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NUTRITION LAB

Saint Louis Zoo's Orthwein Animal Nutrition Center

Zoo nutrition is more than just supplying food to our Saint Louis Zoo animals. It's a science that explores the complex relationship between animals and their foods. What an animal eats affects how it looks, how it acts, how it interacts with other animals, how many offspring it produces, even how long it lives. (As the saying goes, we ARE what we eat!)

Among the things our nutrition staff does here:

- **Concoct new foods and new food “formats”** to keep Zoo diets interesting for our animals and take advantage of plentiful food sources.
- **Analyze the foods that animals eat in the wild** to ensure our Zoo animals get the same healthy nutrients as their wild counterparts.

Current Nutrition Lab projects:

- What happens when hyenas digest bones?
- What foods do cheetahs prefer?
- What's the food intake of horned guans, and what do they eat?
- Will sea lions eat “carp cakes”? (If so, the Zoo could use this bad invasive fish in our Missouri rivers for nutritious Zoo food.)
- Do the tannins in lemur diets in the wild offset iron metabolism?
- What's the best diet for silk moth larvae at the Insectarium?
- Can we produce crayfish at the Zoo for hellbender nutrition?
- What are taste preferences in orangutans?
- How can we store browse (leaves, bark branches) long-term for our herbivores?