

Guide Compiled by CaptainBug of /r/ferrets Discord Server

Feel free to contact me with additional suggestions for this list. :) I'm always adding to it as I find new great things to share!

If you have not yet joined our Discord, here is a link to do so: <https://discord.gg/aeGuVs>

IF YOUR FERRET IS HAVING AN EMERGENCY, TAKE THEM TO THE NEAREST VET.
PLEASE SEE THE [VET MAP LOCATED HERE](#).

Before Buying A Ferret

In the event that you find this list BEFORE purchasing your ferret friend, I want to congratulate you! Great job researching!

Ferrets are extremely involved pets. Both when it comes to time and money. Here are some infographics detailing the cost of owning a ferret: <https://imgur.com/a/rjLIN8q>

- You should absolutely plan to spend between \$300-500 on an initial setup for your ferrets, not counting the ferrets themselves. Plan on a monthly food cost of approximately \$50-60
- You should have a minimum of \$1000 per ferret set aside in a separate bank account to be used in case of veterinary emergencies.

You need to come to terms with the fact that you should not have a single ferret. You NEED to be adopting a pair at a minimum. Having a single ferret borders on cruelty (and this is coming from someone who had a single ferret for almost 7 years!). When a ferret is kept alone it depends on you for EVERYTHING, and that is not a healthy relationship for either you or the ferret. While some of us humans dream of being able to lock up inside our houses and ignore all human contact for the rest of our lives, this is absolutely not the case for ferrets. They are very social animals that truly do require the companionship of another ferret.

- It is important to note here that ferrets and other pets DO NOT make good friends. Ferrets are predators to smaller animals and prey to larger animals. Ferrets do not pay attention to the body language of cats and dogs--instead, they often annoy further. It only takes a single bite, paw swipe, or step to cause permanent damage to or even kill a ferret. Please do not buy a ferret with the intention of introducing it to another pet. Even the most experienced of owners have had HORRIFIC experiences trying to do this.

If you have to ask permission to get a pet ferret, please do not get a pet ferret. This all too often means that you are relying upon another person to also accept all that comes with owning a ferret, including transport to the vet in a life or death situation. There will ALWAYS be more ferrets. Please wait until you are not depending upon someone else.

Where Do I Find A Ferret?

This is a very important section. It is important that you know that there are other options out there aside from direct purchase from a pet store. While these options may not apply to all, please consider them if they do apply to you. As ferret lovers, we truly do want to see the end of ferret mills. Mills do not breed healthy, robust ferrets. Ferrets from mills like Marshalls are prone

to numerous health issues such as insulinoma, adrenal disease, and cancers. Here is a web page that explores this topic further: [HFF Mills vs Breeders](#)

Here are some fantastic shelter listings. Note that some are hesitant to adopt out to first time owners, or owners wanting a single ferret. Most WILL NOT adopt out to minors.

- [Interactive Ferret Shelter Map](#)
- [PDF Shelter List](#)
- [Ferret Shelter Directory Website](#)

Additionally, here is a list of breeders. Most, if not all of these, will not adopt out to first-time owners or to minors. These breeders have been vetted by numerous owners over the years. I would absolutely not veer off of this list. Backyard breeders can be just as bad as mills.

- [USA & Canada Breeder List](#) (Includes an interactive map!)
- At this time there is no overseas list. Ferret breeding is MUCH more common in European countries.

Bringing Home Baby

You **need** to take your new baby to the vet within about 2 weeks of getting him. Pet store babies only come with their initial vaccinations. You NEED to follow up with additional doses of rabies and distemper (and then need to continue to follow up annually). Additionally, this first visit ensures that your baby is in good health. You always want the opinion of an outside vet that is unaffiliated with the pet store! If your baby is from a shelter or breeder, you still need to go get a wellness check! Ask your shelter/breeder what the ferret has already had done, and develop a plan for future vaccinations, wellness visits, and spay/neuter if need be.

[Bringing-Home-Baby 3-2-1 Rules](#)

- Not your first baby in the house? [Here's a resource on quarantine protocol!](#) All new ferrets should be quarantined from your previous ferrets for a minimum of 2 weeks before you slowly introduce them!

