Whole Prey Item Nutritional Guide for Your Pet Reptile!

Many species of pet reptiles in captivity are predominately carnivorous, and while these animals can oftentimes be easier to feed and provide nutritional supplements for in the form of whole prey items, they still require the proper diets, and nutritional supplementation, when need be, in order to remain happy and healthy throughout their lives. Most snakes, as well as some species of lizards, and even some chelonians (such as turtles and tortoises) and some amphibians, may be the groups of animals requiring more carnivorous diets. Rats and mice, whether live, or frozen and thawed, or otherwise pre-killed, tend to be the most commonly available whole prey items for carnivorous reptiles; however, there are also several other options which are available at one's local pet and/or reptile specialty stores, reptile expos, local breeders and suppliers, other sources online, or sometimes through other alternative sources locally, which should be incorporated into a healthy diet for these reptiles.

How much of a difference in nutritional value between rats and mice are there? What other healthy options for whole feeders are available that one can find for their carnivorous reptile, and how do those compare? These are all questions this reference guide will hopefully serve as a useful and practical resource for choosing and comparing whole feeders for your reptile! There are several nutritional components to look for and compare that one should become aware of. **Ca:P** refers to the ratio of calcium to phosphorous in the food item, and in order to provide a properly balanced diet, this Ca:P ratio must be taken into account as high or imbalanced levels of these ratios can lead to an inability to convert calcium, among other health problems.

Many calcium supplements and multi-vitamins that are commercially available contain **Vitamin D3**, which is essential to calcium metabolism, and is developed in your reptile's skin from contact with sufficient UVB wavelengths. Other nutritional components to be aware of, and compare include the percentages or ratios of **Proteins**, **Fats**, **Fibers**, and **Moisture**. **Ash** refers to the remainder of the nutritional components which are not proteins, fats, or fibers, and which are typically composed of salts, minerals, and metals (including the feeder's gut contents). A higher level of Ash thus typically correlates to higher levels of these other vitamins and minerals, as well as a larger gut capacity.

It is also important to consider, that freezing some feeders may also oftentimes cause nutrients such as **Thiamine** (or Vitamin B1) to become lost and thereby reducing their nutritional value. When these certain frozen feeders are fed over a long period of time, and no supplementations are made to add this Thiamine back into their proper diets, Hypothiaminosis, and other nutritional disorders can likely occur. More information can be found on the RodentPro.com website: https://www.rodentpro.com/informationcenter/resources/nutrient-composition-of-whole-vertebrate-prey

It should also be noted that each animal may be an individual, and may prefer or dislike some of these foods over others. Trying variety is key in finding out what your individual animal may like most. Without further a-due, here is a guide to the most commonly used and available whole prey items for

reptiles, and their nutritional ratios and percentages which should be included in many species of pet reptile's diets, as well as which types may be suitable once in awhile with moderation, and which ones should usually be avoided. For this article, we will be looking at all other types of whole prey item feeders, other than insects and other invertebrates (which are covered in "The Feeder Insects Nutritional Guide for Your Pet Reptile") and fish, and of which are also vertebrates.

Other, canned, commercially available, or processed carnivorous diets (i.e. "snake sausages", etc.) are also not included for the purposes of providing as staple, nutritionally sound diets for your carnivorous reptiles as possible. Finally, any and all other sliced or prepared grocery store, or other store purchased meats (i.e. chicken, turkey, ham, pork, beef, fish and seafood, etc.) are also generally not included here. While some of these meats may be OK once in a while, or as special treats for your reptile, this also depends a lot on each individual species. Whole prey items are typically always best, and most of these other meats certainly should not be substitutes for, or staples in your carnivorous reptile's regular, day to day diet.


Domestic Mice (Mus domesticus):

Neonatal/Pinky, or Less than 3 grams

Crude Protein: 64.2%
Crude Fat: 17.0%
Ash: 9.7%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 4.87a

Juvenile (Fuzzy, Hoppers), or 3 to 10 grams

Crude Protein: 44.2%
Crude Fat: 30.1%
Ash: 8.5%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 6.65a

Adult (Hoppers, Weaned, Large, and Extra Large), or 10 grams and over

Crude Protein: 55.8%
Crude Fat: 23.6%
Ash: 11.8%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.25a

Domestic Rats (Rattus norvegicus):

Neonatal, or Less than 10 g (Pinkies to Fuzzies)

Crude Protein: 57.9%
Crude Fat: 23.7%
Ash: 12.2%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.30a

Juvenile, or 10 to 50 g (Fuzzies, Pups, Weaned, to Small Adult)

Crude Protein: 56.1%
Crude Fat: 27.5%
Ash: 14.8%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.55a

Adult, or over 50 g (Small, Medium, Large, to Extra Large, Extra Extra Large Adult)

Crude Protein: 61.8%
Crude Fat: 32.6%
Ash: 9.8%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 6.37a

African Soft Furred Rats/Natal Multimammate Mice (Mastomys natalensis):

Data Not Available.

