

## TASTY TIDBITS - Both for the Critters and Us!

From the Saint Louis Zoo Nutrition Department

Did you know ...



That of the more than 300,000 species of seed-bearing plants identified, only three – maize (corn), rice, and wheat -- comprise over 60% of the world's diet?



That ingestion of a single firefly can be lethal to lizards and amphibians that eat it?



That extracts from catnip and hedge apples repel cockroaches?

### RAW OR COOKED?

If you're including vegetables in the foods you feed your animals, should they be cooked or raw vegetables?

Raw is better, since the costs (in both time and nutrients) will likely outweigh the benefits. Cooked vegetables may have a greater quantity of **available** carotenoids and antioxidants than raw vegetables. However the cooking process destroys a variety of vitamins, including vitamin C. Moreover, raw unpeeled vegetables can promote good dental health (lots of crunchy chewing and grinding) and are a good source of fiber.

### CALCIUM FOR STRONG BONES

What is the best source of calcium for strong bones? Although dairy products are often touted as the best avenue to strong bones, calcium is not the only nutrient needed for bone growth -- magnesium, phosphorous and sodium are also essential. Green, leafy vegetables such as kale, collards, mustard greens, arugula, bok choy, parsley, watercress, broccoli and cabbage are your best bets for combining calcium with the essential minerals for strong bones. Moreover, vegetables contribute to the alkalinity of the blood, which encourages bones to store calcium.

What foods inhibit calcium storage? Diets high in animal proteins, refined flour and sugar actually encourage bone loss. These foods make the bloodstream temporarily acidic with the result that the bones release calcium to restore the pH balance of the blood.