Exercise & Your Ferret: Keep Your Ferret Fit

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

A ferret's physical health is very dependent on how much exercise he gets each day, and the key to a healthy ferret is to keep your ferret active and fit.

Exercising your ferret can be very easy as long as you work with your ferret's instinctive and natural behaviors.

Instinctive behaviors

Ferrets are very curious, and they love to explore. If your ferret lived in the wild, he would hunt, dig, and tunnel. He would experience a variety of different things on a daily basis that would keep him interested in his environment. Domestic ferrets obviously don't have to do these things to survive, but they are instinctual behaviors. Therefore, the best exercise activities are those which revolve around hunting, tunneling, digging, and exploring.

Exercise activities

Ferrets should have at least four hours out of their cage each day, and you should spend at least two hours of that interacting with them. Ferrets that spend too much time in their cage and not enough time playing tend to be obese, lazy, and have poor muscle tone.

Some exercise activities that you can include:

- Play "tag" with your ferret (chasing him around and having him chase you around)
- Use your hand to roll your ferret around, encouraging him to "wrestle" with you
- Drag toys attached to poles, like the Da Bird, around the room, enticing your ferret to chase them
- Bring your ferret outside to run around and explore (always use a harness and lead for safety!)
- Provide your ferret with a dig box

There are other things you can do to keep your ferret fit outside of playtime. One is to house your ferret in a multi-level cage. The more ramps he has to climb up and down, the more exercise he will get. Ferrets that live in single or only double level cages miss out on that exercise.

Another thing you can do is to allow your ferret to have playtime in rooms that contain stairs. Many ferrets love playing on stairs, whether it's wrestling with each other or running down to get a toy. Just make sure that it is safe and your ferrets can't fall off the edge of the stairs.

Finally, the best thing you can do is to focus on ferret enrichment. Purchase toys that your ferret enjoys playing with and rotate them regularly. Expose your ferret to new sights and sounds regularly.

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Come up with new, fun games to play with him. A ferret who is interested in his surroundings will play more often, while a ferret who is bored with a daily routine will spend most of his time sleeping.

Exercise Pens

Many ferret owners are apprehensive about allowing their ferrets to run loose in their house. If your house isn't ferretproofed or there are too many hazards to allow your ferret free roam in a room or multiple rooms, then the next best thing you can do is purchase an exercise pen. An exercise pen allows your ferret to get time out of his cage, but keeps him safe in any setting. You can purchase the basic pen or add the expansion panels for a larger space. You can even put two exercise pens together for an extra large play area.

Your ferret depends on you to help him meet his exercise requirements and to keep him healthy. Use these tips as a guideline to ensure that your ferret is as healthy as he can be.

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