

## **Ferret Parenting 101**

### **Is a Ferret Right For You?**



- ☑ **Time Commitment** – care/feeding, enrichment, socialization



- ☑ **Monetary Investment** – initial/upfront costs, reoccurring costs



- ☑ **Environment/Safety** – dedicated play area, kids, other pets

Before you run out to purchase or adopt your new family member, consider all the things your new ferret will require of you – space, time, safety, money, love and devotion. Taking an honest look at the requirements can mean the difference between living happily with a new family member and taking on a major, unwelcome chore.

The average life-span of a well-cared-for ferret is between 6-8 years. A ferret's environment – his caging, disease, stress, diet, enrichment, and so on – play major roles in his happiness, health and longevity.

#### **Exercise and Time Considerations**

Ferrets are interactive and intelligent pets, and they require lots of your time. Does your lifestyle permit the requisite dedication of 4 hours each day for a ferret? Ferrets need a lot of exercise and attention to be happy and healthy. While they sleep 18-20 hours per day, their time awake needs to be spent playing in a safe, stimulating, enriched, ferret-proofed environment. Unattended caged ferrets will lead to boredom and stress, ultimately often resulting in serious health issues. Ferrets live to play and play to live, so if you can't be an interactive human all the time, get your fuzzy a playmate. Although one fuzzbutt is intensely amusing, two (or more) are downright hysterical.

#### **Odor**

Most ferrets from ferret farms have been de-scented, meaning their anal glands have been removed. This includes those ferrets found in pet stores and at your local ferret shelters. Even the most well-cared-for ferret will have a slight musky smell, often no worse than a dog's smell. Frequent changing of their litter box and bedding will minimize odor. Ferrets may be bathed, but no more often than once every 2 weeks, as excessive washing strips their fur of the natural oils that are necessary for healthy skin and coat.



## **Financial**

Ferrets are expensive pets! Investing in a ferret family member has many intangible rewards, but you must be willing to put out the cash to keep them happy and healthy. The purchase price or adoption fee is just a fraction of what you will need to invest for your commitment. You will need basic supplies (cage, toys, bedding, bowls, litter boxes, treats, mineral supplements, more toys), quality food, spaying/neutering (if not yet altered), annual vet exams (annual distemper and rabies vaccinations). Ferrets do get sick and will likely require veterinary attention within their lifespan of special tests, xrays, diagnostics, and medications. Consider starting a pet fund or purchasing pet insurance.

## **Cage/Housing**

Before you bring home your new ferret(s), you will need to ensure that you have completely and adequately prepared your home for the new arrival. Have all the basic supplies and food available, ready and waiting. Cages are for sleeping and safe-keeping; the hours that they are awake require another environment.

## **Ferret-Proofing Challenges**

Ferrets require a safe and stimulating, ferret-proofed environment for play time outside their cage. Identify where in your house that your ferret will play during the 4 hours that they are awake. All ferret-accessible rooms/areas will need to be inspected for potential harmful factors/characteristics. Ferrets are trouble magnets. Not only will they steal your things, they will dig up houseplants, get into cabinets, tunnel up through couches, climb drawers, knock over breakables, and so on. Ferret-proofing your home will most likely require alterations to accommodate your newest family member.

## **Ferrets and Kids**

Ferrets make great pets for responsible adults and kids. As with any animal, kids need to learn how to appropriately handle and interact with that animal. Ferrets can be playfully nippy and squirmy, difficult to handle. For most young children, interfacing with these characteristics may be challenging. Train your pets, teach your children, and use common sense when they interact.

## **Ferrets and Other Pets**

All animals have a unique personality. There are no guarantees that any two animals will get along together. Multi-species interaction compounds the issue. Ferrets are carnivores, and therefore predators to birds, hamsters, mice and similar. However, ferrets become the potential prey when viewed by some dogs. Generally speaking, ferrets enjoy the company of cats and dogs when they are interested to play with them. While kittens often find ferrets amusing, most cats regard ferrets as annoying. It will depend on a dogs' temperament and personality as to whether they can cohabitate peacefully with ferrets. The key is to know your animals and their limitations. Provide meticulous supervision at all times.



**A FERRET IS "FUREVER" – CAN YOU COMMIT-???**

