

The Evolution Of Ferret Cages

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

By Marylou Zarbock

Posted: April 27, 2009, 6:30 p.m. EDT

Although people have kept ferrets as working animals or pets for nearly 2,000 years, the development of a truly ferret-specific cage is relatively recent. The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the biggest introduction of ferret-specific cages to the market. And ferret cage design continues to evolve today.

Courtesy of Marshall Pet Products

Features of the Marshall Pet Products Folding Mansion ferret cage include three access stores, a powder-coat finish, casters and folding flat for storage.

Companies Improve Ferret Cages

Marshall Pet Products is one of several manufacturers that produce ferret-specific cages. Diane Vair, product marketing manager for Marshall Pet Products, summarized the company's history of ferret cages. "Marshall's first ferret cages were mainly utilitarian and have evolved over the years to include wider doors for ease of use, improved latches, casters for portability, levels and ramps for ferrets to climb, accessories and toys." Marshall Pet Products has made ferret cages since the early 1990s.

Courtesy of Martin's Cages

Larger doors and the option to modify so the entire cage top flips open are a few of the innovations to Martin's Cages.

In 1991, Martin's Cages first offered a multi-level ferret cage that had carpeted balconies and a choice of either slide-out or drop-in litter pans. Owners could also choose either galvanized or PVC-coated wire. Diana Martin said the company made some modifications to its designs around 1999, switching from galvanized to plastic litter pans because plastic is easier to clean and doesn't rust. "We also added larger doors on some models," Martin said, "and most models can be modified to have flip-top lids — the entire top flips open."

Courtesy of Prevue Pet Products

As time passed, Prevue Pet Products included ferret cages with multiple levels and larger size. Prevue Pet Products introduced its first ferret-specific cage in 1988. "The first ferret cages that were made available were basic nickel-plated cages," said Maria G. Guevara, sales and marketing coordinator at Prevue Pet Products. "These cages were not multi-level, but did contain all-metal galvanized pullout trays and spring-lock entrance doors. These cages were made small, specifically for single-ferret owners." As the company received feedback from hobbyists and customers, the cages evolved.

"Features such as height, size, and multi-levels were added to accommodate ferret habits," Guevara said. "These added features also allow ample room for toys and hammocks."

Courtesy of Quality Cage

The addition of balconies, ramps and multiple levels are some of the design changes to Quality Cage's ferret cages through the years.

Quality Cage debuted its first basic ferret cage in the 1990s. It featured sturdy construction; a large, drop-down access door; and a pull-out tray. This cage was later modified to add an enclosed balcony with an access door and ramp, according to Linda R. from Quality Cage. The basic design further evolved with additional balconies and ramps, and a design change to incorporate the different levels.

Courtesy of Marchioro USA Inc.

Powder-coated wire, resting platforms and vented tubes for access between levels are some of the features of Marchioro USA Inc. cages.

Marchioro USA Inc. began selling its ferret-specific cages in 2006. The cages have powder-coated wire, casters, resting platforms, vented tubes for access between levels and come with several accessories. No design changes have

occurred since the first introduction.

Courtesy of Ware Manufacturing Inc.

Ware Manufacturing now offers ferret cages with as many as six levels, and all have the option of the front door attaching to an exercise pen.

In 1993, Ware Manufacturing began making wire cages. The first ferret cages were practical and built purely for functionality, according to Dave Hitsman, a spokesman for the company. The cages were durable, zinc-plated, featured wire shelves and ramps, a top that opened completely and a bottom tray that was 4 inches deep. Over the years, Hitsman said the company went from making practical cages to pet homes, which meld fashion and fun together with the practical features.

Ware Manufacturing began with one level cages and now offers cages with up to six levels. Other improvements over the years include using powder-coated wire, and adding tubes, soft accessories and curved shelves. All shelves and ramps are now plastic to be easier on the ferret and more visually appealing. Also, all cages now feature a fold-down door at the front of the cage that connects to an exercise pen (optional in some models), and all cages are caster-ready, with no tools needed to install the casters.

Courtesy of Kritter Koncepts

Plastex on the floor and shelves, a lip on all shelves and immovable ramps are some innovations added to Kritter Koncepts cages through the years.

Barry Fritz, owner of Kritter Koncepts, began making ferret cages in 1989 for the ferrets at his wife's ferret shelter. In 1991, he began selling cages to the public. The first cages were wood-framed and more like a cabinet. By 1997, he switched to vinyl-coated wire as the basic material for the cages.

Most Kritter Koncepts cages are custom-built, so design changes are ongoing. Some standard models exist, and those feature innovations added through the years. The innovations include a built-in litter box beside a litter box door; wire shelves that have a lip that goes up instead of down, which helps keep bedding in place; floors and shelves covered in Plastex™, which resists bacteria and makes cleaning easier; and immovable ramps that have a flat section at the base to keep them raised off the floor so litter-boxes or other items can be accessed more easily. Another important feature is the stainless steel spring door locks.

Fritz said he's never heard of a ferret escaping from one of their cages, as long as the doors were closed properly.

Courtesy of Super Pet

Super Pet's new Habitat Defined ferret cages feature wavy ramps and the antimicrobial technology Super Protect on all plastic surfaces.

Super Pet, another manufacturer that offers ferret-specific cages, just introduced its latest ferret cage, which features wavy ramps and the anti-microbial technology Super Protect™ on all plastic surfaces in the cage.

Ferret Owners Speak Out About Ferret Cages

With some cage features now being standard, such as narrow bar spacing to prevent escapes, and other features like powder-coated or vinyl-coated wire as common options, what do today's ferret owners like or dislike about ferret-specific cages?

The biggest concerns focus on ease of cleaning, and the ferret's safety and security.

Features that make cleaning easier include large cage doors that allow easy placement and removal of litter boxes, and

reaching inside the cage easily; and a slide-out or removable cage base for quicker clean up.

Misty Hosier of Florida is a fan of the Ferret Nation cage from Midwest Homes For Pets. The features that she likes the most are the huge doors and removable trays. "It is very easy to clean."

Note that there can be differences in the bottom trays. Alicia Drakiotes of New Hampshire likes the Dura-trays found in Martin's Cages. "No matter what size the cage, they clean and sanitize with ease," Drakiotes said. "This is absolutely a great asset to keeping odors down and maintaining a fresh ferret environment." She added that the flexibility of these trays minimizes the chances of them shattering or cracking.

Rebecca Stout of Tennessee said she'll choose a stainless-steel or powder-coated wire cage for her next ferret cage, because she believes these resist odor buildup better.

Drakiotes raises a different concern. "I suggest that cages be constructed of powder-coated or PVC-covered wire. This allows for better cleaning and sterilization, as the finishes deter rusting, which occurs in untreated galvanized caging."

Page 2>>