

----- Feeding

As ferrets in nature are carnivorous predators, the most balanced & natural diet to feed ferrets is a whole prey diet. Appropriate sized prey animals include mice, rats, or chicks which can be purchased frozen or live. The next best choice to feeding a whole prey diet is to feed a natural prepared ferret food, a balanced raw carnivore diet. These diets are available in either freeze-dried or frozen form. Ferrets need a high protein diet, you can either feed ferret specific foods or a high protein kitten food. Make sure the dish you choose for your ferrets food is heavy enough that he or she can't flip it. A ceramic, chew proof dish is your best option. For many, ferret food has been dry processed ferret diets (very much like dry kitten food), but you must be careful in choosing this type of food, read the label closely before purchasing. There are a few supplements your ferret can take. Ferrets love to have treats, just be sure they are appropriate for your pet to keep it healthy. They like protein so raw meat scraps or raw eggs are wonderful treats. Dairy products, nuts, & sugar should definitely be avoided. Ferrets must have access to water at all times. Put water in a heavy dish or in a water bottle attached to the side of the cage.

Seek veterinary attention if your pet changes behavior or becomes inactive; this may indicate the pet has an illness.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for proper pet practices. Be prepared to take an ill pet to a Veterinarian & know which Veterinarian in your area can treat your pet.



check-list ✓

Your pet Ferret requires...

- Aquarium or Cage of appropriate size & wire gauge
- Water bottle(best), dish or bowl
- Substrate or bedding material
- Cave/Den/Hiding spot
- Toys/tunnels/swings (for climbing & exercise)
- Food dish for Ferret appropriate pellets or block
- Food dish for fresh fruits & veg'



Ferrets

- weighing between 1lb. - 5lb., with the average length of 20 inches including a 5-inch tail
- Life Span: 7 - 10 years on average.



----- Temperament

The history of the ferret's domestication is uncertain, but it is likely that ferrets have been domesticated for at least 3000 years. They are still used for hunting rabbits in some parts of the world today, but increasingly they are being kept simply as pets. The name "ferret" is derived from the Latin furittus, meaning "little thief", a likely reference to the common ferret penchant for secreting away small items. For millennia, the main use of ferrets was for hunting, or ferreting. With their long, lean build, & inquisitive nature, ferrets are very well equipped for getting down holes & chasing rodents out of their burrows. Caesar Augustus sent ferrets to the Balearic Islands to control the rabbit plagues in 6 BC.

Ferrets can be just as great of a companion as a dog or cat, but do need a lot of attention. Ferrets love to play games such as hide & seek, tag, chase or tug-of-war. Ferrets in the wild spend lots of their time in sleeping in their burrows, eating, & hunting. Nocturnal by nature, they will adapt to what your schedule is. Ferrets are extremely playful & curious, so as long as they are allowed to run around the house or yard for a few hours a day. They should get plenty of exercise which is vital to their health. Since ferrets are so curious, it is necessary to ferret-proof the areas he will be exploring. Put cardboard around the vents & openings of dishwashers, refrigerators, or cabinets to keep him from getting into them. You can put down floor covers to help prevent your ferret for 'digging' your carpet. Ferrets are very sociable creatures & like to be part of a group. They will get along with any other ferrets - whether female or male. The only exception to this is un-neutered males. If males are not neutered they will often fight with each other during breeding season. They are also good companions for many of the other house members including dogs, & cats. Pets that should especially be watched when they are first introduced include rodents (ferrets natural prey) & hunting dogs, they may see the ferrets as game.

Housing



Ferrets are smart, hardy & a good pet choice. They are trainable & intelligent.

A ferret's habitat should include his own cage or his own room of the house, as well as other areas of the house in which he can explore. A cage should be at least 24 inches wide, 24 inches long, & 18 inches high. The ideal cage would be multi-level with many toys to keep them occupied. Tunnels, hammocks, or hanging toys keep ferrets busy & act as sleep spots. Ferrets like to sleep in a place that is dark, warm & dry. Use soft fabric materials for the sleeping area. A cage will also need a litter box. Ferrets should also be given other areas to live or explore in & not spend all their time in a cage. Give them at least a few hours a day to roam around certain areas of the house. They also love the interaction.

Many owners treat ferrets as they would a cat, not caging the ferret & instead securing the home environment for the animal. Ferrets can get into very unlikely or tiny spots. Furniture & appliances need to be considered if the ferret is allow free run. Ferrets don't necessarily need a cage as they are fairly easy to litter train. To do this at first you are going to have to take care of a few messes. Your ferret will choose places to do their business. When they do this take a box on it's side or a small litter box with a high back, fill the box with litter then pick up the feces & put it in the box. Most ferrets pick up this litter training fairly easily. The easiest & cleanest thing to cover the ground is towels, when they get soiled just throw them in the washing machine! Ferrets have distinctive, engaging personalities & a fastidious nature. They are active animals & should not be caged unless required, though a cage used as a "safe haven" is highly recommended. They are very gregarious and are usually happiest in groups of two or more. Ferrets sleep eighteen to twenty hours of the day, waking up several times. Greatest activity occurs during two hours around sunrise & sunset, when they play endlessly.

- **Water:** The water bottle is best as a constant water source. Ferrets tend to tread in water bowls or tip them, they often become a labour. Make sure you replace the water in the same spot each time for them to find it.

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Health



Ferrets must be vaccinated for Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) annually, as well as Rabies. There are laws governing these vaccinations & your veterinarian can advise you in regarding what is required in your area. Ferrets are known to suffer from several distinct health issues. Among the most common are cancers affecting the adrenal glands, pancreas, & lymphatic system. Viral diseases include canine distemper & influenza. Health problems can occur in unspayed females when not being used for breeding. Certain health problems have also been linked to ferrets being neutered before reaching sexual maturity. Certain colors of ferret may also carry a genetic defect known as Waardenburg syndrome. Similar to domestic cats, ferrets can also suffer from hairballs & dental problems. And, like a domestic cat, most vets will know about these problems & how to treat them. Always take your pet to a veterinarian for a yearly check-up or if your pet displays unusual behavior. Signs that indicate your ferret may not be feeling well include: watery eyes, listless attitude, short & broken whiskers, abscesses, excessive scratching & biting the skin, unnatural feces, anal bleeding, underweight, or black substance in the ears. If your ferret has watery droppings & appears to have diarrhea, then the cause is most likely from having products with milk in them, or from a rapid change in diet.

Behavior & Interaction

Ferrets are sweet little trouble makers. Owning a Ferret is like owning a little kitten. They are a lot of fun & extremely curious. They are also thieves, but they will pick one or two places to stash things, once you find this it is easy enough to steal your stuff back! Ferrets are a joy to own, the majority are extremely affectionate & great play mates. Providing a variety of stimulating & safe toys is a great way to keep your ferret happy. Ferrets will play with almost anything, but it is important to pick toys that are durable & won't pose a safety hazard to your pet. Ferrets do not usually chew or claw furniture or mark their territory & are quiet. Being indoor pets which use a litter box, they do not require daily walks in the park. They are ideal pets for apartment dwellers & good for most allergy sufferers.

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