Bathe Your Ferret, How to

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Even though ferrets groom themselves regularly, it is sometimes necessary to give your ferret a bath. How often you bathe your ferret is up to you, but never bathe him more than once a month. Bathing him more often strips oils from his skin and coat. This not only dries out your ferret's coat, making him itchy and uncomfortable, but also actually increases his odor!

As you will find out, some ferrets love playing in the water, but most absolutely hate bath time. When you decide it's time for your ferret to have a bath, here are a few tips that will help make it easier on both of you!

Supplies

Ready....

Gather all of your supplies and have them ready **before** you bring your ferret to the tub, sink or wherever you decide to bathe him. Once you put your ferret in the water, you aren't going to have time to run and get the shampoo or a towel. You never want to leave your ferret alone in the tub, as he could injure himself trying to get out.

When choosing a shampoo, stick to shampoos made specifically for ferrets. Shampoos made for dogs, cats, or people could dry out your ferret's skin and cause irritation.

There are a variety of ferret shampoos available, from regular formulas to flea shampoos to special tearless shampoos, so you should have no problem finding one that you like. If you bathe your ferret during the winter months, you may want to follow up the shampoo with a conditioner to help replace oils stripped by the shampoo.

You will also want to have something to dry your ferret with right next to the tub. This can be a drying sack, a special chamois drying towel, or just a clean bath towel. You may want to warm the towel in the dryer before bathing your ferret to help warm him up quickly after his bath.

Not too cool

The most important thing you should remember about bathing your ferret is that their normal body temperature is between 101° and 103°F. This means that if the water feels lukewarm or a little chilly to you, it is downright cold for them. Making sure that the water is warm enough for your ferret will also keep him calmer while he's in the bath.

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*

Where you choose to bathe your ferret depends on what both you and he will feel is most comfortable. We highly recommend that you avoid bathing your ferret outside. Not only will he get cold when he's wet and be more uncomfortable outside, but there is a very real danger of escape as well. Many ferret owners choose to bathe their ferret in the tub, others use the sink, and still others will bring the ferret into the shower with them.

Calm and collected

Wherever you opt to bathe your ferret, make sure that your ferret is comfortable. If you are holding the ferret under a faucet or showerhead, make sure to support your ferret's body completely by resting his feet on the floor or putting your hand under him. If you put your ferret in the tub with water, be careful that the water is not too deep and that you help to hold your ferret up. The tub will be slippery under his feet. Making your ferret feel safe and secure should be a goal during any bath time - a scared ferret will scratch, claw, and even bite in an attempt to get out of the tub.

As with the bathwater, shampoo that feels cold on your skin feels even colder on your ferret's skin. Warm it up by running the shampoo bottle under warm water or applying it to your hands rather than directly onto your ferret.

Technique

When you shampoo your ferret, be sure to massage the shampoo deep into your ferret's coat. Pay special attention to the tail, hind end, and abdomen, as these are areas where oils and odors can build up. When your ferret has his winter coat, you will probably need to shampoo him longer to make sure you get all the way down to his undercoat. Be careful not to get the shampoo into your ferret's eyes, mouth or ears. We recommend shampooing up to and behind your ferret's ears, but avoiding his face completely. After shampooing, rinse your ferret thoroughly. Any shampoo residue that is left on his skin or in his coat can cause dryness and excessive scratching.

Bath time is the perfect time to check your ferret for lumps, masses, tumors and any other skin conditions that may require a visit to the veterinarian. When your ferret's fur is wet, his skin is much easier to inspect closely. Baths will also often reveal fleas that were previously hidden by a thick coat. There are a variety of flea control products available for ferrets, including shampoos and sprays.

The "Afterbath"

Once you take your ferret out of the tub, expect to see him throw himself around, rubbing on the carpet, towels and anything else he thinks might help him to dry off. You can use a towel to help him with this process, but don't be surprised if he scoots out from under it and starts rolling around on the carpet. Many ferret owners become alarmed the first time they see this, but it's completely normal behavior. Ferrets don't like being wet, and they want to dry themselves off as quickly as possible.

We recommend keeping your ferret in a contained area during the drying process to prevent him from rolling around or rubbing on something that will make him dirty again. Many ferrets will also want to eliminate immediately after a bath (or during if you're unlucky), so make sure to have a **clean** litter pan in the drying area.

As your ferret begins to calm down, you may want to clip his nails and clean his ears. If he reacts negatively, wait until another day. You don't want to make your ferret any more anxious if he's already stressed out by the bath.

Finally, after your ferret allows you to come near him, give him a treat like FerreTone or Marshall Bandits and apologize profusely for putting him through that!

WE RECOMMEND

DOCTORS FOSTER and SMITH

Nail Trimmer Kit

Advanced Formula Oatmeal Shampoo & Conditioner

FerretVite and FerreTone™ Daily Moist Treats

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*