

FERRETS

- Ferrets were originally domesticated from the European polecat around 2500 years ago.
- Live 6-8 years on average (sometimes up to 11 or 12)
- Females are called jills; males are hobs; babies are kits. Spayed females are sprites and neutered males gibs. A group of ferrets is a "business of ferrets."
- Ferrets have relatively poor eyesight but a keen sense of smell and hearing.
- Ferret is derived from the latin furonem, which means "thief."

Diet

Unlike many small animals kept as pets, ferrets are strictly carnivores. In the wild they eat rabbits, mice, rats and other small mammals. Ferrets require a low-fiber diet that is a minimum of 30% animal protein and 18% fat. Ferrets have a high metabolism, needing to eat every 3-4 hours. Both food and fresh water should always be available.

Housing

Ferrets love to play and are best kept in large multi-level cages that feature ramps, shelves, tubes and toys. Solid floors and shelves are easier on their feet than wire mesh. Ferrets are escape artists so make sure the cage is closed securely. Place the cage away from direct sunlight within a 55 to 70°F temperature range. Like cats, ferrets enjoy their naps and may sleep 15–20 hours a day and will love their hammock and sleep sack to curl up in. With training and positive reinforcement your ferret can learn to use a litter pan.

Handling & Care

Slide your hand under the Ferret's chest and gently lift while supporting the hind end with the other hand. Teething babies can be a bit nippy. Handle your new ferret frequently so that it becomes accustomed to being handled. If it starts to bite, discipline it with a firm "No" command. A taste deterrent spray on your hands can help train your ferret not to bite when handled. Ferrets are very active, inquisitive and curious. They should be allowed free time out of the cage daily with direct supervision. Without supervision they will invariably get into some sort of mischief and possibly hurt themselves.

Grooming

A ferret's sebaceous glands secrete oil with a natural musky odor. Change their bedding weekly to reduce odors. When you do bathe your ferret, use a mild ferret shampoo and lukewarm water. Most ferrets really enjoy bathing time. Dry with a soft, fluffy towel, especially in the winter as ferrets are subject to colds. Keep your ferret free of fleas with ferret flea shampoo & spray. Never use a flea collar or a flea dip on a ferret. A light brushing with a soft bristled brush or grooming mitt can be helpful when ferrets are going through a shedding phase and can help prevent hairballs. Trim your ferret's nails easily by putting a little Ferratone or Nutrical on the ferret's stomach then pointing the nose toward the treat; this will keep the ferret busy long enough for you to get the job done. To prevent common ear problems, their ears should be cleaned with a ferret ear cleaning solution every 2-3 weeks.

Health

Your ferret is already spayed/neutered and vaccinated for distemper and Rabies which need to be boosted yearly. Ferrets tend to develop hair balls after they are about a year old, but unlike a cat they can not vomit them up. This can cause intestinal blockages. To avoid this, give your ferret about 1 inch of Laxatone twice a week. Ferrets cannot sweat; exposure to temps over 85°F may cause heat stroke.



FERRET CHECKLIST

- Ferret Diet & Treats
- Heavy Feed Dish
- Water Bottle
- Cage with Solid Bottom
- Litter Box, Pelleted Litter
- Tunnels, Toys
- Hammock, Sleep Sack
- Laxatone
- Ear Cleaner
- Brush and Shampoo
- Nail Trimmer
- Collar; Harness, Leash
- Ferret Book