

## Ferrets

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Domestic ferrets are the third most popular house pet in the United States. They make good pets since they are quiet, entertaining, and relatively low maintenance. Due to their exuberant personality, ferrets are generally better suited as pets for adults or for older children.

### INTERESTING FACTS

**Characteristics:** Ferrets are small mammals usually weighing less than 5 pounds. The males are much larger than females. Ferrets reach puberty at 4 to 8 months and females produce an average litter size between 8 to 10 kits. Life expectancy is up to 8 years but longer if fed a good diet and with regular veterinary care.

**Appearance:** There are two basic colors of ferrets; sable and albino, but there are many color mutations, producing a wide range of shades and coat patterns. Color variations include Black, Champagne, Cinnamon, and Chocolate.

**#1 Preventable Health Problem:** [Poor nutrition](#) is the cause of several health problems. Feeding low quality, generic cat food results in malnutrition due to the low amount of quality protein. It can also increase the risk of bladder stones. Overfeeding sweet treats can result in obesity and dental problems.

**Preferences:** Ferrets are a living contradiction. They are extremely active and energetic pets but also love to nap. They enjoy playing and are extremely curious, so it is important to let them play in a ferret-proof room. Provide a soft and snug [nest](#) for napping once they are back in their [cage](#).

**Best Features:** Their silly and unpredictable antics make ferrets irresistible and a joy to watch. Agile and inquisitive, ferrets are a bundle of energy that spring into action when let out to play.

**Housing:** Ferret >cages should include a [litter box](#) with a very low entrance, a no-tip water bowl as well as a clip-on food dish, and a sleeping tube or nest. Caged ferrets need to be let out for at least 4 or more hours every day to play in a room that has been ferret-proofed.

**Diet:** Ferrets require a concentrated [diet](#) that is high in energy and protein but low in fiber. Provide quality foods specifically formulated for ferrets as well as a steady source of fresh water. Ferrets will stop eating if they are without water for 24 hours.