

Ferret Bites Family Members, But Not Owner

A ferret owner wants to stop her ferret from biting everyone else in the family.

By Mary Van Dahm

Posted: April 1, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Q: I have a female ferret with a real bad biting problem. She has bitten my brother, grandma and mom. She drew blood on my brother. She likes to bite the wrists and ankles, especially ankles with socks. She doesn't bite me. She just licks my wrists and ankles. She is 4 1/2 years old. Why is she doing this?

A: Some ferrets are more prone to biting than others. Many of the bigger commercial breeders try to breed that out of their ferrets, but once in a while a throwback is born with the instincts of a polecat.

Many "biters" bond with only one person. That person is considered part of the family while other people are outsiders that should be chased away. Some ferret biters eventually tolerate other people that they see on a regular basis, but may not be trustworthy with the general public.

Tell your family to offer her treats when they pick her up or give her something gooey, like the ferret supplement Nutrical, while they are holding her to distract her from biting. Don't give her too much. Many ferret treats are high in sugars and starches, which ferrets don't process well. Overindulgence can lead to diabetes, just like in people. Eventually she should learn to tolerate others holding her.

As to her ankle-biting problem, try spraying the ankles with Bitter Apple or a similar product. If that doesn't work, then your family may just have to learn to wear shoes when your ferret is out to play.