

## The "Cool Rules" For Ferrets In Hot Weather

**Follow these tips to keep your ferret cool, safe and healthy in hot temperatures.**

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Posted: May 19, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

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When the temperature rises, ferrets need special attention to keep them cool and safe.

Most of us live in a place where we have to deal with periodic heat waves in the summer and fall. For households with ferrets, hot weather brings an added danger, because our fur-bearing friends are extremely heat sensitive.

Domestic ferrets evolved from wild mustelids that, on the whole, are nocturnal creatures adapted to cold climates. They generally seek out burrows for shelter, which provide cool sleeping places during hot summer days. They avoid the heat by doing their hunting in the twilight or at night.

Contrast this with the living conditions of our diurnal (active in the daytime), domestic ferrets — most human houses are woefully lacking in earthen burrows. I was tempted to cut holes in my hardwood floor and build a large ferret run in the always-cool space under my house, but I never did. Instead, temperature control for my ferrets depended on air conditioning and the power grid, and the higher electric bills were just another part of the cost of keeping them.

But what happens if the air conditioner breaks or the electricity goes off, especially if we are not home at the time? How safe would your ferrets be? You must consider details like how well insulated your house is and how long it will stay cool enough for the ferrets. If you have a digital-control window air conditioning unit, will it need to be reprogrammed to start up again if the power fails even briefly?

### Cool Rules For Home

Learn how to keep your ferrets cool at home. [Click Here>>](#)

[Cool Rules For Traveling With Ferrets](#)

What steps can you take to ensure your pet's safety in the heat? Learn the "Cool Rules"!

#1. Keep the ferret carrier out of the sun.

#2. Provide water for ferrets. A water bottle drips continuously when the car is moving, so use a dish that locks onto the carrier, under the bottle's spout, to catch drips. For anything more than a very short trip, remove the bottle when driving and just have some water in the dish or it will overflow from all the shaking.

#3. Wedge or tie the ferret carrier in place so it can't be thrown forward in the event of a crash. Orient the carrier so that if you have to make a sudden stop, objects inside can't slide forward to crush your ferret, and it won't be impaled on the water bottle spout.

For short trips in a car:

#1. Keep the ferret carrier on the floor, so its top is at or below the height of the car's seats.

#2. Position it so cool air from the air conditioner can blow toward and around it, but avoid a direct blast into the ferret carrier.

#3. Cover with an insulating layer, not just the ferret carrier itself, but that entire section of the car — either the front seat, passenger side or the whole floor in the back. Adjust the air conditioner to blow downward toward the floor, and arrange the cover to allow the air-flow in. You are in effect making a "lid" to hold in a pool of cold air at floor level that will stay cold for quite a while, even if the air conditioner quits. It is like the layer of very cold water at the bottom of a lake.

A light-colored comforter makes a good cover, and reflects heat if the sun hits it. I've used my fluffy goose down comforter many times. In addition, you can cover the ferret carrier with a reflective windshield sunscreen, like those made from aluminized bubble wrap. If you have to leave the car for a few minutes, the temperature above the seat level may reach over a hundred, but the temperature around the ferret carrier will stay comfortable for a while. But don't "push it," this is

only for short stops.

For medium car trips, hot weather, or if your air conditioner isn't working:

#1. In addition to the above, securely tie a bottle with ice to the inside of the ferret carrier. A favorite bottle size is a 2-liter soda bottle about nine-tenths filled with water and then frozen. Wrap a thin towel around the bottle to absorb condensation. If the car is hot to start with and you have no air conditioner, pack additional ice bottles around the outside of the ferret carrier to help create the cold air pool.

#2. For the longer trip you also need to provide food, a litter box and your ferrets' favorite edible ferret chew toys to keep them occupied and happy when they aren't sleeping.

#3. It is a good idea to keep several emergency ice bottles in your freezer at all times. (What if you suddenly had to evacuate your home for some reason in the middle of summer and had to bring your ferrets out into the heat?).

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Transporting ferrets in vans or RV's, on longer trips, and very hot weather or desert travel:

The principles are the same. It just requires more extensive planning and precise execution. In addition to the above:

#1. Carry an ice chest full of ice, just for the ferrets. Keep a second one for you, if you want. Find two plastic bottles, each of about three or four quarts in size, of a flat rectangular shape and with a wide mouth top that you can keep filled with crushed ice from the ice chest. Rig up a secure holder for each bottle along the (inside) side walls of the ferret carrier, so the bottles will stay put but be easily removable for refilling.

Keep refilling the ice bottles frequently, as needed. Remember, in hot conditions, your ferrets' lives might depend on the ice supply if you have any kind of an emergency, like if you have car trouble in the middle of nowhere, or an accident closes the highway, or you have to evacuate from an approaching hurricane. So even if your car is in great shape and your air conditioning works fine, carry lots of ice! For the longest possible ice storage you could carry solid block ice, and break it up with an ice pick for filling the ice bottles. You could even carry your ice in one of the larger 12 volt car coolers that plug into a cigarette lighter outlet.

#2. Create and maintain the pool of cold air. Cold air flows just like water. In vehicles with larger, open floor areas you must erect a barrier to hold in the cold air. A large cardboard box works, as does covering the ferret carrier completely with cloth. When I crossed California's desert with ferrets 10 years ago, I used a regular cotton bed sheet. I wrapped the sheet completely around the entire ferret carrier, creating something like a tent. The ferret carrier was sitting on a piece of foam rubber to insulate it from any heat coming up through the floor, as well as to dampen any jolts from rough pavement. There was more foam rubber between the ferret carrier and the wall of the van.

Note: The sheet covering the ferret carrier must be kept very carefully closed, as even a small opening in the side or bottom part of the sheet may allow the cold air to drain away and leave the animals "high and dry" in a layer of deadly hot air. Binder clips make good fasteners for holding the sheet closed. Clothespins work fairly well, too.

For easy access and monitoring, I arranged the sheet so two edges came together in front of the ferret carrier's door. I could peek in and slip my hand between the folds to feel what the temperature was doing without letting the cold air escape. A little air will pass through a normal percale sheet like I used. You probably wouldn't want to use a super tight weave, like a 300-plus count satin sheet, it might not let enough oxygen through. I draped the sheet loosely over the carrier, like a big tent, which left more surface area for air diffusion.

If you use a large cardboard box to enclose the ferret carrier, keep the top flaps open and cover the top with a cloth (like the sheet) to hold in the cold air but still allow oxygen to enter. I think if I were going to be parked for several hours, and no wind was blowing through the vehicle, I would want to turn the box on its side and have the open vertical side of the box covered with the sheet, to give any carbon dioxide that was building up a better chance to get out, since it is heavier than air.

**Physics & Ferrets**

How heat transfer affects temperature. [Click Here>>](#)

#3. If somehow you get caught in a hot situation you aren't prepared for, you can accomplish a lot of cooling by wetting down the ferret. Start with just the paws and legs, and maybe the head. Use water that is lukewarm so it won't shock your



ferret with a drastic temperature change. If this doesn't provide sufficient cooling, wet the entire ferret, working a little water at a time into its fur with your fingertips. You can also blow on your ferret to increase the evaporative cooling effect. Your pet will stop panting as soon as its core temperature drops enough, so observe it closely and don't overdo it.

Plan ahead now for the next heat wave, put to use the "Cool Rules," and you can keep your ferrets comfortable in a wide range of environments.

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