

## Earning A Fearful Ferret's Trust

**Only time and patience can earn the trust of a fearful ferret.**

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**Q:** I adopted a ferret from a rescue as a companion for my ferret, Gilligan. The new girl is about 1 year old and very small, only 12 ounces.

Gilligan, our first ferret, is very outgoing, social and an all-around ham. But Helen is very fearful. She does not like to be approached. She bites, sometimes breaking the skin if you don't pick her up fast enough or provide a distraction of Ferretone (the only treat she goes for).

We feel bad because although she has the run of the house, Helen confines herself to the bedroom, playing mostly by herself under and on top of the bed. She does play with Gilligan, but only for short periods of time. When people are in the room, she pops her head out from under the bed and kind of stares into space and shakes. How can we get Helen to understand that we love her and that this is a safe and happy home?

**A:** While it isn't usually the answer people want to hear, I have no magic pill or trick to help you fix her and the best solution is time and patience. She has probably not had much interaction with other ferrets or people, so she is uncertain of what to expect. Try to hand-feed her every day and offer her tasty treats from your hands. Maybe after she has played with Gilligan, you could approach her down on the floor with food in your hand. Don't pressure her, just let her take the food and run off.

When you want to interact with her, sit on the floor so she can come to you. Initially, wear long pants and shoes so she can't bite your legs. It will take her a while to settle into the new life and understand that you can be fun. As you see her interact with her environment and Gilligan more, she will be ready to interact with you. In the meantime, make sure you are always associated with good things &mdash; food, toys, etc. Try to play with her, but use a towel for her to hold onto as you pull her around, or roll a soccer ball to her to play with. Interact with her on her terms and keep everything positive.