ferret pelleted diets should contain 15-20% fat, the most concentrated form of energy for your pet.

**Fiber** is indigestible carbohydrate that adds bulk to the diet and can cause an increase in the quantity of stool. Sources of fiber include that found in grains and vegetable matter as well as plant hulls, such as oat bran or beet pulp. There should be little fiber in your ferret's diet, less than 4%.

### Supplemental Treats

Treats that improve skin and coat, teeth, overall health, and even solve hairball problems can be offered to reward your pet and enhance his health. [Furo-Vite](#) vitamin fills dietary gaps with multiple vitamins, and [Marshall Furo-Vite Chews](#) are a ferret favorite.

The treats above are not a substitute for a quality pelleted diet and should be provided in limited amounts, making up less than 10% of your ferret's daily food intake. Otherwise, your pet may develop deficiencies or become overweight or suffer from nutritional imbalances.

Quality food is extremely important to the health of your ferret. It pays to serve her only the very best.

## WE RECOMMEND



Marshall Furo-Vite Drs. Foster & Smith Signature Series® FerretVite™ Daily Moist  
Premium Ferret Diet Treats