

Caring for Your Ferret



About Ferrets

The domestic ferret (*Mustela putorius furo*) is a small furry mammal in the weasel (Mustelidae) family. Ferrets are not rodents. Ferrets, by nature, are inquisitive, funny and energetic animals.

Habitat

Your ferret's habitat should include:

- Wire enclosure with a safety lock – large enough for a ferret to play in. Enclosures with multi-levels are highly recommended.
- High Back Litter Pan – ferrets like to back into corners before they eliminate waste.
- Biodegradable Litter – safe and natural for ferrets and disposable.
- Water Bottle – your ferret needs a fresh water supply every day.
- Food bowl – ferrets are free-feeding animals, so it is important to have fresh food available at all times.
- Sleeping hammock, tube or sack – ferrets require more sleep than many other pets due to their fast metabolism, so it's necessary for them to have a safe and cozy environment for sleeping.

Water and Food

Ferrets need a nutritionally complete diet high in meat protein. Because ferrets are carni-

vores, your pet needs meat protein to keep it healthy. Your ferret should have fresh food and water available at all times.

Treats should be fed in moderation and should not be used as a diet substitute. Avoid treats with dairy or sugar.

Grooming

Ferrets are clean animals and groom themselves. When ferrets shed, however, they do have a tendency to get hairballs, so it is important to have a malt-based laxative on hand, such as Ferret Lax, to alleviate this problem.

Keeping Your Ferret Healthy

Your ferret should have its first distemper vaccination when they are between 7 to 9 weeks old; verify this with your pet store. We recommend that your pet receive the full series of distemper vaccinations to be given at 9, 12 and 16 weeks of age. Your ferret should re-vaccinated annually. Ferrets should also receive a rabies vaccination after 13 weeks of age, and then annually.

Ferrets are very curious animals and love to explore their surroundings, so be sure to supervise your ferret whenever he/she is out of its enclosure and around small children.

Ferrets are prone to chew things, especially rubber, which is not digestible and therefore very dangerous. Make sure you provide safe chewing toys and remove any latex, rubber or soft plastic from their play areas.

Keep electrical cords out of reach.

Provide interactive toys such as tunnels, tubes and hard plastic balls to encourage physical activity from your ferret.

Ferrets love the outdoors and should be secured with a leash, harness, or in a safe carrying sack when they are out of your house.

Avoiding Human Illness

Ferrets may carry diseases that can be transmitted to humans. The simple precautions below can help prevent the risk of infection.

✓ Closely supervise children and make sure they wash their hands with soap and water after handling small animals, their habitats or anything in their habitats.

✓ As cute and cuddly as they are, do not kiss small animals. Illnesses are sometimes spread this way.

✓ Never use food-preparation areas to clean small animal habitats or anything in their habitats. If you clean the habitat in the bathroom, disinfect the area completely afterwards.

✓ Clean the habitat, food and water bowls in a well-ventilated area.

Children under 5, pregnant women, senior citizens, and people with weakened immune systems run a greater risk of infection; contact your health care provider for more information.

This information is designed as a basic guide. There are several books and online resources available which provide in-depth information on ferrets and their care.