

## A Visit To An Arizona Ferret Rescue

**Come along with author Deva Kolb as she visits the Northern Arizona Ferret Alliance and Rescue.**

*By Deva Kolb*

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Courtesy of Deva Kolb

An amazing plexiglass gate keeps the ferrets in their section of the house.

Courtesy of Deva Kolb

One room has a set of cages that house the ferrets that are Tormohlen's or difficult to adopt.

The tingling sensation grew to physical shaking at the excitement of seeing my very first ferret shelter. The thought of seeing lots of ferrets running around made me want to tear the door off the hinges so I could get inside and play with every one of them. After 11 hours of driving the high deserts of central California and Arizona in the heat of August, I had arrived. During the long drive, all I could think about was all the things I would see and the things I would learn.

The Northern Arizona Ferret Alliance and Rescue (NAFAR) is owned and operated by Bonnie Tormohlen. It's located outside of Show Low, Arizona. Tormohlen runs the ferret shelter by herself and studies to be a veterinary technician while working for a local veterinarian as part of her classroom studies.

Looking around the property, my eyes are immediately drawn to a ferret memorial area. As I walk over to look at the names on the little crosses, a flock of multi-colored chickens of all sizes run to the fence hoping I will feed them. After closer inspection of the markers, I recognize many of the names of ferrets. They were the famous Chaos Crew of California. There was Nibbles, the incredible toy-hauler that my mother so loved.

Courtesy of Deva Kolb

Cages in a different room and the living room house ferrets that are adoptable or need close, frequent watching.

**Taking The Tour**

Two bedrooms constitute the main shelter area with a hallway and bathroom in the middle. I was in awe of the plexiglass gate Tormohlen made that blocks off the rest of the house and turns the hall and bathroom into a small ferret area. This makes a total of four play areas counting the living room. Each room has its own air conditioner.

The first room has four Ferret Nation cages that cover two of the walls. Some are set up for the ferrets to be able to use the entire cage, while others are separated into two cages. The ferrets in this room are either Tormohlen's personal ferrets or they are the ones that would have difficulty being adopted due to age or physical handicaps. There are usually around a dozen ferrets here. The room is open for one group of ferrets to play in during the day, and then the other group gets it all night.

The second room also has two walls filled with cages. These are the adoptable ferrets. This room usually handles about a dozen ferrets. This room has two play groups. Each group has the play room and their open cages for 12 hours a day. Then the second group gets the room for 12 hours. No cage-stress here. The closed-off hallway houses a ferret or two that don't get along well in any of the play groups.

The living room has the cage with the critical ferrets; their location in the living room allows them to be closely watched frequently.

Courtesy of Deva Kolb

Bella is a tiny ferret that suffers from neurological problems.

Courtesy of Deva Kolb

Cuddles was found wandering the streets and had a large chordoma on her tail; thanks to a donation, she received surgery to have it removed.

**Meeting The Shelter Ferrets**

Biggles is an older guy. He came to the shelter blind, insulinomic and with a thoracic spinal tumor. He wasn't able to walk and got around the house by pushing his body with his hind legs. With a lot of love and meds, he was able to live a comfortable life for another 17 months.

Little Bella (also called Bella Deva) stole my heart. She is a true pocket ferret, so tiny you can carry her in a small pocket.

She had been having seizures for two months, and her owners never took her in for treatment, thinking they were just caused by her age (she was 6 at the time). As a result, Bella suffered permanent neurological damage. She has rigid muscles and tips over when you gently set her on the floor. This will stay with her for the rest of her life.

Cuddles was passed around a few owners after being found wandering the streets of Phoenix. She was surrendered to the shelter because of a walnut-size chordoma on her tail. Cuddles' tail was amputated thanks to the big heart and donation of a Ferret Giving Tree Santa. Being both blind and deaf, she lives up to her name of Cuddles. She goes by the nickname of Cuddles Nubby Butt.

Courtesy of Deva Kolb

Daisy Mae ferret happily demonstrates one of the many toys available to the ferrets for play.

Courtesy of Deva Kolb

Deva Kolb and her mother (left) became friends with Tormohlen (right) when they first visited her in California.

#### Learning More About Ferret Care

All rooms were well-supplied with cleaning supplies, food, pee pads, litter pans and fill. I was amazed at the organized of everything, which allowed the daily cleaning of all cages, food and water dishes, litter pans and play area to be quickly done. This is something I plan on using in my home with my ferrets.

Play areas and toys were plentiful, and everywhere were very happy ferrets. Having a variety of toys and many groups of toys in the room, the ferrets could spread out and find their own play area.

I first met Tormohlen in California where she and my mother became special friends. I can't wait until I can move to Arizona and help with this shelter. We will be able to can some ferret food together.

Training with a veterinarian is give Tormohlen hands-on experience with all kinds of animals. Luckily, this veterinarian also has been caring for ferrets.

I was able to learn so many different ways to care for ferrets. I learned how to do the Sub-Q process using sodium chloride, IV line and a butterfly needle attachment or (2) 30cc syringe with 20 gauge needle. Also, I learned how to do a turgor pressure test by pinching the skin on the back of the neck to test the dehydration level of the ferret and when to know if the ferret should see a veterinarian for IV fluids.

Caring for a ferret with an ulcer was new to me. Now I know how to mix the meds and how to get those meds into the ferret with ease. Learning how to spot behavior that signals the beginnings of other ferret diseases had been invaluable. Even understanding what ferrets need in their diets and how to pick kibble and add your own homemade ferret foods will enrich the lives of my ferrets.

My trip to NAFAR may be over for now, but I am planning and looking forward to my next trip and my next lessons in ferret care. My suitcase is out and ready to pack when the next chance comes.