

Getting A New Ferret

When one ferret in a pair is ill and soon to pass, should a new ferret be added before or after the sick ferret passes?

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

Q: My adult ferret Joker had a tumor. We got it removed but it came back and has attacked his lymph nodes. There's nothing we can do, and he only has a few weeks left. I have another ferret, Katie. When Joker was in a cage of his own after his operation, Katie seemed very sad and lonely. I've decided to get another ferret so she won't be alone. Should I get this ferret after Joker passes or before so that Katie won't feel depressed when Joker's gone?

A: There are two ways to handle getting a new ferret and each one has benefits for you or the other ferret. Sick ferrets can be quite time-consuming both medically and emotionally. I usually want to spend as much time as possible with an ill ferret, and this can mean the remaining ferrets do not get as much of my time. If you do not have a lot of extra time after work and taking care of Joker, then it may be best to wait. Most people want to spend a lot of time with the new ferret addition and this may be difficult when taking care of Joker.

On the other hand, I also find it quite challenging to get a new ferret really soon after one passes because it feels like I am replacing the departed ferret. In this case, it may be easier to get a new ferret before Joker passes so that the new ferret has time to adjust, as does Katie, to the new environment. It also gives Katie a playmate when you are busy with Joker. Katie will adjust either way, so the decision should be based on your emotional situation and what you feel you can handle.