

Ferret Care

Caring for Your Ferret: A Guide for New Pet Owners

Ferrets are domesticated relatives of the European polecat, and they're part of the mustelidae family, along with otters, weasels, and badgers. While ferrets have long been used for hunting and pest control, these curious and playful animals are becoming increasingly popular as pets.



Ferret Basics

- **Females** are called jills, **males** are hobs, and **babies** are kits.
- Males tend to be larger than females and can have a strong, musky odour if not neutered.

Are Ferrets Good Pets?

Ferrets are lively, social, and full of energy, which makes them entertaining companions. However, they can also be tricky to handle and may bite if startled, so

they may not be ideal pets for young children.



How Long Do Ferrets Live?

On average, ferrets live between 6 to 10 years, though some may reach up to 15 years. Before getting a ferret, be sure you're ready for the commitment.

Do Ferrets Need a Friend?

Yes! Ferrets are highly social creatures and usually prefer having a fellow ferret to play with. While they can thrive in groups (especially if they're littermates), ferrets also need plenty of human interaction. If you keep a single ferret, be prepared to spend lots of time with them to prevent loneliness and behavioural issues.



Fun Fact: Ferrets can even make friends with dogs and cats, but be sure to supervise their interactions closely. Just be careful with prey animals like rabbits or rodents, as the scent of a ferret can be stressful for them.

When Do Ferrets Sleep?

Ferrets are crepuscular, meaning they're most active during dawn and dusk. These little guys sleep *a lot*—up to 18 to 20 hours a day!

Do Ferrets Smell?

Ferrets do have a natural musky odour, especially unneutered males. Neutering can help reduce the smell, and their coats will feel less greasy afterward.

Where Can I Get a Ferret?

Before getting a ferret, make sure you do your research on their specific needs. While we don't rehome ferrets ourselves, organisations like the RSPCA and specialist ferret rescues often have ferrets available for adoption. Responsible breeders are another option, but rehoming is often a good choice because of the ongoing support they provide.

Ferrets come in several colours, such as pole (sable), dew (white with dark eyes),



sandy, silver, and albino.

What Do Ferrets Need?

Ferrets require quite a few essentials, including:

- Spacious housing or a large cage
- Bedding, hammocks, and blankets
- Food and water bowls (earthenware or stainless steel)
- Tunnels, platforms, and toys for enrichment
- A carry case for vet visits

Ferrets also need constant access to fresh water and space to exercise. If you're considering a ferret, pet insurance is a good idea, as they are prone to injuries and illnesses.



Housing Your Ferret

Ferrets can live indoors or outdoors. Outdoor enclosures should be large (at least 10 ft long by 6 ft high) and offer insulated sleeping areas, plenty of toys, and protection from direct sunlight and drafts. If kept indoors, ferrets can live in tall cages, similar to those used for chinchillas, with multiple levels for climbing.

Important Tip: Never keep ferrets in a garage with vehicles—fumes can be deadly!

Keeping Your Ferret Clean

Ferrets like to hoard food, so it's important to clean their enclosure regularly to prevent mold. Litter training is also possible with ferrets. Use high-sided corner trays and place them where your ferret naturally prefers to go to the bathroom for the best results.

Exercise and Play

Ferrets are incredibly active and curious, so daily exercise is essential. Whether they're in the house or a large outdoor run, they need room to explore and play. Ferrets can even be trained to walk on a leash! Just be sure to use a secure harness and keep an eye out for any dogs or other animals while you're out.



Feeding Your Ferret

Ferrets are obligate carnivores, meaning they need a meat-based diet. You can feed them high-protein commercial ferret kibble, a raw diet (including meat, organs, and bones), or a combination of both.

Treats: Raw eggs in their shells can be given as a fun, occasional treat.

Foods to Avoid: Never feed ferrets chocolate, grapes, raisins, processed meats, or dairy products like milk or cheese. These can be harmful and cause digestive issues.

Keeping Ferrets Healthy

Regular vet checkups are essential for ferrets. Ferrets are prone to fleas, ticks, ear mites, and even distemper, so keep them vaccinated and pest-free. Also, did you know ferrets can catch the flu from humans? Wash your hands after handling your pet to avoid spreading illness.

Neutering and Hormonal Care

Both male and female ferrets can be neutered, but there's a risk of adrenal gland disease after the procedure, so consult your vet about the best option for your pet. Female ferrets (jills) that aren't spayed need to have their seasons managed through hormonal implants or injections, as staying in heat can cause severe health problems like anaemia.

Handling and Socialising Your Ferret



Ferrets can bite, especially if they're young and haven't been handled much, so it's best to start socialising them early. When picking up your ferret, always use two hands—one around their shoulders and the other supporting their back legs. If they're wriggly, you can relax them by gently holding them under their arms and swinging them side to side.

Ferret-Proofing Your Home

Before letting your ferrets roam around the house, make sure it's ferret-proofed! Cover cables, move poisonous plants, and keep cleaning products and medicines out of reach. Ferrets love dark, enclosed spaces, so always check washing machines, dryers, and cupboards before closing them.

By giving your ferret the care and attention they need, you'll have a fun-loving and curious companion for years to come!