Ferret FAQs: General Ferret Care

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

If you're a new ferret owner, this section will be immensely helpful to you. The questions below cover everything from how to tell the sex of your ferret to ferret-proofing, to picking out a quality ferret diet, and more. Learning as much as you can about your new ferret will help you to keep him happy and healthy.

Life Span >

Ferret Age >

Ferret Toys >

Litter Type >

Ferretproofing >

.....

Q How long do ferrets live?

A The average ferret life span is generally 7 to 10 years. If you aren't sure that you will be able to provide your ferret with a home for 10 years, getting a ferret right now probably isn't a good idea.
[Back to top]

.....

Q How can I tell how old my ferret is?

A By looking at his or her teeth! As a ferret ages, her teeth start to become translucent at the tip of the canines, and as she gets older, more of each tooth is translucent.

So at what ages should you see what changes?

*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.*

- **0 to 1 year:** solid, bright white
- **1-1/2 to 2-1/2 years:** tips of the canines will be slightly discolored and semi-translucent
- **3 to 4 years:** discoloration and translucency will have spread further up the tooth and appear more pronounced
- **6 to 7 years:** discoloration and translucency will have gone up all the way to the gumline
- **7 years and older:** the canines should now be completely translucent

If your ferret's teeth have serious discoloration at a younger age, or if the discoloration is accompanied by very bad breath, see a veterinarian immediately. This can be a sign of serious dental problems.

Remember to check your ferrets' teeth when you do other grooming (ears, nails, etc) and brush them regularly! Have your veterinarian do a yearly dental exam and cleaning.
[Back to top]

.....

What kind of toys to ferrets like?

The most important thing to remember when you buy toys for ferrets is that ferrets easily get blockages. Don't give them toys that have pieces that are easily swallowed. Cat toys, bell balls, and edible chew toys are generally good for ferrets. You can give your ferret, just make sure it's soft vinyl rubber and not spongy rubber. Ferrets also love tubes - we highly recommend the Flexible Fun Tubes.

Many people also give their ferrets dig boxes. You can put rice, ping pong balls, biodegradable starch peanuts, dirt - pretty much anything they can burrow into and throw around! Just make sure if you use rice that you supervise your ferret at first to make sure that he isn't eating the rice, and never use instant rice!

You will find that ferrets will choose the items around your house

*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.*

that they want to use as playthings whether you want them to or not! This is why it's very important to make sure objects that will harm them are kept far out of their reach if you have free roam ferrets.

Remember - ferrets are not rodents, therefore they DO NOT need chew toys. Giving your ferret wood to chew on will be very harmful to the ferret, and it is totally unnecessary!

View our selection of ferret toys.
[Back to top]

.....

What kind of litter can I use?

Ferret litter MUST be dust free. Ferrets have very delicate nasal passages that are easily clogged by clumping litters. It can also get into their rectums and cause blockages. Recycled paper litters and wood stove pellets work really well. Do NOT use cedar or pine shavings; some pet stores do, but this is wrong, as it produces dust and has been linked to allergies and respiratory problems in animals.
[Back to top]

.....

How can I ferretproof my house?

The key to ferretproofing is to get down on your hands and knees and think like a ferret! Ferretproofing is vital not only to keep your things out of harm's way, but to protect your ferret as well. Ferrets are very curious and persistent, so this is a process you will have to do repeatedly to make sure that your ferret's play area remains safe.

First block off all holes - air vents, dryer vents, etc. Then make sure that your furniture is ferret safe. Recliners are very dangerous, and the insides of couches are filled with staples, springs, etc, that could severely injure your ferret. Remove recliners from the rooms the ferrets play in, and cover the bottom of all chairs and couches to make sure they can't claw their way inside from the bottom up.

*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.*

Make sure all cabinets, especially those that contain dangerous chemicals and substances, can't be opened. It's best to lock them out of the kitchen altogether. Behind the fridge, behind the stove, under the sink - these are all dangerous places for a ferret to be.

Remember, if the ferret's head fits in the space, his body will as well!

Read more information on ferretproofing in Ferretproofing 101.
[Back to top]

Back to main page

*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.*