

Ferrety Surprises

Find out what ferrets do that surprise their owners.

By Rebecca Stout

Posted: December 1, 2011, 5 a.m. EST

The surprises that ferrets bring to their owners seem endless. No matter how long you've owned them and how experienced you may be, you are virtually guaranteed to be greeted with surprises every day. Just when you think you've seen it all, ferrets come up with more. And many ferret owners take extreme delight in the surprises their pet ferrets provide them with, no matter what they are.

Courtesy of Angela Neiswenter

Clyde seems to prefer the bathtub over his litter box.

Inside And Outside The Ferret Litter Box

Ferret owners are often obsessed with ferret poop. Why? Our little furry balls of wonder go to the bathroom every few hours. That's a lot of poop dealings in a ferret lover's life! What's more, ferret owners have come to find that the appearance of ferret waste is a great indicator of what is going on with their bodies and their general health. This often leads to "poop gazing." So it's no wonder that despite the wide array of surprises that ferrets bring with them each and every day, what stands out in people's minds is what is eliminated out of ferret bodies.

To ease the pain of being faced with the occasional litter box miss, ferret owners refer to such accidents as "presents." The look on the face of someone who doesn't own ferrets as he or she hears two ferret lovers laugh and share stories about where their ferret has left them "presents" is priceless.

Cheryl Richardson, owner of two ferrets, reveals where she often finds a ferrety present, "Poor old Spencer poops by hanging his butt over the stair edge and plopping a good one on the step below. Always nice when going for a drink of water at night to find one!"

You might ask how in the world anyone could find this so amusing or even cute. Just one look into an adorable, fuzzy ferret face and you'll know.

Rescue volunteer and ferret owner Angela Neiswenter of Pennsylvania can't resist forgiving her adorable ferret Clyde for his accidents. Even though she is a veteran owner, he was still able to surprise her with a bizarre potty behavior. "[He] takes all the time in the world to climb up the side of the bathtub and poop in the bathtub."

Now I don't know what goes through little Clyde's mind when he's tenaciously climbing into that bathtub, but Sheri Jipson likes to think her ferret, Grapes, is purposefully expressing great wit with its baffling behavior. The Massachusetts resident explains, "Mine likes to poop on the bathroom scale. I agree with the sentiment!"

Some surprises can be quite shocking. Eleanor Mead of Massachusetts is a longtime ferret owner and member of Massachusetts Ferret Friends, an organization dedicated to the welfare of ferrets. She has found her adopted ferret, Bug, to be an occasional pee drinker! As disturbing as that sounds, this is usually quite a benign behavior. Thank goodness it's not very common.

Courtesy of Sheri Jipson

Grapes the ferret has a different idea about what a scale should be used for.

Ferrets Making Noise

Many ferret owners interviewed for this article said that their ferret farts, especially while in the litter box. The surprise is not that they break wind, but the fact that these little, gas-passing fuzzi-butties are the ones taken aback by it. Each and every time owners witness it, the ferret looks shocked that something so loud and stinky came out -- as if it had never happened before.

Jane Bradley of Virginia was surprised not by the sound of her ferret's fart but where it happened. "One of our first ferrets was sitting/hanging over my shoulder, face toward my back. All of a sudden there was this quiet little 'phewt' sound. Yes, Weasel had passed gas right in my face!"

Donna Hogarth of New Jersey said that her ferret surprises involve another part of ferrets. "My ferrets burp...a lot. What surprises me is how loud some of their belches are and that something that big can come from something that barely weighs a pound."

And those aren't the only noises ferrets make. Ferret owner Darlene Cannon of British Columbia explained, "I was watching TV. Koby was asleep under the couch. I could hear snoring over the sound of the TV. When I checked who was making all the noise, it was my boy Koby."

Ferrets ordinarily sleep up to 18 hours a day. They are already cute enough while awake, but they are absolutely adorable when they sleep. No matter how often you watch them sleep, ferret lovers are always surprised by how cute they are and fascinated by the various contorted positions they make. Two sleepyheads in Manitoba surprised their owner, Amber Overwater, with something adorable. "When my ferrets yawn they do a loud 'Hiiii!' sound. It has woken me up and scared me many times during the night." I bet that never gets old.

Courtesy of Eleanor Mead

Bug the ferret does something that seems shocking but is harmless.

Amazing Ferrets

My favorite ferrety surprise came from Marlene Blackburn, the director of the Richmond Ferret Rescue League in Richmond, Virginia. "I had several ferrets out playing and, when I strolled in, I noticed the ceiling fan very, very slowly rotating. Miss Piggy had climbed a huge Martin's cage, then saw a wide paddle to leap onto. She was a chunky, chocolate sable rescue. Her weight was making the fan rotate. She was squatting on that blade like it was a great circus ride. Never put a cage near a ceiling fan! Miss Piggy was adopted out with her cagemate, Hamlet. Thank God, a happy ending."

As for myself, I am constantly surprised by a ferrets intelligence and ingenuity even after owning them for more than 30 years. Several years ago, my husband was on the floor playing with one of his ferrets when he found his buddy, Pong, doing something extraordinary. Pong was facing my husband while he was on his hands and knees. When my husband scratched the rug with his nails in front of him, Pong scratched the carpet back at him. The mimicry surprised me so much that I thought surely it was a coincidence. But it wasn't! This became a regular game they played every night. And it was only weeks ago when my jaw hit the floor when I saw a video of someone's ferret purposefully arranging objects next to a baby gate in a doorway so it could climb up and jump over it. Because of this intelligence, despite the two-second attention span, ferrets are surprisingly trainable.

Richardson may have seen the extreme goofy side of ferrets when one pooped off the stairs but she has also seen their brilliance. "Neither one of my ferrets poof or pass gas, at least I've never heard or seen it, but, if Priscilla, a 1-year-old female, is by herself, and I ask her 'Where is Spencer?' several times, she will look around as if to see if he's there. When I say 'Go get Spencer!' she will actually go all over looking for him and always finds him -- they are free rangers. Spencer is soon to be 4, and is adrenal, has lymphoma, insulinoma and is on chemo, so finding him is a pretty important thing in my book, and I always give her a treat and hugs and tell her what a good girl she is."

Whether your ferret's surprise comes in the form of aggravation from finding a poopy down below or the fright of seeing it spinning on a ceiling fan high above, these bouncy boogers will bring excitement and astonishment to your life until their dying day.

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