[Bonding](#)

[Litter Training](#)

[Reducing Ferret Stink](#)

Bite Training Pin from Discord: NOTE: You need to give your ferret 2 weeks of being home before beginning formal measures like this. A lot of the time, biting will calm down as they settle in and get used to you. From there, it's a matter of treating them gently and using ignoring techniques.

- Your ferret is most likely not being a jerk on purpose, and may be biting because:
 - 1) They want to play
 - 2) They want your attention
 - 3) "Put me down/don't touch me please"
 - 4) "I am scared/in pain"
 - 5) "This is MY toy!"
 - 6) Deaf ferrets can be more difficult, so more patience & understanding is needed
- Ferret skin is thicker than people's so kits or unsocialized ferrets need to understand to be gentle. You need to communicate with them, not punish them, to train properly.
 - 1) Build trust. Let them approach you while you're sitting down. Let them sniff you and handle them with care.

- 2) Yelp/squeal after a rough bite and walk away and ignore them for a minute or two
 - 3) Put a drop of salmon oil on your arm so they know you are for licks, not biting
 - 4) A "sin bin" (carrier NOT used for vet visits) can be used, but you must catch them EVERY time or it is ineffective. Put them in the carrier for 1-2 minutes. Any longer is unnecessary and they'll have forgotten why they're in there.
 - 5) Redirect the bite by putting a toy in between you and the ferret
 - 6) Say NO!! and use a hand sign (especially helpful with deaf ferrets)
 - 7) As a LAST RESORT you can scruff if they won't let go, but not as a part of regular training (it can make things worse)
- Trying to pull away from a bite can make them bite down harder. You can push in a tiny bit, just behind the canines, to help them release. This is not the same as putting your finger down their throat!!
 - DO NOT FLICK A FERRET'S NOSE.
 - DO NOT USE BITTER APPLE SPRAY. (Kills appetite, harmful ingredients, risks associating food with the awful taste)
 - DO NOT BITE THEM BACK.
 - DO NOT PUT FINGERS DOWN THEIR THROATS.
 - DO NOT USE HOT SAUCE OR CAYENNE PEPPER.

A Quick Guide to Ferret Foods and Treats

- No matter where you have adopted your ferret from, you need to find out what food it was eating and buy a bag so that you can transition them or continue the diet. If you are transitioning kibbles, you will need to do it in increments. Week 1 you will use 75% original food and 25% new food. Week 2 will be 50/50. Week 3 will be 25% original food and 75% new food. Week 4 you will use 100% new food. If you will be using a kibble mix (as is best practice, suggestions below), you should mix them together 50/50 in their own container during this time and use them both as the "new food" in the directions just given. You don't want to transition them once just to deal with adding in another kibble and potentially throw them off.
- Please note that food transitions often cause loose, grainy, or miscolored stools. This will settle down within a couple months maximum of finishing transition.
- Did you just adopt/rescue a ferret and you have no idea what kibble to use? Most ferrets come from Marshalls and begin their lives on Marshall's standard ferret food--this would be the best option in a pinch if you cannot get your ferret to eat anything else.
- Have an unidentified bag of food? [Here is a common kibble picture/description chart!](#) If what you have is not listed, feel free to message me a picture and description and we will do our best to help you match it!

Food Options

- Ferrets are obligate carnivores. A diet made up of raw meat, organs, and bones is the best diet for their bodies. [Here is a link to HFF](#), a fantastic resource with a great FREE mentoring program to help you with all that you may need on your raw feeding journey.
 - [Here is the link](#) to HFF's new mentoring program.

