

Is It A Ferret Or Not?

A homeowner wonders if the animal that suddenly appeared in their home is a domesticated ferret or some other animal.

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Posted: December 1, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

Q: How do I know if I have a ferret or a weasel? When we moved back from our lake house yesterday, we discovered a little furry friend had moved into our home while we were gone. I don't know much about ferrets, but I do know that I really don't want one running loose around my house. We have tried to get it to go outside but without much luck. It seems to like it here just fine.

It is rather small, maybe 9 inches long including his tail. It is chestnut brown with a white belly. It doesn't have a masked-look to its face like the full-grown domesticated ferrets I have seen, and it is much smaller than that. I'm thinking it is a juvenile of some sort. Any helpful suggestions would be appreciated.

A: It sounds like it could be a weasel. Weasels are typically lighter brown with a white belly and a length similar to what you described. A weasel's tail is about the same length as its body and can have black fur on the tip.

In case it is a weasel, do not try to handle it, as they are wild animals. Purchase or borrow a live trap and place it where you know the animal is active. Weasels are carnivores and usually curious, so meat should entice the weasel into the trap. Once caught, you can confirm its identity as a weasel or ferret. If it is a weasel, confirm with a local animal shelter what can be done. Regulations in some areas don't allow wildlife to be moved.