

FERRETS

Ferrets are small members of the weasel family that have been domesticated for more than two thousand years. These energetic little bundles of curiosity are a big responsibility, often referred to as a cross between a cat and a dog but requiring as much, if not more, care than a cat or dog.

- **Common Name:** Ferret
- **Scientific Name:** *Mustela putorius furo*
- **Distribution:** Europe and Asia
- **Size:** 1.5 – 4.4 lbs
- **Life Span:** 6 – 10 years

Habitat

- The size of the cage depends on the number of ferrets you plan to own. A single ferret needs a cage that will allow space for one bed, one litter box, a food dish, and room to play. More ferrets will need room for more beds, food dishes, and play space. A good cage should be at least 30 to 60 inches (76 to 91 cm) long, 18 to 24 inches (46 to 61 cm) wide and a minimum of 20 inches (51 cm) high. Line the cage with paper towels or copy paper (better choices than newspaper) and change them regularly. Set up the cage with perches, water/food dishes and toys. Bring the bird home to quiet place and play soft music for a few days.

- Make sure the cage walls are made of closely-spaced sturdy wire. Wire walls allow air to flow through the cage. Ferrets need good ventilation; never house ferrets in aquariums, no matter how big the aquarium is, they are unsanitary and can lead to serious health problems. Aquariums are for fish, not ferrets.

- Make sure the door is big enough for a litter pan to fit. For ease of cleaning and maintenance.

- Get a cage with a strong, escape-proof latch. Ferrets are very clever and if it is at all possible, they will figure out how to

escape. Be careful of spring latches and small gaps. If your ferret tries to squeeze out, he could get stuck and suffocate.

- Know that ferrets paws are not designed for wire floors. If the cage you choose has wire floors cover them with a piece of fitted linoleum, which is a breeze to clean.
- Make sure the cage has distinct sleeping, eating, and toilet areas. Also make sure that you can secure the litter box and food dish to the cage. If they're not secured, they will be tipped over and used as toys.
- Don't buy a cage that uses painted or pressure-treated woods or metals containing toxins such as lead or zinc.
- Ferrets are relatively easy to litter box train.... due to their habit of “going” in the same area. You can use a regular cat litterpan and cat litter. This makes them about as easy to keep as a cat. Most people say that you need to use a special ferret littler like Marshall Ferret Litter because there is no dust. I have been using a cheap, basic cat litter and have had no problems! If you buy a litter with an excessive amount of dust it can cause respiratory problems so you may have to do trials of different litters.

Nutrition

- Ferrets, like cats, are obligate carnivores (meat eaters). They cannot survive without meat in their diet. However, although fresh raw meat is part of the ferret's natural diet, it may contain harmful parasites and micro-organisms that create risks unacceptable to pet owners. Meat is only part of a natural diet: predators eat not only the muscle meat of their prey, they also eat the liver, kidneys, and intestinal tract, and crunch up bones as well. A diet limited to meat alone would cause harmful and eventually fatal nutritional imbalances. Feed fresh vegetables such as kale, beets, peas, carrots, parsley, cooked yams, sliced apple, mandarin oranges, citrus, and the like. Food can be clipped to the bars of the cage or chopped small in a food processor and put in a bowl.

- The best way to feed ferrets is to always leave dry, pelleted food with them. Moist food sours after a few hours, especially in warm weather. This is one of the advantages of a dry diet. Convenience and keeping quality are other advantages, plus the beneficial effect crunchy food has on the ferret's teeth. Ferrets on moist diets develop much more plaque on their teeth sooner than ferrets on the same food fed dry
- Ferrets are natural diggers and like to dig their food out of the container, especially if it is filled to the top. The best way to prevent this is to use a deep crockery bowl, or a plastic dish clipped high enough on the side of the cage to make it awkward for the ferret to dig in it. An adult female requires only about a quarter of a cup of food daily, so there is no need to fill the container very full. If you have multiple ferrets, it is better to use several dishes than to try to provide enough food in a single large container
- Ferrets on dry diets must have a constant supply of water. The volume of water required is about three times the volume of dry pellets eaten. In warm weather they drink much more. Ferrets that have no water for 24 hours will stop eating. Water bottles are a convenient way to keep clean water available, but ferrets prefer to drink from a dish and will drink much more from a dish than from a bottle. A dish of fresh water can be clipped onto the side of the cage, or made available to the ferrets when they get out for exercise. Kits and juveniles will usually play in a dish of water left on the cage floor, contaminating it with food and litter.
- Ferrets don't need snacks, but owners sometimes need to feel good about themselves by giving their pet a treat. A treat can also be a useful training aid, and may some day make the difference between searching for hours for a sleeping ferret, and having the ferret immediately wake up and come to you when you shake the treat can or box.

TIPS

- Play/Interact With Your Ferret Every Day
- Ferret-Proof Any Rooms Your Ferret Can Access
- Know Your Ferret's Habits
- Continue Educating Yourself About Ferrets

This is only a basic care sheet,
Please continue to educate yourself on your new family
member.