

A Biting Ferret Is Saved From Death's Door

A deaf ferret describes how the biting it communicated with nearly got it killed.

By Tressie Dutchyn

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Deafness likely caused Donnola the ferret to bite until the condition was discovered. Photos Courtesy Tressie Dutchyn
Donnola, seen here with Sampson, is now a happy member of a multi-ferret household.

My name is Donnola, which means weasel in Italian. I am 1 year old. This is my story.

I was bought from a pet store together with my companion, Pang. I don't know what happened to him. The young humans who bought us did not know much about ferrets and did not realize that I could not hear. They did not know that ferrets play with their teeth. They became very frustrated with me because I did not listen to them and they began hitting me to make me listen. A relative who lived with them drank a lot, and he used to pick me up and throw me so I would stop biting. This terrified me more, and I bit harder.

One day the young man told his girlfriend that he was going to kill me and she took me to an animal shelter instead. It was smelly and awful. The people there did not realize that I could not hear. Soon after I arrived at the shelter they stabbed me between the shoulders and put a microchip there. I did not know what was happening and the pain was beyond belief. This made me even more terrified of humans.

A lady who was studying to be an animal doctor came to the shelter and took me home with her. But she could not understand why I was still afraid even though she was kind; she also did not realize I could not hear. I bit her to try and make her understand but she cried instead.

She looked at me one day with very sad eyes; her eyes told me that I would have to die because she could not help me. I became even more frightened and bit as hard as I could, screaming at her to hear me. Someone told her about a place that could help me and that she should take me there rather than end my life.

I went on a very long car ride and hands reached in to take me out of my travel box. I had learned that hands hurt, and so I bit real hard again and again and again.

But guess what? This human's eyes looked into mine and told me she had heard me. She put me gently into a snuggly hammie and her eyes told me not to be afraid, she would wait and together we would learn how to hear one another. The lady is now my mama and I don't bite anymore, I only give kisses. I have lots of brothers and sisters to play with and best of all Mama, and I "talk" lots.

Tressie Dutchyn is Chair of The Ferret Lovers Society of Atlantic Canada and adopted Donnola soon after the ferret was surrendered from a woman who was going to have her euthanized for being a vicious biter. The first owner shared Donnola's early history with Dutchyn.

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