

Pimp Your Ferret's Cage With These 10 Must-Have Items!

Check out 10 must-have items to turn your ferret's cage into a cozy home.

By Bob Church

Posted: September 1, 2009, 5 a.m. EDT

© Isabelle Francais/BowTie Inc.

A cage can be a boring place for a ferret if there aren't new things to explore and play with every day.

Around the world the most common method of confining ferrets is by keeping them in a cage. There is little doubt that caging will continue to be popular in controlling and protecting ferrets, even though research has demonstrated extended caging can cause health problems — both physical and mental.

You can minimize any health risks with an easily implemented program of enrichment and exercise. Enrichment goals are to reduce a ferret's boredom, to increase a ferret's interest in its environment, and to encourage a ferret to exercise on a more regular basis.

Much of the time, however, a ferret leads a solitary, caged existence, such as when the owner is at work or sleeping. Those are the times when enrichment is needed the most. You can redesign your ferret cage to make it more "ferret friendly" by adding one or more of the cage enrichments discussed below.

The following items are not a total solution, but they will help in the implementation of a program of cage enrichment. In addition to the ideas listed, pet product manufacturers make many ferret-specific toys, hammocks and other items to enrich your ferret's life.

1) **Cage Blanket:** Every ferret cage needs a cage blanket, which is nothing more than a covering that conceals part or most of the interior. The best cage blankets are made like quilts, with an interior layer of washable water resistant fabric (preferably dark), quilt batting for insulation in the middle and an outer layer of decorative fabric. The inner layer allows easier clean up of potty mistakes, the insulation layer helps absorb noise and the outer layer makes it look nice for the neighbors.

My cage blankets have a top that is custom fitted to the cage, with back and side flaps that extend to the bottom of the cage; two flaps cover the front. When hanging down and fastened with Velcro, the flaps convert the cage to a quiet, warm and dark environment. It is very easy to lift the flaps up to watch the ferrets, or perhaps to allow light and air in the cage during playtime.

2) **Nest Box:** The fact that ferrets prefer to sleep in a nest is readily apparent to anyone who has had to drag a ferret from under a sofa or hutch, or search for a ferret inside dresser drawers. A nest box can be made from a cardboard box (just cut a hole in the end), or fashioned from wood or plastic. A three-dollar washtub with a hole cut in the side, turned upside down and clamped to a sheet of cardboard is as good as any. Even a wood parrot box from the pet store works as a nest box.

3) **Play Tubes:** It doesn't matter what they are made from — cloth, plastic, metal or paper — ferrets love tubes. In my ferrets' cage, I replaced all ramps with tubes, which I prefer to trying to cover a ramp with carpet. I also have a large coiled tube in the bottom of the cage.

4) **Exploration Tub:** A plastic tub can be filled with leaves, paper balls, scented cloth, rattle balls, toys, or just about anything you can imagine. Even an empty tub becomes a place for wrestling and play.

5) **Ceramic Water Bowl:** Ferrets love water, and a ceramic bowl filled with water becomes a wonderful toy. Yes, water will get splashed, but that is what towels are for, right? Just smile and take pictures of the fun.