

10 Ferret Care Tips To Enhance Your Ferret's Life

These 10 ferret care tips can enhance your ferret's life.

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Although ferrets look innocent, they often get into places they shouldn't if a home isn't properly ferret-proofed.

Part of the joy of owning ferrets is witnessing a ferret live life to the fullest. Whether a ferret jumps around on the bed covers, dashes and stashes a squeaky toy, or sleeps in the oddest position ever, a ferret's everyday antics usually bring a smile to its owner's face.

As a ferret owner, you're probably doing a lot to increase your ferret's chances of living life to the fullest. Check out the following 10 ferret care tips for more suggestions.

Ferret Care Tip #1: Play/interact with your ferret every day. Interacting with your ferret every day increases the bond you share together and enriches your ferret's life. Ferrets are easily bored if confined to the same, unchanging surroundings day after day, which can cause stress. Daily play breaks up any possible monotony.

Playtime with you fuels your ferret's mental processes and provides physical exercise, however, all interaction doesn't have to include exercise. Petting your ferret or holding it while you watch TV also qualify.

Alicia Drakiotes, founder and operator since 1995 of FerretWise Rescue And Rehabilitation Center in Marlborough, New Hampshire, considers interacting with ferrets the second most important thing ferret owners can do. (Read on to find out what she considers most important).

"For optimum health, establish a daily routine for caretaking and interactions," Drakiotes said. "Be aware that change in routine can be stressful to your ferrets"

Ferret Care Tip #2: Ferret-proof any rooms your ferret can access. Ferrets are curious, flexible animals that are drawn to places and things people might not expect. This can be a deadly combination if a home isn't ferret-proofed.

That space above the kitchen floor boards? Yes, ferrets can get into that. Ferrets are known to end up in laundry, which can have a final stop in the washing machine. Ferrets also tend to eat bits of eraser tips, doorstop covers, houseplants and other items that can cause gastrointestinal blockage or illness. Ferret-proofing requires thinking like a ferret and removing possible dangers, especially during holidays.

For Drakiotes, ferret-proofing is the most important concern for ferret owners. And she's not alone in ranking it as important.

Claudia T., a ferret enthusiast and treasurer of Ferrets Anonymous in California, cautions that ferret owners should ferret-proof their entire house, whether or not the ferret is allowed access to it. This is because ferrets don't always stay where they're supposed to.

"Never underestimate a ferret!" Claudia T. said.

Ferret Care Tip #3: Feed an appropriate diet. Ferrets are obligate carnivores that get their nutrition from animal-based protein. Their digestive tract is short and lacks the ability to break down and absorb nutrients from plant-based proteins.

So, even though a ferret might beg for a sip from your soda or crunch down on nacho chips, these provide no nutrition and could harm a ferret if they contain excess sugar. Even fruits and vegetables are a concern, especially those with high sugar content or that are hard and could cause a gastrointestinal blockage. Don't offer these to your ferret.

What should you feed your ferret? "Offer a well-balanced food as recommended by a ferret-knowledgeable veterinarian," said Sandra Mitchell, DVM, DABVP, of Animal Medical Associates in Saco, Maine.

Ferrets' picky eating habits also challenge ferret owners. Ferrets imprint on food at a young age and often won't eat a food they never ate before because they don't recognize it as food. One solution to this problem is offering a mix of food.

"I think a mix of three foods is good," Claudia T. said. "If you feed a mix, the chances are good that you will always be able to find one in the store."

Ferret Care Tip #4: Know your ferret's habits. When does your ferret usually wake up, go to sleep, eat, play or defecate? These behaviors and others give you a clue about its health. If your firecracker ferret suddenly spends most of its waking time lying around instead of playing, that could be a sign of illness.

Knowing your ferret's habits and routine seem like small things, but the faster you pick up on any changes, the more time it might give you and your ferret if a change is caused by a health problem.

Ferret Care Tip #5: House your ferret at the proper temperature and humidity. Heat is usually more of a concern for ferrets than cold. Ferrets are susceptible to heatstroke and cannot tolerate temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Lower temperatures can be dangerous too, if the humidity is high.

What does this mean to ferret owners? Be aware of the temperature. If a heat wave hits, your ferret can't sweat through it. If you don't have air conditioning, put your ferret in the coolest room in your house and place bottles of frozen water in the cage covered in a towel. A blowing fan by itself won't cool down your ferret. Check on your ferret frequently. If your ferret lives outdoors, bring it inside.

Another thing to consider is where you place your ferret's cage in your home. Microclimates exist within structures, so be aware of the temperature, humidity and ventilation in your ferret's area, be it a cage or a room.