

Ferret Glossary

A glossary of words related to ferrets.

Adrenal: A shortened term for adrenal gland disease. It refers to the development of a neoplasm on the right, left or both adrenal glands. Most often, this causes excessive secretion of estrogen that leads to loss of fur and hormonal behavior.

Albino: A coat color distinguished by all white fur and red eyes. This coat color is also known as red-eyed white.

Alopecia: A term indicating loss of hair.

Anemia: A condition in which the blood is deficient in red blood cells, in hemoglobin or in total volume.

Black sable: The color of the ferret. According to the American Ferret Association's color pattern chart, black sable ferrets have a black/brown coat, black or brown eyes and a black/brown nose.

Business: The term for a group of ferrets.

Canine distemper: A viral disease that is 100 percent fatal in ferrets; it can be spread through direct contact with infected animals, through the air and through contact with human clothing and skin that have been in contact with infected animals. To prevent canine distemper, make sure your pet receives the entire series of vaccinations and annual booster shots.

Carnivore: A flesh-eating animal. Ferrets are carnivores and require a diet high in animal protein and fat.

Champagne: A coat color of the ferret. According to the American Ferret Association's color pattern chart, champagne ferrets have a light tan or diluted chocolate coat, brown or burgundy eyes and a pink nose that might have a tan outline.

Chocolate: A coat color of the ferret. According to the American Ferret Association's color pattern chart, chocolate ferrets have warm, milk-chocolate brown coats; brown eyes; and a pink nose that might have a brown outline.

Descenting: Removal of the ferret's anal scent glands to prevent the animal from releasing an extremely strong-smelling substance.

Diabetes: A metabolic disease in which the pancreas fails to produce insulin, a hormone that allows blood sugar to be absorbed by cells for proper function.

Domestic animal: Any of various animals domesticated by man so as to live in a tame condition. The ferret is a domestic animal.

Dooking: The chortling noise a ferret makes. This usually occurs when a ferret is happy, excited, exploring or even content.

Estrus: The time when a female animal is fertile and receptive to a male; also known as a heat period.

Forever Home: A term that describes a home where a ferret is loved and cared for throughout its life, never to be abandoned.

Gib: A neutered male ferret.

Hairball: A clump of ingested hair; in some instances, hairballs can cause intestinal blockage in ferrets.

Heartworms: Parasites that mature in the chambers of the heart and block major arteries, causing heart failure and death.

Hob: A male ferret that is unneutered or "whole."

Hypoglycemia: Low blood sugar that can cause brain dysfunction and weakness; in ferrets, this condition most frequently is caused by an insulinoma.

Insulinoma: The name of insulin-secreting tumors of the pancreas. Insulinoma causes low glucose levels in the blood (hypoglycemia).

Jill: A female ferret that is unspayed or “whole.”

Kit: The term for a baby ferret.

Lymphosarcoma: A cancer of the lymph nodes and other lymphatic tissue, such as the spleen and liver; the most commonly diagnosed cancer in ferrets.

Mask conformation: Distinguishing markings and colors of the ferret's face.

Mustela putorius furo: The scientific Latin name for the domestic ferret.

Poofing: A ferret that still has its scent glands uses them to communicate. It uses the glands to release an odor, usually when it's startled or displeased. The odor doesn't last long but is mildly unpleasant, unlike a skunk's odor.

Plaque: A buildup of bacteria and minerals on the teeth that forms a hard coating and can lead to gum disease.

Quick: The pink, blood-veined area of a ferret's nail.

Rabies: An acute viral disease of the nervous system of warm-blooded animals that is usually transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. Though chances of your ferret contracting rabies are remote, make sure your pet receives annual booster shots.

Rainbow Bridge: Described in a poem by the same name by an unknown author, the term refers to a mythical, beautiful place where departed pets romp happily and await reunion with their owners so that both pass together into Heaven.

Sable: A coat color of the ferret. According to the American Ferret Association's color pattern chart, sable ferrets have a medium warm brown coat, brown eyes, and a brown or pink nose with freckles. It is the most common coat color.

Scruff: The skin at the back of the ferret's neck. Also, to grasp a ferret by the skin at the back of its neck.

Soup: In terms of ferrets, this refers to an easily digested, high-calorie liquid or liquefied diet. The recipe varies and is often homemade. It's intended as a temporary diet for ailing ferrets.

Sprite: A spayed female ferret.

Styptic powder: A substance that helps stop bleeding, such as from a ferret's nails.

Utah Ferrets: This refers to 261 ferrets that were seized by animal control officers in September 2001 from a condo in Utah that was operating as a ferret and reptile sanctuary. A judge fined the owner of the sanctuary and put her on 12-month probation for violating zoning laws. Some ferrets were returned to owners who had been boarding them and other ferrets died before transport to ferret shelters or a new home could be arranged. Ultimately, the ferret community rescued 235 ferrets.

Weasel War Dance: A term ferret owners use to describe a ferret that is jumping around, usually with an arched back, stiff legs and open mouth, and making noises. It generally means the ferret is happy or wants to play.