

## Will These Ferrets Ever Get Along?

**If ferrets fight, must they live separately for the rest of their lives?**

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

**Q:** My girlfriend and I decided to get another ferret so her ferret would have a friend to play with. We went to the pet store and picked up a ferret that was 5 months old that we named Mocha. Strippers, the ferret we have had for a while, is now 2 years old. We introduced them the day we brought Mocha home. There have been some problems between the two that I'm not sure how to handle.

The older ferret constantly harasses the younger one, understandably to dominate him, though the older ferret bites around the face and neck. The older ferret has grabbed the younger one by the face and tries to drag him across the floor, which causes the younger ferret to let out a high-pitched squeal.

On the other hand, when the younger one is sleeping, we let the older ferret in the cage and the older ferret begins to clean the younger one for about 15 minutes. Then the older ferret randomly decides to bite the younger ferret's face, and so far has dragged the younger ferret by the throat while he's sleeping.

I don't understand what's going on, and I can't tell if they will get along or not. We only have 14 days to return the younger one, but I really don't want to do that, already being attached to him.

They are both males. Also, while they are playing for the first few minutes it seems to be friendly, after that the older ferret starts to cause pain for the other ferret, judging by the little squeals Mocha lets out. What should I do about this? Is the age difference too vast for them to become friends?

**A:** If you want the ferrets to become playmates, the best way to introduce them is to place them together in a neutral space, like a bathroom or a ferret-proofed space in your home. Research shows that gradual introductions do not work well and can often drag out the meeting process.

Because they have had playtime together, my suggestion is that you clean the cage thoroughly and place them both in the cage in which they will stay. Neck biting and even dragging is normal ferret behavior; that is why the skin on their neck is so thick.

If the older ferret lets the younger one go when he squeals, then they should be fine. Sometimes the squealer quickly comes back for more, indicating there was no harm done. The key with ferret introductions is to let the ferrets interact without human intervention as much as possible so that they learn to play together. Make sure each ferret has a place to escape if it decides to, like a small box or tube.