Use appropriate containers

When feeding and watering animals, it is extremely important to consider the species being fed and watered and the numbers of the species to be fed or watered from each container. This way, the appropriate container can be selected and adequate numbers of containers supplied.

It is best to keep water containers clean and placed in the shade. In hot weather, water may need replenishing several times a day for any species of animal as the water will heat up, especially in direct sun.

Feed and water containers

There is a huge variety of feed and water containers available for a large variety of animal species. The photos below show examples of different containers.

A cage with feeders suitable for small birds

A feeding dish suitable for birds
A bucket suitable for feeding horses

A stable wall feeder suitable for horses

A large hay holder suitable for feeding horses

A feeder/waterer in an old tyre to prevent spilling – it is suitable for horses
An elevated waterer so the water does not become soiled – suitable for chickens

A cage with waterer suitable for rats or mice

**Numbers of containers**

The numbers of containers required to feed and water an animal or group of animals will vary depending on the species. To decide on adequate numbers of feed and water containers it is best to first evaluate the species and individual animals that you will feed and water. Consider aspects such as:

- Will the animals fight if fed from the same container?
- Will more dominant animals push the others away from the feed or water container?
- Are the animals shy eaters? Some animals will be reluctant to feed in a group.

Next, determine the number of animals to be fed or watered from the one container and the amount of time that the feed or water has to last. For example—will the water trough supplied provide enough water for 4 horses if I only refill it every 24 hours?). Will the container supply adequate amounts of feed or water over the specified time?

It is also very important to consider other aspects such as:

- The quality of the feed or water container. Is it perishing? Will it leak? Is it easily pushed over by the species being fed or watered? Is
the material that the container is made of appropriate to the use- will it leach chemicals, minerals or harmful substances into the feed or water?

- Evaporation. This is especially important with regard to water containers and may affect the amount of water available over a period of time.

- Will the feed or water container cause injuries to the animals being fed or watered? Look for problems such as broken containers, sharp edges, protruding wire or metal, etc.

Can you think of any other considerations with regard to feed or water containers?

Examples

For example, if feeding two large dogs, you would be required to use 2 separate bowls to feed the dogs or you may cause fighting or one dog may get more food than the other. However it would be appropriate to supply just one large water container of an adequate size for both dogs.

If feeding four mice in one enclosure you could use the same feed bowl for all four mice provided the mice were not fighting and they were each getting adequate feed.

Similar principles apply if you are feeding cattle. You could feed a group of cattle from just one feed container (or trough) provided the trough was of an adequate size for the number of cattle being fed and the cattle were not fighting and they were each getting adequate feed.
Preparing live feed

Some species of animals need to be fed live (or just killed) food, although this may seem a bit distasteful it is essential to the survival of animals such as:

- fish
- snakes and reptiles
- native animals
- certain bird species.

It is important that you are aware of any house policies and legal requirements around preparing live food.

There are a range of live foods that you can grow yourself to provide for this need.

The live foods that can be produced easily include feeder fish, rodents, earthworms and insects like cockroaches, wood roaches, crickets, mealworms and maggots.

Breeding wood roaches

Wood roaches breed well in captivity. House them in a warm, dark, ‘tight’ environment with other roaches as in this photo with ‘tower blocks’ made of egg cartons and wood shavings on the bottom. This can be housed in an old aquarium or plastic storage container with a well fitting lid.

Feeding is easy as they eat anything! Water must be supplied but use a water soaked sponge or dripper bottle as they will drown in a dish. They are harmless and can be caught by hand.

Breeding rats and mice

A rodent colony. Rats and mice are easy to keep and breed in these commercial type ‘houses’. Their gestation period is 21 days and they are weaned in 21 days. They should not be mated before 10 weeks of age and their breeding peak is 6 months of age.
A ratio of one male to 2 or 3 females per container is ideal. Water is supplied with a dripper bottle and food is as simple as mixed grains (parrot mix) and dried dog food with some fresh vegetables for variety.

Use shredded newspaper or wood shavings for bedding. It is important to keep them clean as urine inhibits breeding and will predispose the animals to disease.

A variety of ages of young mice are shown above including pinkies (unfurred) to the furred; all of which can be used, once euthanased as reptile food. The average litter size for both rats and mice is 6—8. Baby rats weigh 5—6 gms and mice 2—3 gms at birth.

These can be euthanased by placing pinkies in the freezer and older animals can be hit swiftly on the back of the head on a hard edge (eg table) while holding onto the tail firmly. Or you can use carbon dioxide gas.