

The Evolution Of Ferret Cages

Today's ferret cages evolved from outdoor hutches into ferret homes.

By Marylou Zarbock

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For safety and security, the main concerns are safe ramps, minimizing the risk of high falls in the cage and preventing escape from the cage. Escapes usually occur via a door that the ferret is able to manipulate or a door opening that it can squeeze through, even when latched.

Safety is the most important ferret cage feature to Sherry Stone of Alberta, Canada. "Doors lock securely, no places for pinching toes, ramps attach securely, etc."

For ramps, the concern isn't just that ramps attach securely. Drakiotes believes all ramps should be a wire grid with small openings to prevent a ferret from falling through, like it could with a ladder-type ramp.

And that's not all. "Shelves need to be easy to remove, and move around," said Stacey Merrill Lamb of Missouri. "Ramps not too steep. Fewer levels, only one or two are needed."

Fear of their ferrets falling from a height in the cage is on the minds of other ferret owners. "As ferrets age, I have wished and wished for a cage that featured safer ways for them to get from floor to floor; specifically enclosed ramps for those who are not as steady on their feet," said Katrina Sword of Oregon.

Although she has a multi-level ferret cage featuring enclosed tunnels for access between levels, which prevents ferrets from falling, Risa DiVincenzo of Massachusetts has another concern. "As our crew ages, I do worry about it getting harder for them to get up and down the levels."

Sukie Crandall of New Jersey is still hoping for good ramps. "No one seems to get ramps right, and I'd love ones that lifted easily and did not fall halfway off when shifted by the ferrets or by us, and did not have the risk of catching legs." She offered some possible solutions. "Maybe solid-metal hinged [ramps] in a set location that flips up, with speed bumps on them so that ferrets could climb them easily. A textured hard plastic with ramps done that way might work too."

Ease of moving the cage was another feature ferret owners mentioned, so having properly sized-casters for the cage is a plus. But easy moving usually ranked after cleaning and safety in importance.

Ferret Cage Manufacturers Welcome Feedback

Every ferret cage manufacturer interviewed for this article cited customer feedback as one of the factors for design change of their cages. They welcome such feedback and some work with ferret shelters or rescues to get input on cage design. Ware Manufacturing gets feedback from a focus group, in addition to customer feedback. Another source of feedback is retailers.

"Retailers are in touch with consumers every day," Hitsman said. He added that most successful products on the market address a specific need. "Ideas come from everywhere and usually address a behavioral need."

Vair noted that additional factors affecting cage design change include animal safety, the number of ferrets housed in one cage, material cost and availability, and trends in home design.

Vair also said design changes that make ferret ownership easier mean more to ferret owners. "Latches that work well are more impressive than having a new powder-coat finish, for example."

Ferret Cages Of Tomorrow

The future could bring more changes to ferret cages. "We are always open for new ideas, as well as ways to improve our current cages," Linda R. said, "Customer feedback is the best way to accomplish both. We love to hear from our customers."

Vair believes the future of ferret cages will include exploration of new materials and new efficient designs. "As people are

trending toward staying home more and traveling less, what is in their homes becomes even more important.”

Fritz believes the future will see a trend toward more custom-built ferret cages.

Hitsman sees future ferret cages focusing on fun and fashion, matching people’s homes better and having more accessories.

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<<Page 1