

Must-Know Ferret Tips

Tips for every ferret owner on ferret care, safety, and health.

Ferrets are extremely sociable and love playmates. How well they get along with other domesticated animals depends on the personality and age of each. The introduction process should be slow and supervised at all times.

Companion ferrets, cats and dogs are suitable playmates, but not dogs that are bred for hunting because they, by instinct, will kill a ferret. In turn, ferrets might kill mice, rabbits, hamsters, birds, gerbils and guinea pigs.

Ferret-Proofing

Ferrets must be supervised at playtimes and the owner's house must be ferret-proofed.

To accomplish this task, you must anticipate danger and take precautions for the ferret's safety, such as blocking all holes wider than 1 inch in diameter and restricting areas with recliners and sofa beds. (Ferrets like to crawl inside them for a nap and can get crushed when they are opened.)

Child-proof latches should be used to secure cabinets where household cleaning products are kept. Because ferrets easily can escape, all outside doors must be closed and ferrets kept away from vents and screen doors.

A ferret that escapes from its home most likely will die from exposure, predators or starvation if not rescued within a few days.

Your ferret also may enjoy traveling with you. On short trips, a ferret on the loose in a car can be dangerous to the pet and driver. Therefore, a small travel carrier equipped with an 8- or 16-ounce water bottle is necessary for transporting ferrets to and from the veterinarian's office and on other short trips.

A ferret not in a carrier should be harnessed. One designed especially for ferrets is suggested. Once the ferret is home in its cage, the harness should be removed.

Ferret collars should be used for identification purposes only, and again should be removed once the ferret is back in its cage. Leashes and collars used together are not a safe substitute for a carrier or harness because ferrets will try to slip out of their collars.

For long trips, some preplanning and investigation are necessary because ferrets are still illegal in a few states and can be confiscated and put to death. Before traveling, contact the animal control center in the area to be visited for further information. If you are flying, check the rules and regulations of the particular airline. It is recommended that ferrets travel only in-cabin. Health certificates must always accompany a traveling ferret.

Veterinary Care

A veterinarian experienced in ferret medicine is one of the best friends a pet ferret will ever have. Such veterinarians can educate owners regarding the proper way to care for their ferrets in general and counsel them on the specific health concerns of their ferrets as they age.

All ferrets must receive a checkup and vaccinations against canine distemper within 24 to 48 hours of purchase. Ferrets require additional vaccinations at two to three week intervals until the series is complete. Canine distemper is fatal in ferrets. The only protection is vaccination. A rabies vaccination is recommended at 3 months of age and annually thereafter.

Owners must take time out daily to observe and become familiar with their pet's physical condition, mental state and behavioral patterns so they will be able to notice any abnormal signs. Prompt veterinary care is important, as it may be instrumental in saving the ferret's life.

It is not necessary to bathe your ferret routinely. However, if done, ferrets should not be bathed more than once a week. Frequent bathing can lead to a dry skin and coat condition. Ferret or cat shampoos that do not contain alcohol, dyes or pesticides are recommended.

Ferrets with flea or tick problems can be treated with a cat or ferret flea shampoo. However, flea shampoos should not be



used on ferrets under 12 weeks of age. Cat or ferret flea powders can be used with caution, and flea combs can be used. Flea sprays, collars and dips are not recommended, as they can be fatal to ferrets. Similarly, flea products made specifically for dogs only also should not be used.

Cat clippers can be used to trim a ferret's nails. They need to be clipped at least once every two weeks to prevent them from getting caught in bedding or carpeting.

Ferrets can make wonderful pets but keeping them healthy, safe and happy requires a commitment of love, time to train and nurture and a concern for their health and well-being. Of course, ferrets are worth the extra effort. Brought To You In Collaboration With