Ferret FAQs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Ferrets make great pets, but they also require a lot of responsibility. It's important to learn everything you can about ferrets if you've just brought one home or are thinking of bringing one home. Below we'll go over some of the information you need to know to be a great ferret owner!

How long do ferrets live?

A The average ferret's lifespan is between 6 and 8 years, but they can live to be as old as 10 or 12 years.

What do ferrets eat?

A Ferrets are carnivores, which means they eat only meat. In fact, they can't even digest fruits and vegetables, so you should never feed those to your ferret. Your ferret's daily diet should include a meat based kibble diet that is high in protein and fat and low in fiber. You can also give your ferret treats, but they should be no more than 10% of his daily diet and they should be meat-based treats.

Where should my ferret live?

A Your ferret will live in a cage. There are lots of different cages you can choose from. The best cages are wire cages or wire cages with plastic bases. Ferrets need lots of room to play and climb around, so cages that have lots of levels are perfect. The smallest cage you can use for a single ferret is 2' by 3', but the bigger the cage, the better.

What should I put in my ferret's cage?

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You should put the following things in your ferret's cage:

- Cloth bedding - hammocks, sleep sacks, and other items
- Litter box
- Food bowl
- Water bottle or water bowl
- Toys
- Tunnels

Can I let my ferret out of his cage to play?

A

You should let your ferret out of his cage for at least four hours every day. Ferrets are not caged animals, and they need lots of human interaction. You need to play with your ferret for at least two of the four hours that he is out of his cage. The more you can let your ferret out to play, the happier he will be. Just make sure that any room you let your ferret play in is "ferret-proofed."

When can I handle my ferret?

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When you first get your ferret, you will need your mom or your dad to help you train him. It's best to wait to handle your ferret until your parent or parents are around. Ferrets are "crepuscular," which means that their most active periods are at dusk or dawn, so those are the best times to play with them.

What kind of toys do ferrets like?

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Ferrets like toys that let them do the things they like to do best - hunting, digging, and tunneling. Here are some of the toys that your ferret would like:

- Pop-N-Play Ball Pit
- PipSqueaks
- Dig box
- Super Thru-Way Ferret Tunnel
- Teach & Treat Toy

Make sure to check your ferret's toys regularly for any tears or rips. If the toy is damaged, replace it.

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What is ferret-proofing?

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Ferret-proofing is making sure that the room your ferret plays in is safe for him. This means making sure that all things that could hurt him are taken out of the room or put up out of his reach. You will need to do it each time you let your ferret out of his cage.

Why does my ferret jump around - is he attacking me?

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If your ferret is jumping around in front of you, he's not attacking, he's happy! That's his way of telling you he wants to play with you. This is called the Happy Weasel War Dance.

Do ferrets need wooden chew toys?

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No, they do not. Small pets that need chew toys have teeth that keep growing, and they need the chew toys to wear down their teeth. Ferrets have teeth like cats and dogs that don't keep growing, so they don't need wooden chew toys. However, they do like to chew on rubbery items, so you can give them ferret safe, edible chew toys like N-Bones.

People tell me ferrets smell - is that true?

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Ferrets will only smell bad if their cage isn't clean. They do have a slight musky odor to them, but if you keep their cage clean, the smell won't be bad. To keep your ferret smelling fresh and clean, do the following things:

- Scoop litter daily
- Change litter every week
- Wash bedding every week
- Wipe down the cage weekly
- Clean your ferret's ears once every two weeks

Do I have to bathe my ferret?

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There are some grooming chores you and your parent will have to do, but you don't want to bathe your ferret too much. Too many baths will actually make your ferret smell worse! You should give your ferret a bath no more than once a month. Other grooming chores include cleaning ears and clipping nails. You should do those things once every couple weeks.

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