

## A Schedule Ruled By Ferrets

**Follow the usual daily schedule of Brenda Johnson, founder of the Lakeroad Ferret Farm Rescue Shelter.**

*By Troy Lynn Eckart*

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The ferret room at the shelter usually houses about 40 ferrets, but at times its had as many as 60.

A day in the life of Lakeroad Ferret Farm Rescue Shelter usually begins at 3:30 a.m. with the night crew of ferrets being put in their cages so the early morning group can come out to play. "So begins the same routine I follow seven days a week, 365 days a year," Johnson said.

The shelter, a large house with many different rooms, is divided into play areas by 29 inch high barriers. Each play area is filled with a different enrichment theme to keep the ferrets from becoming bored. The ferrets housed in the playroom get up first, filling four of the eight separate play areas.

"I move another four cage groups from the ferret room to the remaining play areas," Johnson said. "A total of eight cage groups are up at one time to spend their first hour in the play area I put them in."

Cages are cleaned when the ferrets get up for the day, and Johnson rotates the ferret groups between play areas every hour when she's home. By 6 a.m., Johnson dishes out Duck Soup and administers medications to ferrets needing it. But her day isn't completely focused on ferret-related duties.

"At any time there are phone calls to field, e-mails to answer, customers to check out, web orders to fill, adoption requests and possible surrender requests to address, as well as thank you notes to write," Johnson said. She writes most thank you notes while waiting for children to board the school bus she drives.

Yes, in addition to running the shelter, Johnson also holds a job, and its start time is 6:30 a.m. She completes her morning bus run by 8 a.m. and then picks up an elderly lady she cares for by 8:15 a.m. "Kay is 91 years old, does not drive and has no family in the area, so I am her lifeline, the person she depends on for things she cannot do for herself."

After dropping Kay off to have morning coffee, Johnson returns home by 8:30 a.m. to move the ferrets between play areas. If the ferrets didn't mess up an area, Johnson then has time to eat breakfast, but at 9:15 a.m. she heads out to pick up Kay and transport her around town on errands. Johnson cares for Kay seven days a week.

"By 10 a.m., I am usually back at my real job, the shelter," Johnson said. From 10 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. on usual days, Johnson does ferret laundry, picks up the kitchen, moves the ferrets again, rotates the early morning group into their cages so the next group can have play time, opens her store for a bit, takes a break for her main meal, checks e-mail, cleans cages, and cleans any areas that the ferrets might have "trashed" during play.

At 1:30, it's back to the bus until 5 p.m.

After work, Johnson opens her store and finishes up shelter duties. "That may mean hanging the last of the day's laundry out on the line, setting the washing machine timer to start a new load of laundry at 4 a.m. the next day, getting afternoon soup and medications done, putting the mid-afternoon ferrets away and getting the night crew out and into the play areas where they will spend the night," Johnson said. "Once the fur kids are out, I will clean their cages so they are ready for the next morning." The day winds down at 7 p.m.

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Troy Lynn Eckart is the founder of Ferret Family Services, a domestic ferret information, education and welfare public service organization in Kansas.