

Ferret Shows In Germany And Italy

An American shares her story of visiting Italian and German ferret shows.

By Suzy Mentzer

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The show hall buzzes with conversation at the Italian Furettomania show in Busto Arsizio, Italy.

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Ferrets waited outside in a common play area before being judged.

On October 23, 2008, my friend Julie Dyke and I headed for Europe with three jills from Julie's Shamrockin' Ferretry. Our trip was planned to trade ferrets with Marion of the Waldfretchen Ferretry in Thomasburg, Germany. While in Europe, we had the wonderful opportunity to attend an Italian ferret show. We also attended and showed our ferrets at a German ferret exhibition.

Italy's Furettomania

We arrived in Hamburg on October 24. Our luggage did not, but that's another story. On the 26th, Julie, my daughter, my granddaughter and I left Germany and headed for the Furettomania show in Busto Arsizio, Italy. We were very excited and didn't know what to expect.

When we arrived, the hall was a buzzing. It was a wide open hall with ferrets being walked on leashes, groups of people gathered around playpens talking and two obstacle courses for the ferrets. We met Angela Marin from dei Conti di Santa Sofia Ferretry in Italy and Krisztina Ferenc from Thronos Rokke Ferretry in Hungary. We heard about the show from Angela and Krisztina on our ferret breeders' group on the Internet.

Scoring at the Italian ferret show is done using paddles, and judges begin training at a young age.

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The ferret show raises money for the shelter and also gives an opportunity for ferrets needing homes to be seen. Angela told us that Furettomania is held twice a year. The breeders do not get ribbons or trophies, they get breeding certificates. The spring show is bigger as it is the Standard Competition, which is for all ferrets that do not have any certificates of Furettomania. The fall show is the beauty competition for ferrets with certificates. Breeders can get certificates at both shows.

There was a big crowd. It consisted of men and women, young and old, and several families. The judging was very interesting. Three judges sat at the table and examined the ferrets. They made notes on their judge's sheet, gave the ferret back to the owner and then held up paddles with a number between 1 and 10, similar to the judging on Dancing With The Stars. Judge training starts at a very young age.

The show is held to raise money for the shelter. There are two rescue/shelter associations in Italy. The Italian Ferret Association, which organizes Furettomania and the AIAF, which is a newer and smaller organization. They had more than three hundred ferrets come through the shelter last year. The reasons given for surrendering ferrets are the same as those given to shelter operators in the United States. Reasons such as having a landlord force removal of the ferret, the owner going to college, a baby arriving in the family, not having enough time, not knowing ferrets took so much work or not being able to afford taking the ferret to a vet. Ferrets are also found abandoned or wandering.

Julie and I planned to donate merchandise for their raffle, but because our luggage had not yet arrived, we only had a sterling silver standing ferret charm with us. The charm was auctioned off and the winning bid was 50 Euros. It was a good feeling being able to help raise money for their shelter.

It was a beautiful day. Ferrets were walked on leashes outside and there was a common play area. When a ferret's class was called, the ferret was removed from the play area, dusted off and taken inside. The show had a very relaxed and fun feel to it. Everyone made us feel very welcome. Jet lag set in, however, and we left before the trophies were given out.

First arrivals at the German ferret show quickly get set up.

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At the German show, judges are kept separated from the crowd and never see the owners of the ferrets.

Germany's Ferret Show

On November 1, we followed Marion and Werner Stumpe from Lunesburg to the Festsaal Tonsmeyer in Osnabruck, Germany. Marion had entered six ferrets in this show — Sammy Jo, Shana Kay and Hersheys Gold Nugget were brought by us to her and Gawain, Collum and Hailey-Sue were those she gave to us. Upon arrival at the show hall, the ferrets were checked by a veterinarian. We were one of the first to arrive. The show hall was a good size, but it did not take long for it to fill up. After all exhibitors had checked in, it was time for breakfast.

After the breakfast break, judging began. The judges stay in a room completely separated from all exhibitors. When a ferret's number is called, the owner brings it up front and a runner takes it back to the judges' room. There are three tables for the judges and stewards. The judges never see the owner of the ferret. Julie and I were much honored to be allowed into the judge's room. We had to promise not to reveal any scores we saw.

Classes are divided by both color and ages, and included long-haired, short-haired, angora, hybrids, albino and black self (solid black). Trophies are given to ferrets in the top four places, and certificates are given to all ferrets with their placing in each class. Next, the first place finishers are called to the stage by age group. Several judges look over the ferrets, vote and award the Best In Show. The Best in Show winners are then brought back for the Best of the Best award. Julie and I were guest judges and allowed to vote on the top ferret. It was not an easy decision, because there were some beautiful and well-muscled ferrets on the stage.

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Julie Dyke and Suzy Mentzer accept a trophy at the German show for traveling the farthest to attend.

Ferrets Around The World

If you ever get a chance to visit Europe, definitely go. It will be an experience you will never forget. Between the two shows, we met ferret breeders and owners from Germany, Italy, Hungary, Lithuania, Holland, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Some of the things we learned in our travels are: No matter what country you are in or from, the shows and exhibitions are a source of fun, pride and camaraderie for all. Also, no matter how you pronounce it, ferret, furetto, frettchen or fuzzibutt, the meaning is the same in all languages — love.

Now for a little bragging. Shana Kay, Sammy Jo and Collum all took first and Gawain and Hersheys Gold (in the same class as Sammy Jo) both took second. Hailey-Sue got a fourth. Shana and Sammy's dad is from Scarlett's Happy Dookers and Hershey Gold Nuggets' dad is our Neo. When you see Julie, ask her about Currywurst, hold the Curry ...

Suzy Mentzer is co-owner of Four Paws Wrecking Crew Ferretry and Digital by Joe & Suzy. She is a vice-president of Heart of Ohio Ferret Association and Rescue, a member of the American Ferret Association and has owned and shown ferrets since 1997.