# Species-by-Species Appetite Loss & GI Stasis Red-Flag Chart

> **Companion Reference Sheet for:** Exotic Pet Not Eating: When Waiting Becomes Risky
> Save this PDF to your phone or print a copy for field reference. This sheet does not replace an exam by a veterinarian. If your pet is in distress, call a vet now.

## Key Takeaways

- There is no safe fasting timeline that applies to every exotic species. A missed meal matters differently for a rabbit, parrot, snake, or bearded dragon.
- Food refusal paired with low energy, weight loss, abnormal posture, fewer droppings, breathing changes, or weakness needs prompt attention.
- Rabbits and other small herbivorous mammals can develop serious digestive problems when they stop eating. Do not wait for obvious weight loss.
- Check food, water, temperature, lighting, and recent changes, but do not let a husbandry adjustment delay veterinary care if your pet is declining.
- Record your pet's normal weight, appetite, activity, and fecal output so subtle changes are easier to spot.
- Call ahead to confirm an emergency clinic treats your species. Our emergency exotic care directory can help you find a clinic to contact.

## When appetite loss becomes urgent

| Pet type | What makes food refusal concerning | What to do |
|---|---|---|
| Rabbits, guinea pigs, chinchillas | Less fecal output, small or misshapen droppings, a hunched posture, tooth grinding, or low energy. In rabbits, 8 or more hours refusing food is a red flag; 12 or more hours without food and droppings is an emergency warning. | Call an exotic-animal veterinarian promptly. Do not wait for visible weight loss. |
| Birds | Fluffed feathers, sitting low or on the cage floor, weakness, altered droppings, or breathing changes alongside appetite loss. | Seek prompt advice, especially if your bird is quiet, weak, or struggling to perch. |
| Snakes | Prey refusal with weight loss, poor body condition, mouth changes, abnormal breathing, regurgitation, or a recent husbandry problem. | Review the pattern and enclosure conditions, then contact a reptile veterinarian instead of repeatedly offering prey. |
| Lizards and tortoises | Food refusal with lethargy, weakness, abnormal stool, weight loss, or temperatures outside the animal's required range. | Check measured enclosure temperatures and arrange veterinary advice if the change persists or other signs appear. |
| Ferrets, hamsters, rats, and other small mammals | Reduced activity, drooling, difficulty chewing, vomiting, diarrhea, or a change in droppings or urination. | Contact a veterinarian familiar with the species, especially when appetite loss is paired with weakness or digestive signs. |

## Medical causes and husbandry checks

| Type of care | Typical U.S. Estimate | What can affect the total |
|---|---|---|
| Exotic pet consultation | $75 to $145 | Clinic, region, and appointment type |
| Diagnostic bloodwork, fecal screening, or imaging | $95 to $340 | Which tests the veterinarian recommends |
| Emergency exotic exam or triage | $175 to $295 | After-hours timing and facility |
| Twenty-four-hour exotic ICU hospitalization and oxygen | $450 to $1,200 or more | Level of care and length of hospitalization |

## Checklist: What to check and share

- ☐ **Food:** Record the last normal meal, what was offered, and what remains uneaten.
- ☐ **Weight:** Share recent measurements and the dates you took them.
- ☐ **Droppings:** Note whether they are fewer, smaller, unusually wet, discolored, or absent.
- ☐ **Behavior:** Describe activity, posture, hiding, perching, chewing, and response to handling.
- ☐ **Husbandry:** Write down measured temperatures, lighting changes, humidity if relevant, and any new food, cage mate, or enclosure change.
- ☐ **Other signs:** Mention discharge, drooling, breathing changes, vomiting or regurgitation, or signs of pain.

Bring the record and any medications your pet takes to the appointment. If you can safely take a short video of an unusual behavior, it may help the veterinarian assess a sign that is not present during the exam.

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