Introduce a Ferret to a Multiple Ferret Household

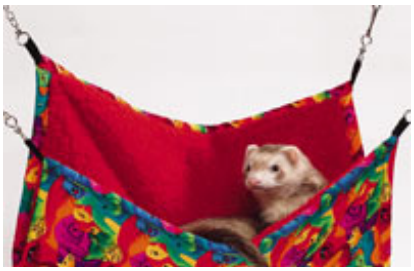
Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

ADDING a ferret to a multiple ferret household

Introducing a new ferret into your group can be a very stressful time for everyone involved, including you! However, there are a few things you can do to eliminate as much stress as possible and ease the introduction for all ferrets involved.

Many of the methods you can use to introduce your ferret into a multi-ferret household are similar to what you would do when introducing a new ferret into a single ferret household. These include:

- Introduce them in a neutral area in your home or a friend's home to lessen the possibility that one or more of the ferrets will act in a territorial way.
- Allow the new ferret time to explore his new environment before letting him out with any of his new cage-mates. This will give him time to acclimate more slowly.
- Never put the new ferret in the other ferrets' cage right away. It will be frightening for him to be surrounded by so many strange scents. It will also upset your other ferrets to have an unknown animal in their territory.
- House the new ferret in a separate cage until she is playing and sleeping with the other ferrets outside the cage.
- Switch bedding back and forth between the cages so all of the ferrets can get used to each other's scents.



- Supervise playtimes and break up any serious fights. There will always be some roughhousing however, so don't step in unless there are signs that one or more ferrets is truly frightened. These signs include biting accompanied by rough head shaking, fear pooping, and screaming.
- If the new ferret seems overly frightened around the old ferrets, limit playtimes to no more than 15 - 20 minutes so as to minimize stress.

*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.*

- Use a bite deterrent or a treat like FerreTone to dissuade excessive biting.

- When play does get rough, don't punish the offender. She is probably just as scared and upset as the victim. Instead, separate them and give them both treats and cuddle them. You need to show both ferrets that they are safe and loved.

The biggest difference when introducing a new ferret into a group rather than to a single ferret is that you should never simply throw the new ferret in with the group for a mass playtime. Being in a new home surrounded by a group of ferrets sniffing (and possibly biting) is very stressful. It will be much easier on the new ferret to meet your group one at a time. Allowing them to meet one on one will make it easier for you to identify any problems you might run into during the integration.

As with any introduction, you will need to take it at the pace that your individual ferrets set. You may find that some of your ferrets accept the newcomer immediately while others are still suspicious and possibly even hostile. Wait until all of the ferrets have accepted the new ferret, or at least are not being openly aggressive, before putting the new ferret in the cage with them.

Keep a close eye on all of your ferrets, new and old, during this adjustment period. Introducing a new ferret into an established group can result in depression or health issues. Signs that one of your ferrets is upset by the change can include:

- Lethargy
- Depression
- Lack of appetite
- Diarrhea

If you see any of these signs, especially diarrhea that is black and tarry (a sign of ulcers), schedule a veterinary appointment immediately.

The more often you add a ferret to your group, the easier the process will become. Ferrets that are used to welcoming new ferrets will adjust to the change much more quickly than those ferrets who haven't met a new ferret in a year or more. No matter how long it's been since you added the last ferret to your group, be patient and don't push your ferrets. Integrations can happen as quickly as a few days or take as long as six months or more.

*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.*