

Ferrets Everywhere At The Buckeye Bash

The Buckeye Bash ferret show draws ferrets and owners from across the nation to compete in the championship show, participate in fun events, meet other ferrets and owners and shop for great ferret-related merchandise.

By Marylou Zarbock

Posted: September 12, 2008, 7:20 p.m. EDT

© Courtesy of Marylou Zarbock

Veterans Memorial Hall is on the banks of the Scioto river in downtown Columbus, Ohio.

The air crackled with excitement and held the distinct musky scent of ferrets on August 23, 2008, at Veterans Memorial Hall in Columbus, Ohio, where the 10th annual Buckeye Bash occurred. More than 300 ferrets participated in the championship and specialty categories, according to Scarlett Gray-Saling, a founder and organizer of the event. Attendance included 550 walk-ins, more than 40 vendors and owners of all the competing ferrets.

"We go out of our way to make this a vendor-friendly show," Gray-Saling said. "[It] helps that we are centrally located, advertise/promote well and cater some to our vendors. Many of our vendors are shelter/rescues. If they do well, their shelter does well, so it all boils down to that the ferrets benefit the most."

In addition to helping visiting vendors, the event is important to the Heart of Ohio Ferret Association. According to the HOFA website, the bash is, "The main fund raiser for HOFA's yearly operating expenses, rescue efforts, hospice care and public awareness campaigns." This year, Gray-Saling estimates that the show raised \$5,000. "We hold back enough for a deposit for next year's show and insurance, and all the rest goes to the shelter."

© Courtesy of Marylou Zarbock

The show hall contained more than 40 vendors, all the competing ferrets and the judging rings.

So what's it like to attend a bash? Tables that create central aisles display vendor merchandise, and a visitor can spend several hours just browsing the wonderful ferret-related merchandise and speaking to vendors.

Ferrets were the stars, though. The fun events included a paper bag escape, tube race and costume contest. These took place at various times throughout the day. If you missed a PA announcement, a cluster of people forming in one area of the hall alerted you that something was up.

The championship and specialty judging took place nonstop throughout the day at four tables located together near the far end of the hall. Championship classes ranged from adolescent hob to adolescent jill to late alter to companion and more. Specialties included all the coat patterns and colors, physically challenged and others.

© Courtesy of Marylou Zarbock

Ferrets rest in playpens or cages as they await judging. This ferret's playpen already sports several winning ribbons.

Announcements called people to bring competing ferrets to the correct judging table. Ferrets were then examined individually by three judges for championship rings and one judge for specialty rings. Judging takes from five to 10 minutes per ferret and entrants ranged from about 10 to 60 per ring, so it's a time-intensive process. Gray-Saling happily reported that the show ran smoothly this year and they were able to get out of the hall before dark.

Once a ferret was judged, owners could pick up their pet as judging continued for other ferrets. After all entrants in a ring were judged, all owners gathered before the judges to hear the placements. One judge stood in front of the table and described the ideal ferret for that particular ring, then called forth the ferrets from lowest to highest placement. The owners joyfully stepped forward to claim the ribbon for their ferret.

© Courtesy of Danee DeVore

This photo of TCF's Quattro won the photo contest that people at the show voted on all day.

A photo contest ran all day, with the winner announced as the show wrapped up. Danee Devore's photo of TCF's Quattro won.

A raffle of items donated from various people and companies also added excitement to the day. Peg Francisco won the title of Rodent Ho at this show and had the honor of donning the Rodent Ho outfit for the day. This title goes to the raffle entrant who wins the most gift certificates donated by the company Rodent Pro. The original winner wore a tiara and



waved a wand, and the second winner added the tray with chicks on it. Francisco plans to add a feather boa to the ensemble for the next winner.

© Marylou Zarbock

Peg Francisco won the title of Rodent Ho at the show because she won the most Rodent Pro gift certificates in the raffle. First-time show-goers Creighton T. Freeman and Qing Liu Freeman found the show to be pretty much what they expected, with a few exceptions. "The actual show judging was more low-key and less well-announced than at a dog show or horse show," Creighton said. He and his wife Qing enjoyed talking with the breeders and seeing ferrets up close. "I had seen ferrets before but didn't know much about keeping them as pets. Qing had only seen them on TV and thought they were very cute; PBS TV had a program on the show. Talking with the breeders was very informative and at times quite entertaining. Apparently ferrets are characters and find many amusing ways of getting into trouble, all in the name of play and curiosity of course."