

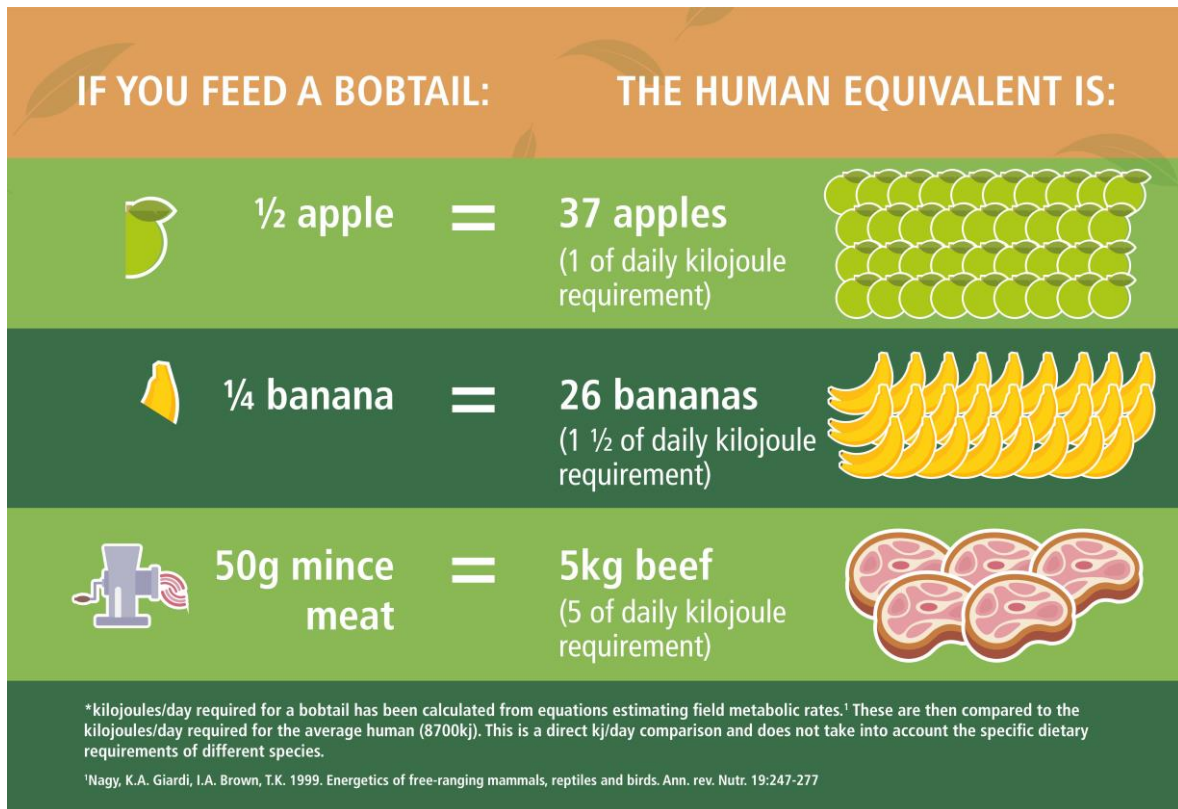
## Should I offer backyard bobtail lizards food?

### Offering backyard bobtails food is not recommended.

Bobtail lizards can often be found in Perth backyards and it is tempting to provide food for our wildlife residents. However, by feeding our native animals we may be doing more harm than good. Providing human food to native animals can lead to **nutritional imbalances**, increase the **spread of disease**, and result in **negative influences on animal behaviour**.

### Nutritional imbalances

Human food is not natural for bobtails and **can make them sick**. Bobtails naturally eat plant tubers, bugs and fungi. Nutritional imbalances may lead to **obesity** and other life threatening complications. Remember bobtails are much smaller than the average human so **even small portions of human food** can be very unhealthy for them. Along with the associated health risks from a bad diet, overweight animals are less able to evade predators.





## Spread of Disease

Offering foods such as raw meat can expose animals to **parasitic disease** such as the potentially fatal parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. If numerous animals are feeding from the one feeding station the risk of **disease transmission** between them is also much greater.

## Disrupting natural behaviour

Feeding bobtails may also result in a **loss of fear for humans**, and as a result make them **more vulnerable to abuse** by other people or bring them into contact with **household pets** i.e. cats and dogs.

## What can I do instead to help bobtails living in my garden?

There are plenty of things you can do **to encourage reptiles living in your garden without the risk of causing them harm.**

- Ensure bobtails are safe from pets on your property.
  - Keep cats indoors, or contained within an outdoor enclosure.
  - Provide a “dog free” area of your garden. Use **ring-lock fencing** to separate out part of the yard.
- Plant **plenty of native vegetation and mulch around your garden**, to provide shelter and food sources.
- Keep a substantial amount of leaf litter to encourage insects for the bobtail to eat.
- Provide some **basking spaces, such as rocks**, for these cold blooded reptiles to warm up.
- **Avoid using plant and insect poisons**, which can be fatal to bobtails – either by the bobtail eating the poison, or by the bobtail eating poisoned bugs or plant matter covered in poison. Additionally, killing insects will remove a food source for the lizards.
- **Do not remove bobtails from your property and release them elsewhere.** This is illegal (*Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*). The survival of animals after being moved in this way is very low. Bobtails are monogamous (they tend to have the same breeding partner for life) and moving a bobtail will separate it from its mate.

## Feeding bobtails is not recommended. If you must feed them, you should aim to minimise the risk of harm:

- Offer **very small portions** of safer foods, and **not everyday**.
  - **Snails are a favourite food of bobtails** and readily available in the garden. Make sure they haven't been exposed to snail pellets.
- Plant low, fruiting plants in the garden, such as strawberries, to provide a treat for the bobtails alongside their own foraging of native foodstuffs.

## Source:

<sup>1</sup> Nagy, K.A., Girard, I.A., Brown, T.K. 1999. Energetics of free-ranging mammals, reptiles and birds. *Ann. Rev. Nutr.* 19: 247-277

