

# Force Feeding a Ferret

## *Information for the Ferret Owner*

Ferrets are prone to periods of anorexia or not eating. The reasons are numerous and include intestinal infections, stress, and metabolic diseases. Due to their small size, many times supplemental force feeding on the part of the owner is necessary.

The frequency and amounts to feed vary but a good starting point is 2 to 4 milliliters every two hours. This amount can be gradually increased to 10 to 12 milliliters every 2 to 4 hours as a maintenance schedule.

Some medications (such as sucralfate) should not be given at the same time as food.

### **What to Feed?**

1. Duck soup. This formula was first used for a ferret named Lucky Duck and is so named.
  - 1/2 cup of high quality, dry kitten (or ferret) food. Soften this with hot water to make a stiff paste.
  - 1/8 cup of Susitcal (or equivalent liquid, non-dairy food supplement. Do not use the chocolate flavored. Strawberry works well.). You can freeze the remainder in an ice cube tray and package them in a ziplock bag and keep frozen.
  - 1 1/2 inches of Nutrical or Nutristat.
  - 1 'pump' of Ferratone or Linetone.Mix all the ingredients together. Use anywhere from a thin gruel to thick paste.
2. Pureed ferret diet. Soak your ferrets dry kibble food in warm water for 15 to 30 minutes then puree in a blender.
3. a/d by Hill's. a/d is a special force feeding formula used in cats and dogs. It works well short term but may cause diarrhea long term. It is also more expensive than the other two choices.
4. Oxbow's Critical Care for Carnivores. This is especially formulated for force feeding pets like ferrets.

### **When to Stop?**

When your pet starts to show interest in their regular food, start to slowly wean them off of the force feeding by decreasing the amount fed at each sitting.

### **How to Do It?**

Fill the oral feeding syringe with the food and place the tip behind the canine teeth and point slightly backwards. Give small amounts (1/4 to 1/2 milliliter) and allow the ferret to swallow. Occasionally, ferrets will eat off of the end of the syringe.



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