



Think you have a hard time getting dinner on the table some nights? Try working in the zoo's commissary, where zookeepers prepare 175 different diets every day! While the zoo is home to more than 130 species, many animals require individualized diets based on their age, health, activity level, or nutritional needs.

From the largest elephant to the smallest insect, every animal at the zoo is fed a species-specific diet. The zoo uses more than 50 types of fresh fruits and vegetables, including 40 pounds of carrots and 60 pounds of romaine lettuce each week, 30 varieties of grain, 280 pounds of meat, and tons of hay per week. And that's not even the full menu; it doesn't include the mealworms, crickets, pinkies, mice, and rats that are also fed to the zoo's animals. Each of the Zoo's three elephants alone, for example, consumes approximately 120 pounds of hay every day.

Other unique Zoo foods include ferret chow, ZuPreem canned primate food, herring, tofu, ground oyster shell, and Purina pigeon pellets, to name a few. Special vitamins and supplements are also added to some animals' diets to help ensure they receive proper nutrition.

What is the zoo's commissary?

Simply put, the zoo's commissary is a kitchen, but it's not your ordinary kitchen. It is fully equipped to prepare daily diets for all the animals that call Roger Williams Park Zoo home. The commissary is a free-standing building with dedicated areas for grain and hay storage, as well as walk-in refrigerators and freezers for food storage. Zoo staff follow the same food safety standards found in commercial kitchens that prepare food for people.

What are some examples of animal diets?

Here are a couple of examples of the "dishes" prepared by commissary staff:

Herbivorous Reptile Salad

- 10 lbs. mixed spinach, kale, romaine & leaf lettuce, chopped or torn into large pieces
- 1 lb. carrots, grated
- 1 lb. sweet potato, grated
- 2 lbs. green peppers (remove the stalk & seeds, cut in half and then sliced)
- 4 lbs. broccoli (heads sliced & stalks halved or quartered and then sliced)
- 2 lbs. firm tofu, broken into small pieces

Penguin Chick Hand Feeding Formula

440 gm 5-7 long whole herring (remove head, tail, fins and skin)

440 gm Krill (squeeze out water before measuring)

600 ml Filtered water

8 each 7.5 Brewer's yeast tablets

550mg B1

1 each 5 lb Mason Vita-Zu tab w/o Vitamin A

4 each 10 grain calcium carbonate tablets

1200IU Vitamin E

2cc Poly-vi-sol with Iron

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