

## Ferrets Can Play It Safe In Water

**A ferret owner shares her tips for safe and fun water play with ferrets.**

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Be aware of the temperature, humidity, presence of other pets and other possible dangers when you take your ferret outdoors.

Water games can be refreshing and a lot of fun for ferrets. During our holidays near the Mediterranean Sea, my family and I often rent a house with a garden and a little swimming pool. We chose this house because it is particularly suited for ferrets — having a big room that is ferret-proof, a perfect garden with little trees and a lot of fresh grass, and a swimming pool with absolutely no chlorine or other chemical substances inside.

### Ferret Fun At The Seashore

Early in the morning my boyfriend, myself and one or two of our ferrets at a time go to a very nice beach near the house. We try to be there early in the morning (no later than 9 a.m.), because the temperature is not too hot, and it's the only time during the day when the beach is perfectly quiet with very few people and dogs. We carefully select the place on the beach where we stop, because any dogs there are often free to run on the beach off leash, which could be dangerous for our ferrets.

Once we're confident that nothing dangerous to the ferrets is at the horizon, we let the ferrets have fun on their favorite playground, the sand. As soon as they touch it, they go crazy! The sand of this beach is perfect, because the grains are small, compact and moist — allowing our little fur-architects to build an amazing network of underground galleries. They have so much fun digging and running through the tunnels they make!

Obviously we are always with them, having so much fun looking at them and at the same time monitoring that everything is OK — no dogs or other animals around and no sand in the ferrets' eyes or mouth.

They also chase the little waves on the shore, having fun getting wet and running up and down. For safety, we keep them on leash during all their activities.

As the temperature rises and after all these adventures, it's time for a little bath with fresh water to wash away the salt and sand from their fur. We then offer the ferrets some food and water. We always bring food and water with us when we go out, water is fundamental to keeping the ferrets well-hydrated. After this, the ferrets usually fancy taking a nap in a comfy bed at home in a fresh room.

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Whether or not a ferret takes a swim should always be a choice made by the ferret.

### Garden & Pool Giggles

The day is not over yet. In the late afternoon or early evening, when the sun starts to set, it's time for ferret fun in the garden and the swimming pool!

The ferrets enjoy exploring the swimming pool area, sniffing all around (always on leash to avoid any accidents) and, if the temperature of the water is fine, they swim in the pool and play on the body board or an inflatable pool mattress. I think this is a really great, stimulating activity for them because they have fun doing it and can't do it during the rest of the year. It's also good exercise for their muscles.

The first time each swam, I took each ferret by itself and let it explore the pool area for as long as it wanted so that it felt comfortable in the new environment. Once the ferret finished exploring, I took it in my arms and slowly entered the water with it.

The ferret instinctively began to swim as soon as it felt the water. As I began to swim, the ferret followed me, remaining close to me.

All of my ferrets are very good swimmers, but they tire out quickly. I never leave them in the water for more than few

minutes at a time, and I am always near them in the pool, with a body board on which they can easily climb by themselves to get some rest.

My ferrets got confident with this new “play area” very quickly. My two boys, Kundun and Madhu, began quite soon to be independent in the water. They soon swam all over the pool on their own, as if they were professional swimmers. They quickly realized that the body board meant rest, and could be used as a platform to jump from and dive into the water. They also seemed to understand very well why humans like to take a nap on the mattress, while being cuddled by the water and a gentle wind.

My little lady Kuta is a bit more lazy. She prefers the part of taking a nap on the mattress. When she comes in the water, she usually likes to be on my shoulder when I swim, which proves that females are definitely more clever than males!

#### It's All About Comfort & Safety

I'm always near the ferrets, and the water of the pool is chlorine-free to avoid any irritation to skin and eyes. My ferrets never experience any irritation but, to be on the safe side, I always give them a little shower with fresh water and a drop of ferret shampoo when their swim in the pool ends.

At the pool, it's always the ferrets' choice whether to go in the water or not. They are never forced to swim.

Usually, the ferrets play a bit around the pool, then when they see me going in the water they often follow me in the first part of the pool where there are some little steps and the level of the water is very low. This shallow area of the pool gets them familiar with the water, and some parts allow them to walk with the water at neck level. When they're ready, the ferrets often swim off to explore the remaining part of the pool.

I place bath towels on the inflatable mattress to make it more comfortable for them when they want to have some rest.

After the pool, the ferrets love to roll over on the fresh grass and to get as dirty as they can digging in the fresh soil near the little trees. The ferrets really seem to enjoy the holidays as much as we do.

#### Warm Weather Danger

One thing very important to never forget as soon as summer comes is heartworm prevention. Even if your ferret does not go outside, mosquitoes can get inside a house. Infected mosquitoes can inject the heartworm parasite in ferrets with a single piercing bite. The heartworm parasite then develops and migrates to the ferret's heart where it can produce devastating results. So talk to your veterinarian about the best heartworm preventive for your ferret.

Clemence Tailhades lives in Italy and shares her home with her ferrets Kuta, Bamboo, Madhu, Shamba and Kundun.