

Ferret

Mustela putorius furo



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Ferrets are affectionate, intelligent small animals that love to play and explore. They are known for their happy, inquisitive nature and humorous behavior. If given daily exercise and attention, they make wonderful family companions. Ferrets have scent glands that produce a musky smell.



Is a ferret the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

1. I have an appropriate location and space for a ferret.
2. I will make sure my home is ferret-proofed.
3. I will provide daily, supervised time for this ferret outside the habitat.
4. I have considered possible compatibility issues if I have other companion animals/aquatic life.
5. A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered, "Yes" to these statements, a ferret may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for a ferret and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care. All PETCO ferrets have been spayed or neutered and scent glands removed.

Average Size 15 inches long

Life Span Up to 8 years with proper care

Diet High-quality ferret food; ferrets are obligate carnivores

Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily

Do not feed ferrets dairy products, chocolate, sugary foods and beverages, caffeine, alcohol, salty foods, seeds, or nuts as these can cause serious medical problems

Feeding Food and fresh water should always be available; small servings of treats

All food given to ferrets 16 weeks or younger should be moistened for easy consumption

Housing Ferrets acclimate well to average household temperatures; be cautious of extreme temperature changes; habitat should never be in direct sunlight or in a drafty area

Ferrets need large, multi-tiered wire-sided habitats with good ventilation, a secure door, a solid floor and a pullout tray for easy cleaning; openings between wires should be small so the habitat is escape-proof; habitat should also include a hammock, tube, litter box, and toys

1-2 inches of bedding may be placed in the habitat; proper bedding includes hardwood shavings and pelleted or recycled products; cedar bedding may cause harm and is not recommended

Different types of small animals should not be housed together



Habitattitude

Recommended Supplies

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large, multi-tiered habitat | <input type="checkbox"/> Bedding | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High-quality ferret food | <input type="checkbox"/> Food bowl | <input type="checkbox"/> Litter box/litter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water bottle | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft brush | <input type="checkbox"/> Ferret shampoo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about ferrets | <input type="checkbox"/> Harness and leash | <input type="checkbox"/> Nail clippers/Kwik stop |

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Normal Behavior and Interaction Intelligent, playful, and mischievous; love to collect and hide household items; love to dig, so be conscious of house plants

Some ferrets may communicate by making entertaining noises or by using body language

Nipping is a natural behavior to get attention or show defensiveness when awakened

Habitat Maintenance Scoop litter box daily; change bedding weekly or more often as necessary

Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to dry completely before placing the ferret back into the habitat

Grooming and Hygiene Monthly baths are recommended, or more often as necessary, using ferret shampoo; ferrets have a natural musky order that bathing will not remove; outer ears should be cleaned using a cotton ball and ear-cleaning solution

Nails should be cut every two to three weeks

Fur may be brushed daily with a soft brush; ferrets shed coat twice a year

Because all ferrets are potential carriers of infectious diseases, such as cold & flu – including H1N1 - always wash your hands before and after handling your ferret and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential of spread of diseases.

Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems should contact their physician before purchasing and/or caring for a ferret and should consider not having a ferret as a pet. For more information regarding ferrets and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/> and PETCO at <http://www.petco.com/pet care info/companion animal care sheets>.

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Active and sociable when awake
- Shiny coat and clear eyes
- Sleeps up to 18 hours per day
- Eats and drinks regularly

Distemper vaccinations are required at 9, 12 and 16 weeks of age; rabies vaccinations are required between 13 – 16 weeks of age from an exotic animal veterinarian. After that time, ferrets require annual vaccinations.

Common Health Issues	Health Issue	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
	Diarrhea	Loose stools caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or infectious organisms.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian to determine cause and treatment.
	Ear Mites	Parasite that causes itching and brownish discharge in ears.	Contact an exotic animal veterinarian for treatment.
	Heat Stroke	Emergency condition that can occur if ferret is left in hot room. Symptoms include heavy panting, seizures, and loss of consciousness.	Can be fatal; contact an exotic animal veterinarian immediately.

Red Flags

- Weight loss
- Distressed breathing
- Skin lesions
- Abnormal hair loss
- Lethargic
- Diarrhea or dirty bottom
- Eye or nasal discharge

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources *Choosing a Small Mammal* by Dennis Kelsey-Wood
Ferrets for Dummies by Kim Shilling
The ASPCA Complete Guide to Pet Care by David L. Carroll

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.