

How Ferrets Change People's Lives

People discover that their lives can change dramatically after adopting a ferret.

By Rebecca Stout

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The Next Buzz On Ferrets

In August's The Buzz On Ferrets column, Rebecca Stout explores the question, "What do you find that other people misunderstand most about ferrets or ferret ownership"? Want to send an answer for her to possibly use? [Click Here>>](#)
The deadline is June 15, 2009

Never has a pet changed my life in such dramatic and even bizarre ways as the ferret. I've cohabitated with a wide array of animals, everything from anoles to zebra finches. All of which have happily fit into my life. Dogs and cats seem all too happy to accommodate us and slide into our schedules and activities with ease. Fish tanks find places in the home as easily as a lounge chair. Gerbils are quite content to gnaw on their balsa while I brush my teeth. Large birds can be a bit more challenging, but they are busy little things so given a job to do each day they turn into industrious little workers. While I flip through the pages of the latest novel, my cockatoo stays busy tearing up an old phone book page by page and redecorating her cage. Whether I live with iguanas or rabbits, I am master of my home ... of my life. With ferrets? Not so much.

When I brought home my first ferret, Baby, I kicked off my shoes, lounged back and tossed her a ball so I could do some school work. The ball disappeared, and then my shoes. I grudgingly got up to grab the scoundrel before she made off with my keys next. But then it was my toes she tried to hide. I found my exhausted self performing the Riverdance around the room to avoid being tripped while she tried to tackle my feet. I firmly told her to go play. No sooner had I turned my back, than I heard meows. I turned to see a wide-eyed cat stretched out, gripping the rug with its claws while its whole body repeatedly jerked back hitting its head on the frame of the bed. The ferret was trying to drag and hide the cat under the bed. It took all of about 10 minutes to realize that my life would never be the same again.

Changes, Big And Small

The changes that occur in a ferret owner's life vary from the minutest things to the most life-altering ones. But even the smallest modifications can really transform a ferret lover's life. When asked how ferrets had changed her life, Selina Siu of Ontario, Canada, said the way she walks changed. "People have noticed," she said. "Ferret owners shuffle so they don't step on their ferrets." It's the first thing that strikes a visitor upon entering a ferret owner's home. The habit can get so entrenched that it affects the way people walk outside their home, giving fellow customers at the local grocery store something to goggle at other than the alien abductions in the latest gossip magazine on the newsstand.

The actual household also can be greatly altered by a ferret's arrival. In a typical ferret owner's home you may find toilet seats always down, baby locks on cabinets and drawers, legless couches, trash cans on counters, TV controllers impossible to find, and the home sealed up tight enough to withstand a chemical attack. Fran Prager, a ferret owner and board member of the International Ferret Congress, described her precautions.

"No door or window is opened when the ferrets are out of their cage," she said. "No one can come in or out of this house ... all doors remain closed. Period. The dog isn't walked, garbage isn't put out ... these little ones can get out so fast!"

For me, I think the most extreme home modification I've ever seen was an upside down Christmas tree hanging off of a ceiling to prevent the ferrets from trying to hide it, along with the cat, under the bed.

Courtesy of Ed Scheer

Online ferret forums and groups help Joan Scheer provide the best care possible for her ferrets like Tiki, seen above.

A New Schedule

Some people's way of life changes because of ferrets. Joan Scheer of Pennsylvania began her life with ferrets when her husband decided he needed a friend and brought a ferret home one day. Ferret math quickly took over the couple's life, and they began receiving ferrets that needed homes.



Scheer discovered the world of online groups when she got a new job at a local college. "I went to the library on the weekends to get my feet wet, joined a few forums, and quickly got overwhelmed with e-mails. I began getting up and going in to work two hours early, 2:15 a.m., to get a hold of a computer and keep updated. This went on for three years. I learned and could better provide for my ferrets through these knowledgeable groups and forums. These days, I have a computer at home, but still keep this early routine. I have two play groups that need time for each other, and I need time with them. People seem astonished at my routine, but for me it was a minor adjustment to compensate for all I have and still gain."

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