

Ferrets With Soule

For more than nine years, ferrets in the Gardnerville, Nevada, area have found help and hope at the Ferrets With Soule ferret shelter.

By Troy Lynn Eckart

Posted: July 1, 2010, 5 a.m. EDT

© Courtesy of Linda Soule

The Ferrets With Soul(e) ferret shelter has rescued more than 450 ferrets in nine years.

Linda Soule has been running Ferrets with Soul(e) in Gardnerville, Nevada, for more than 9 years. Since its opening, the shelter has taken in more than 450 ferrets. "If I were to sit down and go through all the paperwork, there would probably be more," Soule said, "but I am too afraid to do that." The average number of ferrets in the shelter runs between 35 and 45, and Soule has her own ferrets to care for as well.

Previously Soule helped with rescues in California for three or four years. She saw there was a need in the area, with many lost ferrets and nowhere for people to take them. "There were no ferret shelters, and the ASPCA would not take ferrets in the Carson Valley," Soule said. "People would either have to go to Carson City or Reno to turn in ferrets."

Advice For Ferret Owners

After helping hundreds of ferrets, Soule has quite a bit of ferret knowledge. "I think the first most important thing when having ferrets is that you have a very knowledgeable vet. They can be the difference of saving your little one's life," Soule said. She recommends starting a savings account and putting \$20 into it every payday, never touching it except for emergency vet visits.

"You will be grateful for that savings," Soule said. "If you think your ferret is sick, don't wait to go to the vet."

She also suggests giving a ferret hairball remedy like Laxatone at least once a week and twice during the shedding seasons. She said that other keys to ferret health are keeping them and their environment clean, and allowing plenty of playtime with you and other ferrets. The right food is also important. She recommends a high-quality ferret food. She also likes the information on ferret care at MiamiFerret.org. "The site has great information on ferret health care, how to feed a sick ferret, etc.," Soule said. "It is presented well and in layman's terms. That always helps for new ferret people."

Soule urges all ferret owners to do everything they can for their pets. "They are here on earth for such a short time, enjoy every minute you have with them," she said. "Then when it is their time to leave you, please do the one thing that every ferret wants, be with them til the end. I know it is hard and I understand if you can't be there for them, but you will be thankful that you were there for them, not for you. They were there when you had a rough day at the office, they were there when you felt lost/frustrated/lonely, and when you were sad. You brought joy into their little lives and they want you there til the end."

© Courtesy of Linda Soule

Many ferrets at the shelter require special care. Calvin needed to have his rear leg amputated and recovered well afterward.

Ferret Stories

Soule has lots of success stories. A recent case involved two ferrets that were found in front of a Barnes and Noble bookstore in Reno. They were at the ASPCA for five days before arriving at the ferret shelter. She named them "Barnes" and "Noble." Both seemed dehydrated and had a low temperature. The first night with them was rough, and Soule stayed up late and ended up waking up nearly every hour to check on them. Sometime after 5 a.m., the tide turned for Barnes. "He was out of the sleepsack, and he raised his head to look at me," Soule said. "He ate some warm soup, and I gave him a huge hug and told him everything was going to be just fine now. I told him that night that if he would make it though the night, he wouldn't ever have to go anywhere, and he would always have everything that he wanted. So, he is here with his brother and is now fat and sassy."

Unfortunately, all cases don't end so well.

Soule related the story of Penny, a ferret that was found in an abandoned house, trapped in a ferret ball with no food or water. She came to the shelter and was fostered by one of Soule's foster homes. This little ferret also suffered from

adrenal gland disease, but after much care and adrenal surgery, she was healthy again. When a man came to the shelter seeking to adopt only one ferret, he seemed like the perfect match for Penny.

“He came over several times to play with her, and when he decided she was the one for him, my husband, a friend of ours and I went over to ferret-proof his home,” Soule said. The home was neat, and among other things, they fixed a recliner so it couldn’t fold out or swivel.

Soule called him a few times to check on Penny, but one day he called her to say he couldn’t find Penny; she had been missing for three days.

“Boy, was I not happy,” Soule said. “A few of us went over to his house with squeakers and went through the entire home, the outside yards and then started looking around two or three blocks. It really worried me, there are hawks out in his area and there are so many dogs. We were there for hours looking for her. We looked everywhere, but we couldn’t find Penny.”

Soule called him several times afterward, but Penny was still was missing.

“He called me about a month later and told me he found her,” Soule said. She asked if Penny was alive, and when he said no, Soule started crying.

She found out that during a cold spell, the man found Penny when he went to take out his electric blanket, which he stores under his bed in a plastic, zippered bag. “Somehow little Penny got into the bag and couldn’t find her way out of it,” Soule said. “The only thing that I hope is that she just went to sleep and never knew what happened. Please everyone, check and make sure there is nothing that these precious little ones can crawl into and can’t get out.”