

Ferret

Average Size: males 3-5 lbs., females 2-3 lbs.

Life Span: 7—9 years

Diet and Feeding:

Staple diet: Choose a high-protein, high-fat, low-carb, advanced nutrition diet, made especially for ferrets. Minimum protein level should be 35% with minimum fat content of 20%. ***Due to their high metabolism, ferrets need food available at all times.***

Treats: Ferrets enjoy treats, but offer them sparingly; only 1-2 per day. Be sure the treats are high in protein and formulated especially for ferrets. (Discontinue feeding treats if diarrhea develops.)

Foods to avoid: Ferrets should never eat any sweet or sugary foods, foods high in carbohydrates, dairy foods (milk, cheese, etc.) or nuts.

Water: Ferrets drink lots of water, so be sure to fill your ferret's water bottle with clean water every day.

Housing/Habitat:

Housing: Your ferret needs a multi-level, well-ventilated home with a textured plastic or all-wire floor. There should be plenty of room for all cage accessories, and for her to move around freely. Minimum cage size is 14"W x 30"L x 30"H.

Litter: Only use recycled, pelleted paper litter (do not use clay or clumping cat litter) and clean it daily or more often if needed. Provide a corner litter pan and fill it with about 1" of litter.

Sleeping: Create a sleeping area near the top of your ferret's home with a specially designed ferret bed or a pile of clean towels. Wash bed or towels regularly.

Cage placement: Place the habitat in a cool, low humidity area, out of direct sunlight and away from drafts.

Toys: Provide your ferret with a selection of specially designed ferret toys. Remove and replace toys when you notice signs of excess chewing or wear.

Normal Behavior and Social Interaction:

Ferrets are fun-loving! They are known for their kitten-like personalities and are curious, active and love to play. Ferrets will seek out human family members, as well as dogs and cats as playmates. They have no fear of people or other pets, so be sure to monitor their interaction carefully.

Ferrets are very intelligent, and can be trained to perform basic tasks, including using a litter box and walking on a leash. They are also very curious and will explore any area into which they can fit.

Ferrets have a predatory nature and must be kept away from pet birds and small pets such as hamsters and rabbits.

Sleeping habits. Though very active when awake, it's normal for ferrets to sleep up to 18 hours a day.

Ferrets are carnivores. This means they are meat-eaters, and need an advanced nutrition diet high in meat protein and fat and low in carbohydrates.

Nipping. Ferrets have a natural tendency to nip, which can be overcome with gentle training.

Diggers. Ferrets love to dig and will turn over and dig into any house plants within reach.

Ferret-Proof. Ferrets' long bodies are designed to get into tight spaces. Remember, if their head can fit, their body will follow. So it's important to "ferret-proof" your home!

Lifting & handling: Handle your ferret gently. Gently clasp the ferret behind and below her shoulders and loosely support the hips with your other hand, then bring her close to your body for added support.

Special needs: Ferrets need a regular grooming routine including occasional baths, as well as regular nail trims. They also require annual veterinary exams and vaccinations. As they age, ferrets will require more frequent veterinary care.

Musky odor: Ferrets have oil glands in their skin, in addition to large anal scent glands. Even though our pet ferrets have their anal scent glands removed (descented), they will still have a mild musky odor.

Health/cleanliness:

Please remember that all pets may bite or scratch, and may transmit disease to humans. Keep your ferret's home clean and wash your hands before and after handling him or cleaning his home. Infants, young children, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems, and the infirm or elderly are at greater risk of infections and should use caution when in contact with the pet or its habitat. Consult your doctor for more information.

In addition, ferrets can catch and spread the human influenza virus. They should not interact with humans who have or think they may have the flu.

The information on this care sheet is NOT a substitute for regular veterinary care.