

Ferret Nutrition 101

The Basics

Ferrets are *obligate carnivores*... meaning they require protein (meat) only. Ferrets cannot digest anything that comes from a plant. They do NOT eat fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, berries, or dairy products. Carbohydrates and sugars should be avoided. The ferrets' body is designed to eat and digest only meat.

Many ferret owners feed dry food or kibble. Appropriate kibbles include meats such as chicken, lamb, beef, turkey, duck, salmon, venison, veal or rabbit. Chicken meal or chicken fat are acceptable. Non-specific protein sources such as meat meal or animal fat are not recommended. Select only a high quality ferret or cat/kitten food with at least 40% protein and 20% fat content. Look further at the ingredient labels to verify low carbohydrates and does not include fruits, grains or vegetables. Food with a lot of carbohydrates is known to cause pancreas tumors, called insulinoma; peas are known to cause bladder stones. Since pet food labels can be confusing, there is a ferret food analysis chart that is recommended to guide your choices. This chart categorizes the ingredients and provides content percentage. Check it out at: <http://moredooks.herobo.com/search.php?chart=ferret>.

Ferrets that are fed kibble should be fed "free-choice", or have access to the food at all times. Ferrets do not over eat and they have short digestive tracts and fast metabolisms which dictate that they must eat often. Food only stays in their system for 2-4 hours before it's out the other end. Feeding a mix of several kibbles is highly recommended. This avoids disruptions in supply in the event of recalls or manufacturing issues.

An alternative to kibble is a "natural diet", consisting of *raw* or *freeze-dried raw*. These diets should be comprised of meats, bones, and organs offered in proper proportions. Many commercial brands are available to make balancing the raw diet easier. When feeding raw or whole prey, food does not need to be available at all times. When beginning to feed a raw diet, ferret owners are advised to consult with a holistic nutritionist who can help guide the diet to ensure that it is properly balanced.

Investing in feeding your ferret a high-quality diet promotes good health, happiness, and longevity. A quality diet contains more meat and less fillers, meaning your ferret will eat less and poop less. It also is cost effective when you consider that a healthier ferret equates to less trips to the vet. It's a win-win result for you and your ferret!

Karen's Duck Soup Recipe

- 2 c Quality kibble (crushed in blender)
- 1 c Natures Instinct raw chicken, or duck, or rabbit (frozen and/or canned) – OR – 1 can (5.5 oz) Hill's Science Diet a/d canned food – OR – 2 jars Gerber baby chicken food
- 2.5 oz organic 100% pumpkin
- 5T Jim's Duk Soup mix – OR – NUTRO Ferret Nutrient (powders)
- 5T Carnivore Care
- 2T 8in1 FerretVite – OR – 8in1 Vita Sol mineral (optional)
- 1 raw egg
- 1 packet Purina ProPlan FortiFlora probiotic or similar
- 1 bottle (8oz) Original ENSURE vanilla flavor
- Pedialyte unflavored for electrolytes

Mix all ingredients. Add warm water to bring to desired consistency – typically, more liquid than a paste. Heat in microwave to slightly warmer than room temperature (warm, not hot). Spoon into small individual serving bowls. Finish with splash of Ferretone, salmon oil, coconut oil or olive oil.

Remainder can be stored in refrigerator for up to 1 week. Reconstitute with warm water to desired consistency.

Duck Soup supplements provide additional vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids to keep ferrets healthy.