Bite & Litter Training Your Ferret

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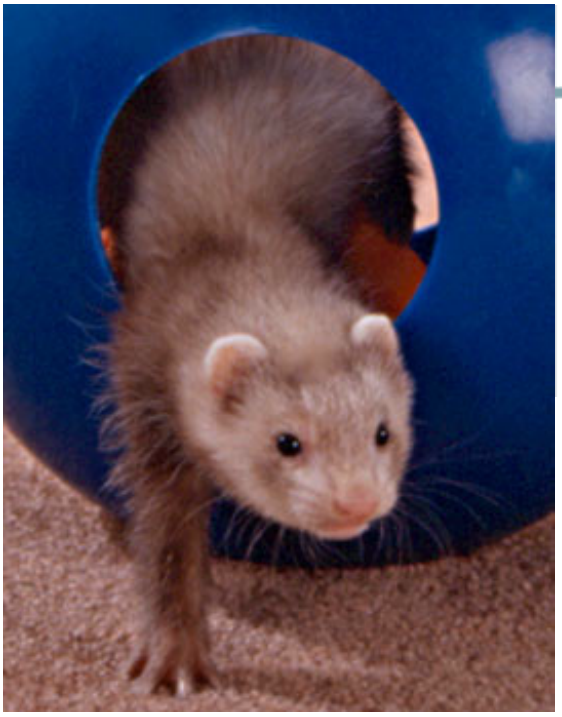

what products can I use to help me train my ferret?

Part of being a responsible ferret owner is training and socializing your ferret. The two most important kinds of training you will need to accomplish are bite training and litter training. While there are other forms of training you can introduce, such as clicker training, both bite training and litter training are an absolute necessity to prevent unwanted behavior by your ferret. Some of the methods for these different kinds of training are well known, but many ferret owners aren't aware that there are a variety of products available to help make training easier for you and your ferret.

What products can I use to bite train my ferret?

All ferrets need at least some bite prevention training, and ferrets with a fondness for biting will need more extensive training. Baby ferrets, called kits, are very nippy; this is a natural behavior, and it's due to two reasons. First, baby ferrets explore their environment with their mouths, and you're part of their environment. The second reason is that ferrets bite each other when they play, and your kit is interacting with you in the only way he instinctively knows how. He doesn't understand that while his thick skin protects him from playful bites, you have thin skin that is easily broken. Bite training should start as soon as you bring your ferret home, and should be reinforced throughout his life, whenever necessary.

Bite training is most successful when you combine positive reinforcement of good behavior with time-outs for bad behavior, and prevention of situations that could lead to biting.

The most common bite training technique is to scruff your ferret (grasp him by the loose skin on the back of his neck) and say "no" loudly and firmly when he bites. Do not yell or scream, and do not tap, hit, flick or otherwise act physically threatening toward your ferret. This type of behavior will most likely result in your ferret fearing you, which will cause him to be more likely to bite out of fear and will likely negatively affect the bond you form with him.

If you bring home an older ferret that bites, it's very likely that he was never trained as a kit that biting humans isn't acceptable. You can use the same methods and products to train an older ferret that you would a kit, though it may take longer to complete the training because you have months or years of bad behavior to correct. Be sure you are extra patient in this situation. Old habits can be a challenge to break.

The following products can be useful when used with other bite training methods:

- Fooey! for Ferrets
  This bite deterrent spray is incredibly bitter, and often works in cases where Bitter Apple does not. It provides a safe, effective way to stop destructive chewing, biting, licking and gnawing behavior. Fooey! is alcohol-free and can be sprayed directly on your skin or other items

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around your home.

- Marshall Cord Protector
  This product is related to bite training as well, though it protects your ferret, not you. Because of their rubbery texture, electrical cords are a favorite for ferrets to chew on. This is obviously very dangerous, and any cords that cannot be fastened out of the ferret's reach (when he is standing on his hind legs, not on all four legs) should be covered by a Cord Protector.
- Ferret Play Paw
  Play Paws work well to teach your ferret when he can and cannot bite. When you put the Play Paw on, allow your ferret to bite it as much as he wants. When you aren't wearing the Play Paw, use one of the training methods to discipline him if he bites you. This will help him to learn the difference between when it's okay to bite and when it is forbidden. However, you don't want to wear the Play Paw all the time, or he won't get used to playing with you (i.e.: human skin) directly.

All of these products are effective, but only when used in conjunction with proper bite training methods. It is not realistic to expect that a bite deterrent spray or a play paw alone is going to teach your ferret not to bite. You need to work with him and train him how to interact with humans.

What products can I use to litter train my ferret?

Some ferrets will come into your home already litter trained, but many will need some training, and older ferrets often need to be retrained later in life. It's important to realize that most ferrets will never be completely trained to the point where they use the litter box every single time, but it is possible to get them at least 95% of the way there with a little time, effort, and patience.

Some items that are important for litter training are just regular products. You need to be sure you have a big enough litter box - ferrets prefer one that they can get all four feet in comfortably. You also want to choose a litter that they like, or they will refuse to use the litter pan. There are a variety of litters available, including recycled newspaper litter, wood pellet litter, 100% Bentonite pearl litter, wheat-based clumping litter, and more.

Other daily products that can help with litter training include food and water bowls and bedding. These can be placed in corners in your ferret's cage or out in his play area to discourage him from going to the bathroom there.

The following items will help you to successfully litter train your ferret when used along with litter training methods:

- Nature's Miracle Just for Ferrets This product is a must-have for cleaning up accidents outside the litter pan. Nature's Miracle is an enzyme-based formula that not only removes new urine and feces stains, it gets rid of old ones as well. The reason it works so well is because it completely breaks down the odors, eliminating them completely. Ferrets find their toilet by smell, so if they can still smell the accident, they're going to continue to improperly eliminate in the same place.

All of these products can make it easier for you to litter train your ferret, and can even reduce the training time significantly. However, as with bite training, it's important that you work with your ferret for successful, lasting litter training. Always watch your ferret when he's having out of cage playtime so you can catch him if he starts to back up in a corner without a litter pan.

Remember, the key to any type of ferret training is patience! Your ferret can be taught not to bite and to use the litter box regularly as long as you're willing to put in the time and effort to complete the training.

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