



## Owning and Caring For Pet Ferrets

These intelligent, highly entertaining creatures will win your heart with their curiosity, loving nature, and unique personalities. Ferrets are known for bonding closely with their owners. Take the best qualities of dogs and cats, wrap them up into a cute, smaller package, and you've got a ferret!

### Facts:

- Lifespan 6-13 years
- Weight 1.5-6 lbs
- Neutered and descented by 5-6wks
- Gestation (pregnancy) about 40-42 days
- They are carnivores
- Sleep 18-20 hours/day
- Can be litter trained
- Love to wrestle and play

### Common Problems:

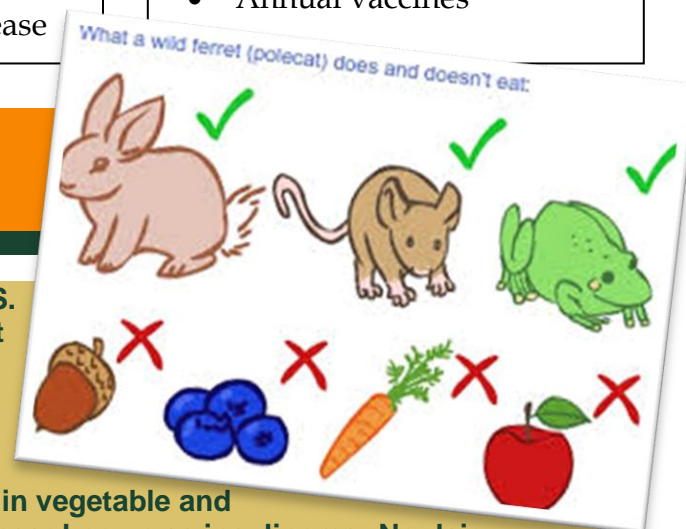
- Adrenal gland disease
- Gastric ulcers
- Intestinal foreign body
- Lymphoma
- Insulinoma
- Aplastic anemia
- Back injuries
- Cold and flu
- Skin tumors
- Green Slime Disease

### Preventative Care:

- Complete physical exam every 6-12 months
- Yearly fecal exam to check for parasites
- Annual blood work to monitor organ function
- Regular dental prophylaxis
- Year round use of heart worm and flea prevention
- Annual vaccines

## DIET ESSENTIALS

Ferrets are weasels, and as such are obligate CARNIVORES. This means they need meat in their diet. Dry ferret food that is high in protein and fat, low in fiber, carbs, and sugar should be your pet's primary diet. There are many high-grade ferret foods on the market, however, be sure to read the ingredients to make sure that the food is not fish-based. Its also good to avoid foods which are too high in vegetable and grain matter as this can help predispose your ferret to a cancer known as insulinoma. No dairy products, fruits, vegetables, or foods high in fiber, carbs, and sugar. It is best to feed them several small meals throughout the day, and offer them fresh water daily. You may offer an assortment of treats and vitamin supplements to ensure your ferret is getting all the nutrients he/she needs. Changing foods or flavours abruptly may give your ferret GI upset, so it is best to transition to new foods slowly.





- Dog food
- Adult cat food
- Cooked bones
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Bread or grains
- Sugar free things containing Xylitol
- Caffeine
- Dairy products
- Plants
- Garlic
- Nuts



Some good treat options for your beloved ferret would include commercially produced ferret treats from a local pet store, meats, eggs, freeze dried meat (available as cat/dog treats), meat containing baby foods (without added carbs), and semi-moist meat or liver snacks.

## Behavior

Ferrets are highly intelligent and social pets that do best in small groups. It is highly recommended you consider adopting a pair of ferrets so they will always have a companion to socialize with. Ferrets love to play, they are not pets that can be caged all the time like gerbils, hamsters and mice.

They also like to wrestle and play-fight. They tend to play rough, but they learn to be careful with humans if their human playmates yelp when nipped. A firm “no!” will also get the job done. Some ferrets will “speed bump” as they play, this means they suddenly lie very still on the floor.

Touching them might make them sad because a speed-bumping ferret is *invisible*, but make sure to make a fuss once they get up and play again! They are also extremely inquisitive, anything you may have in your home IS of interest, so “ferret proofing” your home is a must so they do not get caught in between, underneath or behind things.

## Environment

Ferrets should live in a single- or multi-level, open wire cage with solid floor designed for specifically for ferrets. Keep in mind they are masters of escape. Make sure cage doors are secure and ferrets cannot squeeze through any openings. Place the cage in a quiet location and maintain a temperature of 60°F to 80°F.

Your ferret needs several litter boxes: one for the cage and several for playtime outside the cage. The best litters to use are recycled newspaper products or aspen shavings (avoid cedar and pine shavings, which can irritate the respiratory tract, and clay or clumping cat litter, which may be ingested by ferrets). The litter box should be cleaned daily. Use a towel, hammock, blanket, or old shirt for bedding. To limit musky odor, wash bedding frequently. The cage should also contain a dark enclosure such as a wooden hut, where the ferrets can make a nest for sleeping. Sturdy toys with no small parts that can be chewed and swallowed are best. Avoid toys made of foam rubber, latex, or plastic that might be chewed and ingested.

## Training

Like all weasels, ferrets can be trained to use a litter box, a “piddle pad,” or newspaper as a toilet. However, it is important that their bathroom be located in the same room they play, because unlike a cat or puppy, a ferret can’t “hold it” very long. You’ll have the most success if the litter box or piddle pad is placed in the corner of the room, to take advantage of your pet’s natural preferences. Ferrets are also receptive to other forms of training such as sitting, coming when called, leash walking, and shaking paws.



## Grooming

Ferrets are naturally clean animals, and tend their own fur carefully. They need a bowl of water in order to wash their faces, and they clean the rest of their coat in the same fashion as a cat. Baths should be kept to a minimum, regular bathing may make your ferret smell good

for a night, but its strips the natural oils off their fur and they will then overcompensate for this by producing even more! They will then get A LOT smellier and their skin will dry out.

