

Cage, Preparing Your Ferret's

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Choosing the right cage for your ferret can be a serious decision, but what you put in her cage is important too. A properly outfitted [ferret cage](#) can mean the difference between a happy, healthy ferret and a bored, depressed ferret. Your ferret's cage should be an entertaining play area as well as a safe haven where she feels totally comfortable and has all the supplies she needs. Some of the ferret products you will need to create this home for your ferret include a high quality food, ferret-safe litter, comfortable ferret sleeping arrangements, and fun ferret toys.



Provide a Proper Carnivore Diet

When choosing a food for your ferret, always remember that ferrets are obligate carnivores. This means that your ferret gets the nutrition she needs from animal proteins and fats; vegetable protein is not adequate. Steer clear of ferret foods with large amounts of vegetable protein.



Ferrets have a very short digestive tract - from the time the food enters your ferret's system until it exits is only about four hours. Because of this, you need to provide your ferret with a food, such as, [Drs. Foster & Smith Signature Series Ferret Diet](#), that has high levels of animal protein and fat so she can absorb as much of the necessary nutrients in that short time period as possible. Stick to foods that have no less than 35% protein and around 20 - 22% fat. You also want to pay attention to the ingredients in the food. No less than three of the first six ingredients should be quality sources of animal protein, and the first ingredient should always be a source of animal-based protein.

We recommend that you choose more than one [quality food](#) and feed two or more foods in your ferret's daily mix. Ferrets will imprint on a food, which means that changing her diet abruptly if her regular food isn't available could result in her refusal to eat. Given the very short digestive period of four hours, this could cause your ferret to become very ill very quickly.

Choose the Right Feeders & Waterers

Once you pick diets for your ferret, you will need to find the right [food bowl](#) for her. Many ferrets like to rearrange



their cage, so the best food bowls are those that attach to the cage, such as a [locking crock](#). This will keep the food in one place, preventing your ferret from moving or flipping the bowl. Some ferrets like to dig in their food bowls, so you should give them a smaller food bowl that can be attached higher on the cage. Put it low enough that your ferret can still access it, but high enough that she can't get her paws in the bowl to throw food out. We recommend putting more than one food bowl in a multi-level cage.

Since food should be changed no less than once every two days, you only want to put as much food out as your ferret or ferrets will eat in that amount of time. If you have only one ferret, she will obviously need a smaller bowl than if three or four ferrets were sharing a cage.



Water bottles should also attach to the cage, as ferrets will have fun tipping those over as well. You can also choose to use a [water bottle](#), though we recommend that you also supply a water bowl in addition to the bottle. Water bowls are a must when you have a ferret who likes to "snorkel" or dig in the water. That can quickly turn a fresh, clean water bowl into a dirty mess, and you want your ferrets to have a clean alternative with the water bottle. However, many ferrets will not drink as much water as they need to when they have a water bottle, so it's important to provide a bowl as well.

Ferret-safe Litter & Litter Pans

When picking out an acceptable [ferret litter](#), your biggest concern should be your ferret's health. Some litters, such as clumping cat litter, are very cheap, but they are also very dangerous for your ferret! Clumping cat litter can form plugs in the area of your ferret's rectum and cause blockages. Avoid litters that create a lot of dust, as the dust can harm your ferret's delicate respiratory system. Other litters that are not safe include silica litters, scented litters, cedar shavings, corncob litters and wood chips.

The most popular (and most effective) ferret safe litters are [recycled newspaper pellets](#) and denatured [wood pellets](#). Other safe litters include wood stove pellets, 100% bentonite pearl litter, and alfalfa pellets. You can use plain newspaper in a pinch, but it is not very absorbent and has no odor control properties. Plus, newspaper tends to dissolve and bunch when it gets wet, making it difficult to clean up.

There are many options to choose from when picking out a litter pan, but the most important factor is size. Ferrets like a [litter pan](#) in which they can fit all four feet comfortably. This may mean that you will have to purchase a larger litter pan as your ferret grows. Kits (baby ferrets) often do fine with a small triangular litter pan, but you may find you need to switch to a large square or rectangular pan when they are full-grown. Choose a pan that has a low entry and high sides. Ferrets back up to go to the bathroom, and low sides will probably result in your ferret going to the bathroom over the side of the litter pan rather than in it.



Bedding - More Than Just Shavings

While many ferrets in pet stores live in a pen or cage that is covered in shavings, this is **not** the correct way to house your ferret. Ferrets need [sleeping areas](#) such as hammocks, sleep sacks, blankets, and other similar items to burrow under and sleep in. Make sure that you give your ferret a variety of sleeping places in her cage to allow her plenty of hiding spots and places to nap. Ferrets can actually become stressed when they do not have a quiet, dark place, and stress can lead to illness. If your ferret's cage floors are made from wire or mesh, make sure that they are completely covered to protect your ferret's feet. You can use a large blanket to do this. Old t-shirts also work well to provide a protective covering beneath the other pieces of bedding you put in the cage. Other items that ferret owners use to cover the bottom of the cage include carpet remnants, linoleum, or Plexiglas.

Some ferrets will chew on their beds, so you will want to inspect beds regularly to ensure that your ferret hasn't been eating it. Any ingested pieces of fabric could cause a blockage, which is a life-threatening condition. If your ferret is chewing on her beds, remove any of those pieces immediately, give her some [laxative](#) or [hairball remedy](#), and call your veterinarian.

Provide Toys to Prevent Health Problems

Many ferret owners have the misconception that their ferret will spend her time in the cage sleeping and her time out of the cage playing. This isn't true! A ferret who does nothing other than lay around or sleep in her cage is bored, and boredom is dangerous for a ferret. Bored ferrets become depressed ferrets, which can lead to health problems. You need to provide your ferret with a variety of [fun toys](#) both in and out of her cage.

Some toys that your ferret will enjoy include [tunnels](#), balls, squeaky toys, and [edible chew toys](#). All of these toys can be used

both in the cage and while your ferret is out during playtime. As with your ferret's bedding, inspect her toys regularly to make sure that there are no pieces missing or parts coming off that could cause blockages if eaten. If any toys are worn or damaged, throw them away immediately.

There are some toys you should not allow your ferret to play with unsupervised. These include stuffed animals, and anything she could possibly pull apart and eat. Avoid putting these types of toys in the cage! Any toy that you put in your ferret's cage must be ferretproofed.

Out of Cage Time - How Much is Enough?

No matter how many fun toys or how much comfortable bedding you put in your ferret's cage, you still need to give her as much time out of her cage as possible each day. Keeping your ferret locked in her cage 24 hours a day is dangerous to her physical and mental well being. We recommend that you allow your ferret to play outside her cage no less than four hours each day.