

How To Determine Ferret Gender

Owners need help determining their ferrets' gender.

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Q: My fiancé and I have a little family of ferrets. We first received ferrets from pet stores, and we had specific paperwork stating the sex of each. We then received three others from private sellers, and we are having a difficult time determining their sex. Could you give us some pointers to figure it out? We tried to look at the proven sex ferrets and go by them, but everything seems to look the same.

A: It can be a real challenge in many small mammals to tell apart males from females. This is even more difficult when the animals are young. Sometimes, in some rodent species, you cannot honestly tell male from female without having them side by side.

Fortunately, that is not true in the ferret. In ferrets, unlike most other small mammals, the vulva and prepuce look very different anatomically and are found in different locations on the body. In some small mammals, the distance from the anus to the urogenital opening is the only visual difference in males and females.

In ferrets, the female's vulva is found by looking at the back end of the ferret and raising the tail. In females not in heat and spayed females, the vulva is small but still easily seen. As you lift up the tail, at the base of the tail, you will see the anus. Just beneath the anus is the vulva. There is no similar structure on the male ferret. If you lift up the tail and see only one opening, it is a male.

In the male, the prepuce, which covers the penis, is found on the abdomen. So, turn your ferret on its back and look down a bit toward its pelvis, if you see a red structure in the center of the abdomen, that is a male ferret. No such structure exists in a female ferret.