

Some common signs of illness:

- ☹ Inappetance or poor appetite
- ☹ Weight loss
- ☹ Hair loss or scratching
- ☹ Vomiting or diarrhea
- ☹ Weakness or lethargy
- ☹ Coughing or sneezing
- ☹ Weakness, dragging rear end

☺ Bring your ferret in for an exam if you see any of these signs so that treatment can be started promptly. Ferrets should have a complete exam annually.

Common Ferret illnesses/diseases:

Flu – A viral disease that causes fever, eye and nose discharge and sneezing. Avoid handling your ferret if either of you have the flu because it can be spread between ferrets and people.

Ear mites – A parasite that lives within a ferret's ears causing excessive scratching.

Green Slime – A contagious disease among ferrets that causes inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract and liver. It also causes greenish loose stools.

Adrenal Disease – This condition causes symmetrical hair loss, enlargement of the vulva (female genitalia), prostate disease, dry hair coat and itchy skin.

Insulinoma – This is a tumor found within the pancreas that causes a decrease in the body's glucose levels leading to lethargy, weakness and seizures.

Vaccines:

Distemper – A fatal disease that affects the skin, feet and brain.

Ferrets receive a series of vaccines as kits and then yearly.

Rabies – A zoonotic disease that affects the nervous system.

Ferrets receive a rabies vaccine yearly.

→ Vaccine reactions are very common in ferrets. Common symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea and/or lethargy. The most serious reactions happen shortly after the vaccine is given. For this reason, we ask that all ferrets wait in the hospital for 20 minutes after being vaccinated to be monitored for reactions.



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BASIC CARE OF THE FERRET



Ferret Facts:

Average Lifespan: 5-7 years
Average Weight: Males = 3-4 lbs
Females = 1-2 lbs

Baby ferrets are called *kits*.

Females are called *jills*.

Males are called *hobs*.

A proper diet is essential:

- ☺ Ferrets are carnivores and require a high fat, meat based diet.
- ☺ They have a fast metabolism and require small frequent meals throughout the day.
- ☺ Ferrets should be fed a good quality ferret food, such as Totally Ferret® or Marshall Farms® ferret food.
- ☺ Fresh water should be available at all times in a bowl or bottle that is changed daily.

The proper environment can affect health and well being:

Ferrets are curious by nature and will enjoy a large cage with plenty of places to explore. Choose a cage of wire mesh with spaces no larger than ¼ “ to prevent accidental injuries. Two ferrets require a minimum of 24”x 24”x 18” high of cage space. Clean the cage at least twice weekly.

Ferrets can frequently be litter box trained. Choose a low-sided litter box and a pelleted litter like Yesterday’s News®. Avoid clay litter because ferrets like to dig and burrow and will make a mess of themselves and their cage.

Ferrets like to hide when they sleep and will appreciate an area to burrow. Sleep sacks, pillowcases or ferret hammocks are good choices.

Tubes are great toys!



Ferrets love hammocks!



Toys provide enrichment and prevent boredom:

Good choices for ferret toys are sacks or boxes to hide in, objects to chase (but large enough to prevent accidental ingestion), or tubes/tunnels to run through.

SAFETY AND FERRET PROOFING IS A MUST:

Ferrets sleep for a large portion of the day, but do require and enjoy exercise. Whenever a ferret is out of its cage, it requires close supervision. Ferrets love to explore and can weasel their way into amazingly small spaces. Providing a ferret safe area is important. Remove all toxic substances, plants and electrical cords from areas they reach.



- ☹ Do not allow ferrets to play near a reclining chair as they can climb into the chair and get injured when the chair is moved.
- ☹ Remove all foam or rubber objects as ferrets love to chew on these objects and they can cause a life-threatening intestinal obstruction.
- ☹ Ferrets like to try to climb into clothes dryers and dishwashers. Always check inside these appliances before turning them on to ensure that a ferret has not decided to climb inside.

Grooming tips:

Ferrets are frequent groomers and do not generally require frequent bathing. Ferrets naturally have a musky odor to their skin that is present even in descended ferrets. Bathing will not remove this odor and excessive bathing will dry out their skin and coat.



If your ferret does need a bath, use a mild shampoo, such as DVM tearless® or Hylyt® and be sure to thoroughly dry the ferret to prevent illness.



Nail trimming is important to prevent injury. A ferret’s nails should be trimmed every 6-8 weeks. Ask us for a demonstration of proper nail trimming technique.



A ferret’s ears should be cleaned regularly to help prevent ear infections. Ferrets, as well as other species, are also susceptible to ear mites and a ferret with itchy ears should be examined by a veterinarian.



☹ Ferrets can get dental disease and many ferrets will allow regular brushing with a small cat toothbrush to help reduce tartar

build-up. Always use toothpaste meant for animals, never toothpaste made for people.