Litter Train Your Free Roam Ferret

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Allowing your ferret to have the run of your home doesn't mean you have to deal with "accidents" in every room. Free roam ferrets can be litter trained, and the methods are similar to those you would use for ferrets restricted to only one room. With a little patience and effort, you can train your free roam ferret to use designated toilet areas.

Start Small

The most important part of litter training free roam ferrets is starting them off in a small area. When a ferret starts off with a huge area to play in, it can be next to impossible to litter train him. Start your training in a play or exercise pen. When you let your ferret out of the cage, put him in the playpen. Once he has mastered using the litter pan in the playpen, expand his space. You can add expansion panels to make the playpen larger or put two playpens together.

As soon as your ferret is using the litter pan in that smaller space, allow him to run around in one room. When you let him out of the cage, you must supervise him. If you aren't there to supervise, the training is going to be unsuccessful. When he starts to back up into a corner where there isn't a litter box, move him to the nearest litter box. If you aren't able to make it over to him before he eliminates, wait until he's done, and then immediately move both your ferret and his solid waste into the nearest litter pan. After he is well trained in one room, expand his play space room by room, until he is allowed access to every room in your house.

Using Multiple Litter Boxes

When you start out in one room, you should have at least two litter boxes out in the play area. Ferrets tend to be a little lazy in their litter box habits, and most are not going to run back to the cage to go to the bathroom. Note which corners they run to and put litter boxes there. It's not uncommon to have a litter box in each corner. If your ferret picks a corner where using a litter box isn't feasible, such as by the door to the room, use a Piddle Pad® in that location.

As you allow your ferret access to additional rooms, you will need multiple litter boxes throughout the house. It just isn't realistic to expect him to run to another room to use the toilet. This thinking will result in a lot of accidents and frustration! Put at least one litter box in each room. If you don't want to use a litter box, use Piddle Pads or newspaper to create at least one toilet area per room.

Free Roam Litter Training Tips & Tricks

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You've probably heard many of these tips regarding regular litter training, but they will work just as well to litter train free roam ferrets.

- If your ferret has an accident, move the solid waste to the litter pan and, even more importantly, clean the area thoroughly with a cleaner that completely eliminates odors. Ferrets tend to revisit the same toilet areas - appropriate or not.
- Make sure that the litter box is big enough. Though corner litter pans work well in the corners of your rooms, they may not be big enough for a large ferret to fit all four of his feet in it comfortably.
- Use positive reinforcement - while you're expanding his space room-by-room, praise your ferret profusely whenever he uses the litter box (even if you had to put him there) and give him a treat when he climbs out. He needs to associate using the litter box with a treat, not with being yelled at.
- Avoid punishing your ferret for missing the litter box - putting his nose in his accident isn't going to help at all. Simply clean up any accidents and put him in the litter box with his nose facing a corner so he can smell where he's supposed to eliminate.
- Scoop soiled litter and waste out of all litter boxes every day. Many ferrets become more picky about using a dirty litter box when they have so many other places they can go to the bathroom.
- Leave one small piece of stool and a few pieces of used litter in the litter pan after scooping it so it still has the smell of a litter box. This will help your ferret to identify where the toilet areas are.
- Do not let your ferret out of his cage after he wakes up until he uses the litter box.
- Until your ferret has proven he can use the litter box in one area, don't allow him access to another room.

As with every kind of training, be patient and reward your ferret for his good behavior. You'll have a litter trained free roam ferret in no time!

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