

## **Nutrition of Companion Animals**

### **Teacher's Notes**

#### **Aim**

To demonstrate the requirements of companion animal nutrition.

#### **Objectives**

The student will be able to:

- Identify suitable foodstuff for companion animals.
- Discuss the requirements of predators and prey animals.
- Establish which food groups each foodstuff provides.
- Establish which foodstuffs are palatable.
- Recognise the importance of quantity.
- Discuss methods of presentation.

#### **Content**

This unit provides the basis for an understanding of what types of foodstuff are suitable, and palatable to the most common companion animals. The general principles are introduced, and it is intended that students can apply these to individual species of interest. This principle lends itself well to classroom discussion, independent research, or practical tasks, as applied within the suggested lesson plan:



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<b>Nutrition – suggested lesson plan</b>				
Timing mm:ss		Activity	Indicative Content	Suggested tasks
		Watch film clip:  Palatable foodstuff	<p>What foodstuffs can be fed to companion animals?</p> <p>What are the main differences between predators and prey?</p> <p><b>Consider:</b> Prey animals are usually herbivores, and a 'dry food' is available containing grains and seeds. That provides a balance of carbohydrate, protein and lipid. They can also be fed fresh vegetables which are a good source of carbohydrate and vitamins, but care must be taken as some vegetation is poisonous.</p> <p><b>Consider:</b> Predators In the wild animals such as ferrets will hunt, kill and eat animals such as rabbits, mice, and chickens. They will also steal eggs from birds' nests. Meat and eggs must therefore be provided for such companion animals, as this is an excellent source of protein, lipid and vitamins.</p> <p>Both predators and prey must always be provided with plenty of fresh Water as it is essential to maintain hydration.</p>	<p>Classroom discussion regarding feeding strategies.</p> <p>Allocate species, to a group or individual, in order to carry out independent research.</p> <p>Discuss Modes of nutrition – carnivore, herbivore, omnivore.</p>
		An Interactive task is included in this package – Students are required to identify plants that can be safely fed to companion animals		<p>Discussion topic ; What % of the animal is water? How is this water lost by animals?</p> <p>Complete the interactive task via the link provided.</p>



	<p>Watch film clip:</p> <p>Quantities</p>	<p>What quantity is required?          What factors govern the quantity given?          How is the feed quantified and measured?</p> <p>Why is there a great danger of overfeeding?</p> <p>Consider:          In the wild these animals would have to hunt or forage to find their food, and this would take energy.</p>	<p>Independent research to identify suitable quantities.</p> <p>Discuss how age, sex, reproductive status and productivity may affect quantity fed.</p> <p>Classroom discussion regarding the perils of over feeding.</p>
	<p>Watch film clip:</p> <p>Presentation</p>	<p>Why is it important to try and present the food in a way that encourages the animal to carry out this hunting or foraging behaviour?</p> <p>How does this affect physical and psychological health?</p> <p>Consider:          It MUST be remembered however that in the UK it is illegal to feed live vertebrates (or animals with a backbone) to predatory species. This is not the case in all countries. In the UK live invertebrates such as insects can be fed to predators.</p>	<p>Individually or as part of a group:          Identify ways of using presentation of food to create enrichment.          Design some forms of enrichment that would encourage given species to hunt or forage.          Discuss the advantages, disadvantages and suitability of various feeding and watering vessels.          Design and produce an enrichment activity using food – implement and observe effect on behaviour.</p> <p>Within the class debate whether you think it's acceptable to feed live animals to predators.          Should this apply to vertebrates and invertebrates or not?</p>