

## How To Deal With Nipping Ferrets

**A ferret owner tries to learn why her ferrets continue to nip her.**

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**Q:** My two ferrets nip now and then, but I still care for them and handle them every other day. They still keep nipping me. Can you tell me any ways that I can stop them from doing this?

**A:** Ferrets nip for a number of reasons, each one specific to the animal and its age. Young ferrets, much like puppies and kittens, bite because they are learning to play and they are teething. If yours are young, the best solution is to yelp when they bite so they learn that it hurts you. Do not punish them for biting, just teach them not to bite you. If they are older, then it is possible they are in pain because biting is a common way for animals to express pain.

If your ferrets are over the age of 6 months and healthy, then the usual cause of biting is that it has worked for them in the past. If your ferrets are nipping at you when they are picked up and you immediately put them down, then they are reinforced to bite you if they aren't in the mood to be held.

Think of other ways you may be reinforcing this biting behavior. Are you pulling your hand away quickly like it is a game? If this is the case, then they learn how to engage you in the coolest game ever, chase. Are they getting enough exercise? Often an animal that is bored or under exercised will bite. Make an effort to create an environment that is entertaining and allows for variety. Also make sure your ferrets get time out of their cage on a daily basis for exercise. If they are vaccinated and healthy, a romp in the yard can be great fun. Make sure they are on a leash and the temperature isn't too hot or cold.