

Animal Diet and Health

What are the considerations for feeding zoo animals?

Animal Care

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the session:

- ✓ All students will understand some of the unique requirements inherent when caring for wild animals.
- ✓ Most students will begin to understand the methods used to overcome certain challenges when providing healthcare and diets for certain species.
- ✓ Some students will begin to understand how to meet the physiological and psychological requirements for zoo animals to create a balanced husbandry programme.

Session Outline:

The session starts with an introduction to the standard requirements for zoo animals according to the Secretary of State's Standards, with considerations for the animals' natural environment and behaviour. We then delve into feeding animals in captivity. This includes the legislation involved and the different feeding categories. Carnivorous and herbivorous diets are discussed including avoiding toxicity and malnourishment. Understanding how to evaluate an animals' diet is covered before investigating the different animal adaptations for ingesting different foods - including morphological, physiological and behavioural adaptations. The students then get a chance to examine some animal faecal samples to determine the feeding category of the animal, the consistency of the faeces and whether parasites are present. Following this task, veterinary care, behavioural health and welfare needs are addressed. Finally, animal enrichment is covered, including different forms of feeding enrichment. The second half of the session involves a tour of the zoo which will allow students to witness real-world scenarios of aspects covered in class, including opportunity to ask questions to qualified animal keepers.



Key Points Covered:

- Balanced nutrition
- Zoo diets vs. wild diets
- Faecal investigation
- Food presentation
- Practicalities of feeding
- Preventative health care