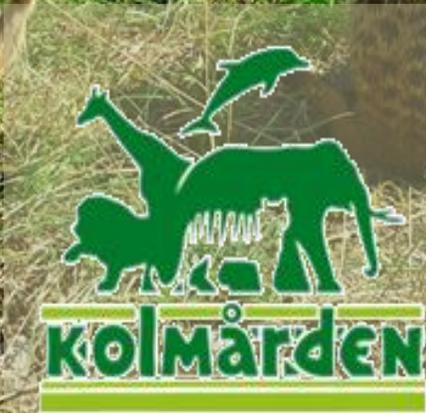# Conclusion

The captive meerkats in this study prefers food with a high protein content. This is in line with what have been seen in the wild.

The meerkats in the study also shows signs of social learning from older to younger individuals. This has also been seen earlier in the wild

Food Preferences In Captive Meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*)

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Background

Selective feeding is found in many animal species. With selective feeding means that the animal spends a lot of time and energy on finding the preferred food.

The food preference is also known, in some species, to be transferred between individuals by social learning.

Aim

The aim of this project was to investigate the food preference in captive meerkats


Method

3-choice food test:
- Protein (cricket, zophoba larvae and egg)
- Fruit (apple, banana and orange)
- Vegetables (carrot, tomato and cucumber)
- Combined to make 84 combinations

The food items was presented three at the time and the meerkats were tested individually.

A individual and a group preference list was created based upon the order the meerkats ate the food items. This was then used to check correlations with the nutrient content and similarities between individuals.
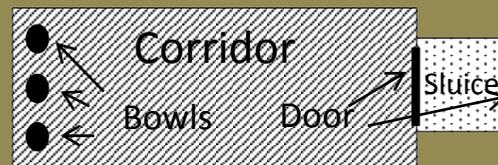
Picture above: The test arena used. The food items were presented in the bowls. The sluice was used to let the right meerkat in.
The left picture shows the food bowls with three food items.

Results

The food preference has a high positive correlation with protein content ($R_s = 0.933$; $p < 0.01$)

A comparison between individuals showed that the oldest individual have the most amount of correlations of their food preference to other individuals. Which may indicate social learning