

Ferret's Secret Urination Is No Game

What can be done to litter-train a ferret that pretends to go in the litter box?

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Q: My ferret Charlie is 4 years old, and he still doesn't do his business in his cage; he does it in every corner of my house, and it's crazy! Every time he backs up to the corner, I put him in his cage and he pretends to go, but when I walk away he gets out and really goes in a corner.

I've tried rewarding him with treats when he goes in his cage, and scolding him when he does it in a corner, but it doesn't work. I don't know what to do anymore. I'm tired of scrubbing my rug to get out the stains. I love my ferret, but it seems like the only solution is to give him away.

A: If Charlie spends a lot of time in his cage, then place him in the litter box when you wake him up before allowing him out to play. Don't trust the behavior that looks like he is urinating, but wait to see proof. Praise him, then let him out to play.

Ferrets have to go to the bathroom quite often, so when Charlie is out and about, be very vigilant. Place him back in the cage to urinate, and wait to see evidence that he urinated. Additionally, add litter boxes in the corners of your home where he has been going.

Ferrets are not cats and their litter box habits can be frustrating as well as inconsistent. Sometimes the best that ferret owners can do is manage the behavior. It also may be worth trying different litters in case Charlie has an aversion to the litter you are using. Make sure the litter is ferret-safe, meaning no clumping or clay litters.

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