

How Biology Affects Ferret Behavior

Biology, mainly hormonal behavior, is one of the factors that affect ferret behavior.

By Mike and Arita Morrett

Posted: April 1, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

Behavior is often perceived as part of personality, but some ferret behavior and traits are driven by biology. Hormonal changes affect ferret behavior. The aroma of an intact (whole) ferret is quite noticeable. Other changes are traits of the species during breeding season. Most intact ferrets make poor pets during breeding season. They have a heavy musk odor and mark their territory, although there are some exceptions. Jills are not usually a problem but do mark their territory and their personality changes toward other female ferrets in the group. This usually manifests as squabbles between one or two other females. In some cases there can be outright fighting but normally not enough to cause severe damage.

The hob's behavior in ferret breeding season is more pronounced. They must be kept separated in most cases. Two hobs together in breeding season can result in severe fighting, even death. Further, their attitude toward you may be aggressive. In addition, this behavior can be an early warning sign of medical problems, especially adrenal disease, in any ferret.

Mike and Arita Morrett are co-owners of Savannah Lakes Ferretry in South Carolina, where they reside with their eight ferrets, and breed pet and show-quality ferrets.