Red Wolf SSP

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Waddell, W. (1998) Nutrition. In: *Red Wolf Husbandry Manual Guidelines for Captive Management*. Red Wolf SSP Management Group American Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Section 7 - Nutrition

7.1 Introduction: Periodically, red wolves from the captive population may be selected for release into the wild. However, it is not the responsibility of the RWSSP to feed red wolves a diet that they will find in the wild. Biologists in the field will assist the wolves in making the transition from a captive diet to natural prey items. Consistency in types of food is important to ensure that the wolves will readily eat when being transferred from one facility to another.

7.2 Captive Diet: Feeding requirements of red wolves have generally not been a problem in the RWSSP, as long as good quality commercial (dry) dog food is provided. Because of the number of commercial foods made, their availability, and cost it is difficult to recommend a specific brand. Wolves maintained in Tacoma have done well on food with label guarantees ranging from 22-28% protein, 8-18% fat, and 2-4% fiber. Vitamin supplements for red wolves are normally not required. Adding commercial carnivore log to dry chow may be needed to encourage some wolves to eat, although should not be the primary component of their feed.

7.3 Feeding Regime: Individual feeding containers should be available for each wolf housed at a facility and placed a good distance apart within the pen to minimize one wolf monopolizing the food. Stainless steel pans or bowls work well because they are durable and rust proof. Food containers should be cleaned and disinfected daily. Some facilities report effective use of community feeders. Regardless of the feeding method used, individuals should be monitored to insure that each wolf is getting enough food or that an individual is getting too much food.

a) **Adults.** Each adult wolf should be fed amounts based on weight; age and activity level in accordance with manufactures recommended amounts. The wolves should be fasted one day per week except when there are young and during sustained cold weather, ~40^{o}F (4.4^{o}C). In some cases, it may be necessary to feed near dusk to prevent avian scavengers from eating the wolves' food. It is not necessary to change to a higher protein food during breeding and whelping season as long as a good quality food is being provided. The female's food intake should be monitored during this period and additional food provided if warranted.
Stool quality can vary from wolf to wolf and may change due to activity level, stress, parasites, infection, bowel disease, food allergy, or changes in food. Stool quality should be monitored daily with general appearance compared to the gastrointestinal grading sheet described in Appendix D. Grades 2-4 are not uncommon in healthy red wolves with Grade 3 considered typical. Changes in an individual wolf's stool quality should be related to the veterinarian and chronic diarrhea chould be reported to the RWSSP veterinary advisor.

b) **Pups.** Feeding puppy or growth chow is not required for red wolf pups, besides the adults will eat this food. When pups are seen eating food provided to the adults, food amounts can be increased. More feed pans can also be added if needed. Pups should also have access to water by placing a shallow pan of water near the adult water source.

7.4 Bones: Bones may be fed on a random basis. These bones must be very large (beef/horse variety). The wolves should be monitored as gastrointestinal problems may occur with some individuals. Bones are good enrichment items and do seem to increase activity.

7.5 Whole Food: Providing food other then dry chow can occur on a random basis. However, whole food, e.g. rabbit, mice, deer, etc., should not be the primary diet as this can make switching to dry chow more difficult when a wolf is moved to another facility that may not have the ability to offer similar food items.

When feeding whole food, it is important that the source is reputable and that food items are not contaminated.