Famous Ferrets!

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

ferrets in the media

Ferrets are making their way onto your television screens! In the past twenty years, ferrets have been featured or have made appearances in television shows, commercials, and movies. Sometimes, these are positive appearances and, sometimes, they focus on some of the more negative stereotypes about ferrets.

Movies

Movies that ferrets have had notable roles include:

- Beastmaster
- Kindergarten Cop
- The Big Lebowski
- Mars Attacks!
- Along Came Polly
- Starship Troopers
- Dr. Doolittle 2
- Big Fat Liar
- Harry Potter & the Goblet of Fire
- Ace Ventura
- Lord of the Rings
- Garfield: A Tale of Two Kitties
- The Golden Compass
- Stardust

In some of these movies, ferrets have had positive roles, such as in Kindergarten Cop, where a ferret effectively saves the main character's life and helps him to bond with the children in his kindergarten class. However, in other movies, ferrets have a derogatory role, like in The Big Lebowski, when a ferret is thrown in a tub to attack the main character. Negative depictions of ferret aggression help to further the myth that ferrets are vicious biters that attack people.

Movie actors and actresses have also been known to have negative things to say about ferrets. After the filming of Along Came Polly, both Ben Stiller and Jennifer Aniston referred to the ferret cast as Rodolfo as a "rat," and Ben Stiller told everyone about how the ferret bit him, apparently unprovoked. For many people who don't know anything about ferrets, the opinion that ferrets are just nasty, vicious "rats" may end up to be the opinion they hold, whether or not they ever interact with one, and it perpetuates a stereotype.

Television Shows

Television shows in which ferrets have made an appearance include:

- Beastmaster series
- Full House
- Northern Exposure
- Xena: Warrior Princess
- Hercules
- Seventh Heaven

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- Star Trek: Deep Space Nine
- Star Trek: The Next Generation
- Twin Peaks
- 3rd Rock From the Sun
- Golden Girls

There have even been documentaries made about ferrets. Ferrets: The Pursuit of Excellence, a documentary about the ferret community and ferret shows, aired on PBS in July of 2007. It discussed both positive and negative aspects of ferret ownership, and gave the public a look into the lives and hearts of ferret lovers around the country. However, there was still mention of ferrets biting, and repeated shots of a woman who had been bitten on the nose. So even shows devoted entirely to ferrets can sometimes perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Television Commercials

Companies that have featured ferrets in their commercials include:

- Budweiser
- Verizon
- Diet Mt. Dew
- Capital One Credit Card

Unfortunately, many of the television commercials that feature ferrets tend to focus on the misconceptions that exist with ferrets. In the Verizon commercial, a ferret attacks a man who is staring at him, biting him on the tongue. In the Diet Mt. Dew commercial, a ferret chases people through the woods while wielding a chainsaw. In the Capital One Credit Card, the young girl stares at the ferret with distaste. While many of these commercials are meant to be silly and it was not the advertiser's intention to denigrate ferrets, they do tend to further the idea that ferrets are biters, that they are aggressive, and that they are not a desirable pet overall among people who aren't knowledgeable about ferrets.

Hopefully in the coming years, we will start to see a more positive portrayal of ferrets in the media and appearances that focus on ferrets' intelligence, curiosity, playful behavior, loyalty, and all of the other traits that endear them to so many of us.

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