

## 10 Steps For Fun, Safe Outdoor Walks With Ferrets, FerretsMagazine.com

**You can enjoy a walk outside with your ferrets as long as you take safety precautions.**

*By Bob Church*

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

6. Most people expect exploration dangers to include cars, deep holes and dangerous animals. However, joggers, bicyclists and skateboarders can be as bad or worse — ferrets are small animals that can be difficult to notice by someone moving fast. There have been several times I've had to take rapid action to prevent my ferret from being squished (I've come to call bicycles "die-cycles" because of a few close calls).

7. Another danger is that ferrets could eat something potentially poisonous or dangerous for them. I simply cannot explain why a ferret will turn up its nose at nutritious food, only to go outside and sicken itself by eating a poisonous plant. Pesticides and poisons are obvious, but perhaps more dangerous are garden plants, small bites of which could cause bowel blockages, bacterial infections or just plain poisoning. I feed my ferrets before going outside so that hunger doesn't spur dietary experimentation, but I still watch those little weasels like an eagle. If a ferret looks like it is chewing something, I take away the item as soon as I can.

8. Ferrets, like most carnivores, seem to like to roll around in other animal's poopy messes, so you need to watch for that as well. Nothing can draw a ferret to a spot on the lawn faster than a pile of the fresh stuff, except maybe a bigger pile. Unless you want to have your veterinarian check your ferret for parasites and your dry cleaner to check for nasty spots on your clothes, try to keep your ferret away from those poop piles.

9. Parasites are always a problem. Mosquitoes, ticks, chiggers and fleas seem to lie in wait in the exact spots a ferret wants to explore. Every year I pull ticks off my ferrets and comb fleas from their fur. Prevention helps (talk to your veterinarian about the best preventives for your area), but even with such precautions, your ferret can still take home some of the little beasties.

I always give a ferret back from an outing a complete look over before returning it to the home population. A bright penlight, a flea comb and a tick remover are essential equipment. I give my ferret some of its favorite food and, while it munches, I prowl for naughty bugs hiding in its fur. When finished, I generally wipe down the fur with a damp washcloth to make sure it is clean. You never know when a roll in the poop was done behind your back.

10. If given the choice between walking down the road or sniffing the stuff that is encountered and playing with outside toys, most ferrets choose to sniff stuff every time. A ferret is built to sniff, and trying to identify new odors is one of the most enriching things a ferret can do. So, when you take your exploratory hikes, go to different places and take differing routes. Keep it smelling new, and you ferret will thank you ever so much, usually with a pile near the door. But, hey, that is what a ferret does, right?

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