Egyptian Spiny Mice (Acomys cahirinus):

Data Not Available.

Gerbils (Meriones spp.):

Data Not Available.

Guinea Pigs, Adult/10 Week Old (Cavia porcellus):

Crude Protein: 51.4%
Crude Fat: 46.1%

Ash: 9.2%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 6.99a

Rabbit, Domestic (Oryctolagus cuniculus):

Neonatal:

Crude Protein: 72.1%
Crude Fat: 13.0%
Ash: 14.9%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.06a

Adult (Sizes Not Specified):

Crude Protein: 65.2%
Crude Fat: 15.8%
Ash: 3.4%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.30a

Calf (Holstein), Neonatal/Fetal Age (Bos taurus):
*190 to 270 Days Old. *For Very Large Reptiles.*

Crude Protein: 60.0%
Crude Fat: 8.9%

Ash: 16.0%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 4.08a

Pigs, Neonatal/Fetal Age (Sus domesticus):
**For Very Large Reptiles.*

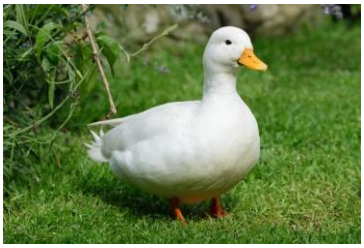
Crude Protein: 50.7%
Crude Fat: 33.2%
Ash: 11.9%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.78a

Chicken, One-Day Old/Chicks (Gallus gallus):

Crude Protein: 64.9%
Crude Fat: 22.4%
Ash: 6.4%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.80a

Chicken, Whole Adults (Gallus gallus):

Crude Protein: 42.3%
Crude Fat: 37.8%
Ash: 9.4%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.90a



Duck (Mallard/Domestic), Whole Adults (Anas platyrhynchos):

Crude Protein: 63.1%
Crude Fat: 26.4%
Ash: 9.5%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 5.92a

Quail, Japanese; Whole Adults (Coturnix coturnix):

Crude Protein: 71.5%
Crude Fat: 31.9%
Ash: 9.9%
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 6.79a

Toads (Anaxyrus spp.):
**Southern Toad, but Probably Similar for Other Species. *For Certain Toad Eating Species.*

Crude Protein: 6.8%/61.0%
Crude Fat: 13.7%/14.0%
Ash: NA/NA
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 4.61a/4.25a

True Frogs (Lithbates spp.):
**Green Frog, but Probably Similar for Other Species.*

Crude Protein: 71.2%
Crude Fat: 10.2%
Ash: NA
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 4.80a

Anole Lizards (Anolis spp.):
**Green Anole, but Probably Similar for Other Species.*

Crude Protein: 67.4%
Crude Fat: NA
Ash: NA
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): NA

House Geckos (Hemidactylius spp.):
**19 Species*

Crude Protein: 25.3%
Crude Fat: NA
Ash: NA
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): NA

Eggs, White Chicken:
**Whole, Hard Boiled*
**OK as Occasional Only*

Ca:P: 1:3.4
Protein: 12.6%
Fat: 10.6%
Fiber: 0%
Moisture/Water: 75%

Eggs, Quail:

Ca:P: NA.
Protein: 7g/Percentage NA.
Fat: 9.0%
Fiber: 0%
Moisture/Water: NA

Eggs, Finch:

Data Not Available.

Non-Whole Meat Items Which May Be Given Occasionally or as Treats, but Not Staples:

Chicken Breast:
**Occasional Only; Not as a Staple.*

Protein: 92.0
Fat: 4.0%
Ca:P: 0.06
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 4.4a

Beef Heart/Liver:
**Occasional Only; Not as a Staple.*

Protein: 79.6%/69.0%
Fat: 16.1%/13.8%
Ca:P: 0.0.11/0:0.1
Kcal (Gross Energy/g): 4.78a/4.66a

Pork Loin/Chops:
**Occasional Only; Not as a Staple.*

Protein: 30.2%
Fat: 8.1%
Ca:P: 1:7.8
Fiber: 0%
Water/Moisture: 61%

Ground Beef:
**Occasional Only; Not as a Staple. Low Fat.*

Protein: 26.1%
Fat: 11.7%
Ca:P: 1:15.5
Fiber: 0%
Water/Moisture: 61%

Whole Prey Items to Generally Avoid:

Most Wild, or Field Collected Animals:

Squirrels, Wild Rabbits, Raccoons, Opossums, Wild Rodents, etc.

Although many wild animals can be easier and less expensive to acquire, particularly when they are found road-killed or already dead, these animals generally do not make suitable feeders for most captive, or pet reptiles due to the risk of internal and/or external parasite transmission. Unless they are thoroughly cooked, or in a few cases, in which some animal's gut and immune systems can digest and handle these types of animals, wild animals generally do not make good feeder animals.