



# Transitioning your Sugar Bears to a Healthy & Nutritious Diet!

(Portions of this special report are reprinted with permission from:  
"Sugar Gliders: A Complete Veterinary Care Guide" © 2009 Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians™. All  
Rights Reserved. For more information, go to: [www.ASGV.org](http://www.ASGV.org) )

It has been estimated that over 90% of all problems Vets see in our little buddies are directly related to improper diet – and *"in most cases these problems can be traced back to complicated, homemade diets found on the Internet..."*

The simple fact is that there's a lot of misinformation and hype out on the internet about which diets are best for Sugar Bears/Gliders – and this can get very confusing for owners. For example, on many unregulated "Sugar Glider" websites, there is an almost fanatical, deeply-held conviction among a core of amateur enthusiasts that nothing can be too "good for the glider", and therefore it must be catered to, and provided with, a wide variety of food items to choose from. Anything less, and the animal is somehow being abused or malnourished. In recent years, these self-proclaimed experts have inundated the internet with their emphatic and frequently unsupported recommendations of certain feeding programs (as well as almost every other area of Sugar Glider husbandry). In many cases, these so-called "experts" have only raised a small number of gliders themselves – and with no veterinary training whatsoever spend their entire day on a handful of Sugar Glider chatrooms dispensing "wisdom" to well-meaning new owners - and aggressively attacking anyone who disagrees with them.

This *"blind leading the blind"* mentality has dominated the Internet for the past decade – and significantly contributed to the majority of health issues commonly seen by Veterinarians to this day.



To be clear, the diet we recommend (Glide-R-Chow™, Glide-A-Mins™, fresh fruits & veggies) has been developed and refined by top Vets and licensed animal-care experts over more than a decade – and has proven to consistently produce tens of thousands of wonderful, healthy Sugar Bears . Even so, if you adopt animals from other people that aren't used to our diet – or get "off-track" a little bit when feeding your own little guys (which is easy), it's important to get them all on the right diet as soon as possible. As such, the following page of information (published by Association of Sugar Glider Veterinarians™) has some great general diet tips and instructions for staying on track! ☺

## ***"Transitioning your Gliders to a Nutritious and Healthy Diet"***

Due to the animal's extreme predilection for sweets, transitioning a sugar glider to the proper diet can be challenging. Once a patient that has become accustomed to a "junk food" diet, they will often hold out for the sweet foods they like – and refuse to eat more nutritious items.

Transitioning must therefore occur gradually, by mixing more nutritious items into their current diet. This is usually best accomplished by grinding up the pelleted kibble into a fine powder - and adding increased amounts over the course of approximately 30 days. If the patient eats around the powder, mixing in a blender may be necessary until they become accustomed to the taste. As the levels of nutritious food are increased – and the sugary, fat items are decreased – eventually the patient can successfully be transitioned onto the correct diet.

When transitioning an obese patient to the proper diet, practitioners should caution clients to go slowly – and to actually "follow through" with the transition. Often, the underlying problem originally began with the owner wanting to feed the animal what it "likes" – so the critical importance of transferring to a proper diet, (and the consequences of not doing so), must be stressed.

Owners of young joeys (8-16 weeks out of pouch) should be extremely careful when transitioning to a new diet. As with most animals, a sudden change in diet can put their entire physiology under severe stress – and this is especially true for babies. Young sugar gliders often develop chronic diarrhea and die rapidly from dehydration (and other stress-induced complications) due to owners abruptly changing their diet.

### **DIETARY WARNING:**

**Contrary to commonly available information in lay publications and on the internet, the majority of a sugar glider's daily diet should not consist of fruits, vegetables, or "live" foods (such as mealworms or crickets).** Such items contain excessively high levels of sugar and fat which can result in obesity, osteoporosis, periodontal disease and wide range of related disorders.

**Additionally, Sugar Gliders should not be presented with a wide selection of foods at mealtime. Experience has shown that, when offered such items in this manner, sugar gliders will tend to gorge themselves on sweet and fatty items – to the exclusion of healthier, nutritionally-balanced foods.**

**The detrimental effects of this behavior cannot be overemphasized enough – and requires continual proactive management by owners – as it is believed to be a substantial contributing factor to many illnesses seen by practitioners.**

The above issues are often made worse by owners who mistakenly believe that a particular food is good for the glider – just because they happen to "like" it. One effective way to communicate the seriousness of this problem to owners is by comparing sugar gliders to human children – because in many ways, their dietary behaviors are quite similar. For example:

- They love sweets – and prefer them over almost anything else.
- If presented with a meal that includes sweets – and healthy food – they will almost always gorge themselves on sweets first – to the exclusion of nutritious items.
- Once their system has become accustomed (ie. addicted) to getting sweets, they will often stubbornly hold out for them – refusing to eat other foods.
- The physiological affects are similar, and include obesity, decreased energy/activity levels, periodontal disease, etc.. However, of particular importance to gliders is the relatively rapid onset of calcium-related deficiencies – often resulting in seizures, hind-limb paralysis, and death.