

Ferret Won't Use Water Bottle

How can a ferret be encouraged to drink from a water bottle?

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Q: Why does my ferret refuse to drink water from her water bottle? I keep fresh water in it every day, yet my ferret still prefers to drink water directly from her food bowl or from the cat's water bowl when she is out of her cage. How can I encourage my ferret to drink from her bottle?

A: Water bottles were originally designed for rodents because these animals tend to dig in their bedding and foul their water if it is in a bowl. Rodents have a natural tendency to drink from a sipper tube because many rodents in the wild drink dew from the tips of leaves and grass.

Wild weasels and minks derive most of their fluids from their prey or from standing water. Many ferret owners feed their ferrets dry kibble, so it is important to supplement a ferret's food with a clean water source. Bottles are clean and easy for the owner to maintain, but a bottle usually is not a ferret's preferred method of obtaining water.

Drinking from a bowl is a lot easier for some animals, and they can quench their thirst faster. Drinking from a bottle means that they can only get a couple of drops with each lick, and they have to work harder to quench their thirst.

As long as you have water available in a bowl nearby, your ferret will continue to go to it to satisfy her needs. Rather than forcing your ferret to use the bottle, perhaps you can get her a water bowl of her own. Don't be surprised if she still drinks from your cat's bowl, though. Water is water. She doesn't know or care if one bowl is hers and the other belongs to the cat.

If you really need to have your ferret drink out of the bottle, you will have to remove all other sources of water from her environment.

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