Ferrets & Snow: Winter Weather FAQ

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

LET IT SNOW!

Along with winter comes colder temperatures and, in many areas, lots of snow! Ferrets do much better in cold weather than many owners realize, and your ferret is probably more comfortable than you are with the heat turned down low. If your ferret is healthy, he may have a blast playing outdoors in the snow.

How long can he stay outside?

Just because your ferret has a thick, winter coat doesn't mean that he can stay outside for longer periods of time. The undercoat of a ferret housed indoors, as most ferrets in the United States are, doesn't provide as much warmth as the undercoat of a ferret housed outdoors.

How long your ferret can stay outside depends on a number of factors including his age, his health, and the weather. Younger ferrets will generally want to stay outside longer than older ferrets. Ferrets with health issues should only stay outside for a few minutes at a time.

Taking all of the factors into account, the maximum amount of time you should allow your ferret to play outside in the snow is between 30 and 60 minutes. Older ferrets, or ferrets in poor health, should be allowed no more than 5 to 10 minutes outside at a time. Limit his outings if the temperature is below freezing (32° F) or if there is ice. If the weather outside is excessively windy or cold, save the outing for another milder day.

How will I know if he wants to go indoors?

Signs that your ferret is tired of the snow and wants to go inside and warm up include:

- Excessive shivering (to raise his body temperature)
- Pawing or standing at the door
- Sitting still and not playing
- Trying to climb your leg
- Standing against your leg with his paws up, looking up at you

It's up to you to keep an eye on him and watch him for signs that he needs to go in, even if he isn't doing any of the things listed above. If you see snow or ice buildup on the pads of his feet, take him inside immediately.

Why doesn't my ferret like snow?

Some ferrets will love going outdoors while others want nothing more than to hang out in your nice, warm house. If your ferret doesn't want to go outside, but you want to see if he'll like the snow, try bringing some into the house in a plastic tub. Don't just drop him in the tub; allow him to explore the snow at his own pace. He may want nothing to do with it, or he may have a great time throwing it around, tunneling, and digging. Each ferret will have his own likes and dislikes, and it's important to respect that.

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Playing in the snow can be a great time for both you and your ferret, but always make safety your number one priority. Be sure to use aharness and lead every time, as a ferret tunneling through the snow could easily escape. Never force a ferret to stay outside for longer than he wants to, and take him indoors if you see any signs that he may be getting too cold.

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