

Ferret Needs Easy-Use Litter Box

What can owners do to help a physically challenged ferret use a litter box?

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Q: Our 6-year-old ferret, Smudge, was diagnosed with adrenal gland disease a couple of years ago. We can't afford surgery, so that hasn't been an option. We understand that he will lose strength in his hind legs. He has difficulty getting into a litter box, and has resorted to using a space near the boxes on the tile floor. It is heart wrenching to watch as his hind legs splay out to the sides and he ends up lying in his own urine.

Is there any affordable way to facilitate his bodily functions and preserve his dignity? We've tried spreading paper towels for traction, but he just pushes them out of his way before making a mess of himself.

A: One option is to purchase a rectangular cat litter box and cut off or cut down one long side. This allows your ferret to easily get in and out of the litter box. In my house, we use large refrigerator drip pans, around 3 feet by 3 feet, with a ferret-safe litter. The lip is very low and even older ferrets can get in and out.

Another option is to replace the litter boxes with newspaper or a puppy pad. This reduces the need for your ferret to lift himself at all and gives him a place to go without soiling himself.