

Fearful Ferret

What can be done to help a badly abused ferret learn to trust people?

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Q: I'm fostering a male ferret. He is 2 years old and was abused badly in his last-known home. He is very afraid of humans, and we are trying to get him to the place where he is not afraid of people. He's learning new tricks all the time, but he will not let me hold him close. What do I do?

A: Working with an abused ferret will take time and patience — a lot of both. Don't push him to try something he is not comfortable doing, like being held. Start by hand-feeding him and playing gently with him so that he learns to trust humans and human hands.

Once he is comfortable, take it one step at a time. He may not ever be comfortable being picked up or held tightly, and that is OK. All animals have a fear threshold. You need to find out what he is comfortable doing and what he is not comfortable doing. Don't push him to do something he isn't able to deal with, instead make him feel secure.