

A Life Changed By Ferrets

The ways ferrets can touch a life and change it are endless.

By Priscilla Gabrielle

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Courtesy Priscilla Gabrielle

Ralph (left) and Trixie changed their owner's life for the better.

I changed my life because of my ferrets. Ralph and Trixie added such love, companionship and joy to my life that the changes I made were well worth it!

I ferret-proofed my house, getting down on hands and knees to "think like a ferret!" Ferrets have an unending curiosity along with a streak of fearlessness that can get them into trouble. So even with the ferret-proofing, I monitored them closely when they were out. I also have a "ferret pen" set up in the living room for periods when I cannot watch them closely. It is loaded with toys, blankets, tunnels, food, water bowls and litter box. I also have a Ferret Nation Cage taking up the space that would probably hold an entertainment center.

I keep busy with the necessary cleaning, washing, sweeping, mopping, and litter box scooping daily — most often twice a day. My kids are four-legged demolition champions! A neat, clean and arranged play area can be transformed into total chaos in mere moments.

Ralph is a most excellent water bowl tipper. I could use a lock-type crock or a really heavy water bowl, but I don't! Ralph has so much fun doing his water bowl tipping, that I don't have the heart to take it away from him. Besides, he is so much fun to watch. Sometimes I think he is an otter, he loves the water so much. Trixie was a food stasher; "eat one-stash one" was her motto. So, my hand sweeper was always in use.

Besides the physical changes I made to safely be owned by ferrets, I made other, more intangible, changes.

My ferrets' health, happiness and care are a most important priority. They are the first thing I think about in the morning. I couldn't wait to get home from work to let them out to play. I stopped taking long vacations, because I didn't want to be away from them for more than a few days. When I did go away, I had a wonderful pet sitter come to the house two times a day to feed and play with them. This required planning, and I had to consider the cost of their pet sitter's care in my travel budget.

My disposable income is no longer an issue — I don't have one! Ralph and Trixie saw the veterinarian often for routine vaccinations, frequent well-visit checkups, plus care for illnesses. At just 3 1/2 years old, Trixie was diagnosed with lymphoma in December of 2008. She saw the veterinarian about every two weeks for exams, blood work, medications, etc. Lymphoma is not curable, but I hoped to be able to get her into a remission. After Trixie was diagnosed in December, I spent more than \$1,000 on exams, diagnostic tests and medications in just two months.

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