# Scruffing: Handling Your Ferret as Her Mother Would

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Scruffing can be a very effective disciplinary technique, but it also comes in handy in other situations. However, many ferret owners are unsure of how or when to scruff. Below we will discuss what it is, what it does, and when you should use it.

## What is scruffing and what does it do?

Scruffing is grasping your ferret by the loose skin on the back of her neck. Use your thumb and first few fingers (not your fist) to gently restrain her. Hold her firmly enough to immobilize her but not enough to hurt her.

If you do it correctly, it is exactly how her mother would carry her or discipline her, so it is not frightening or painful. Scruffing actually relaxes your ferret. When you scruff ferrets, they will usually go limp and many will yawn.

## When is scruffing useful?

Scruffing is useful in many situations, but the two main times you would use it are for discipline and for restraint during grooming procedures.

If your ferret is biting and other corrective methods aren't working, you can scruff her and say "no" firmly. You can also flip her onto her back while holding her and scruff to put her in a submissive position and show her that you are the dominant one. Her mother would have disciplined her in this way, and mothers sometimes drag their kits around by their scruff if they are being especially naughty. In this situation, scruffing is a way to show that you are the leader and the "alpha ferret."

When scruffing is used for grooming, it is simply a way to hold the ferret immobile long enough to clip her nails, clean her ears, or brush her teeth. Scruffing allows you to hold her head still so you don't hurt her when cleaning ears and brushing teeth. When clipping nails, scruffing relaxes your ferret long enough for you to safely trim her nails. It ensures that you won't hurt her leg or paw by holding it too tightly in an attempt to keep her from getting away.

## When is scruffing not useful?

Scruffing should not be used in the following situations:

- Litter training
- Fear biting
- Training of or interaction with previously abused ferrets

In addition, some ferrets just do not respond well to scruffing. It can actually upset them and cause them to become agitated even if they have never been abused. With those ferrets, you will need to come up with other disciplinary methods. When you groom a ferret who hates scruffing, you can try wrapping her in a towel to immobilize her. You should then perform the grooming procedure while another person gives her a treat like FerreTone to distract her.



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