- It is EXTREMELY important that a raw diet be properly balanced! Please DO NOT attempt to do this on your own EVER.
- Next best is FDR. There is no discernible difference between feeding raw and FDR. FDR has the convenience factor of being shelf-stable and fully balanced. I personally like [Stella & Chewy's](#) non-fish options, and personally use DuckDuckGoose because it consists of 3 proteins. Even if you only use FDR for a meal or two each day, it is a great addition for their health!
 - FDR Math to figure out how long a bag will last you:
 - Each 18oz bag contains 345-350 morsels. Ferrets typically eat 5-7 morsels per meal
 - $345 \text{ morsels} / 7 \text{ morsels per meal} = 49 \text{ meals}$
 - $345 \text{ morsels} / 6 \text{ morsels per meal} = 57 \text{ meals}$
 - $345 \text{ morsels} / 5 \text{ morsels per meal} = 69 \text{ meals}$
 - 2.5 meals a day (some ferrets do 2 meals, some do 3)
 - 22 days w/ 6 morsels for 1 ferret eating 2-3 meals a day
 - Low end: 3 meals a day of 7 morsels = 16 days
 - High end: 2 meals a day of 5 morsels = 34 days
- After that is kibble. Appropriate kibble options for ferrets are very slim. You want to avoid grains (exacerbates insulinoma issues), peas/lentils/potatoes (causes bladder stones), and other plant content (just not biologically appropriate or digestible) as much as possible. Below are the options I feel are currently the best options for ferrets based on personal experience, extensive research, and discussion with other long-time owners. Note that you need to mix at least 2 kibbles to provide an appropriate nutritional profile, and to prevent issues in the case of formula changes, product discontinuations, etc.
 - Choose 1 of the following. This should make up 50% of your food mix. These two should not be used entirely alone because the nutritional profiles are not adequate, and should not be used together because they can cause big tummy troubles while still not delivering an adequate nutritional profile.
 - [Wysong Digestive Support](#)
 - [Dr. Elsey's Clean Protein](#)
 - Next, choose 1-2 of the foods below to make up the other 50% of your mix.
 - [Orijen Regional Red Cat Food](#)
 - [Orijen Cat & Kitten Food](#)
 - [ZiwiPeak Air Dried](#)
 - [SquarePet Turkey & Chicken](#)
 - [Natures Variety Instinct Ultimate Protein](#)
- Transitioning foods can take time. Some ferrets imprint onto their food harder than others. The following guidelines work for the majority of ferrets:
 - Week 1: 75% original food, 25% new food in the same bowl
 - Week 2: 50% original food, 50% new food in the same bowl
 - Week 3: 25% original food, 75% new food in the same bowl
 - Week 4: 100% new food
 - Some ferrets will transition very easily and take to a new food right away. If this is the case for your ferret, transitioning faster is just fine. If your ferret still will not take to the new food by week 4, go back to week 3 guidelines for as long as it takes for them to eat the new food.
- For more research on kibbles:

- [Pea-Free Food Chart](#): Note that many foods on this chart contain LARGE amounts of grains and/or potatoes. This is NOT ideal. Weigh the cons of having these ingredients vs a miniscule amount of peas low on the ingredient list--remember that large amounts of grains exacerbate issues such as insulinoma drastically. Some wish to avoid peas altogether, but it should be noted that the risk of bladder stones with VERY SMALL amounts of peas is greatly diminished.
- [Freeze Dried Raw Food Chart](#)
- [Canadian Food Chart](#)
- [Reddit Kibble Comparison Charts](#): I prefer the main USA/Canada chart on this page. It provides far more appropriate options than when a solely pea-free approach is taken, as well as has a clear-cut ranking system that I feel is far more friendly to new owners looking for the best food options.

Treats/Oils:

- [Salmon Oil](#): You don't have to use this specific brand. Just be sure the ingredients are either only salmon oil, or salmon oil + mixed tocopherols. They can have up to 1/8tsp daily. Salmon oil is the only oil I feel is safe for ferrets. Here is a rationale for each type of oil: <https://imgur.com/a/nVFmpUs>
- [Stella & Chewy's FDR](#): A small bag of this will last well for treats for a good while, and is the healthiest option for your pet aside from raw meat. Your ferret can have as many of these as you feel like giving them.
- [Greenies Cat Treats](#): These are great for helping teeth-brushing. Your ferret can have up to 2 per week to help clean their teeth.
- Vaseline is a good thing to have on hand. Make sure that it is PLAIN vaseline. This is helpful for things like constipation or hairballs.
- [Duck Soup](#): This is great for when ferrets are sick. It's a very appealing soupie. Try and give it to them once a month or so so that it's not brand new the first time you try to use it with them.

A Guide to Caging & Cage Accessories

It is my personal opinion that ferrets should always have some sort of cage (not just a carrier) available in case of emergency. You don't want to be caught without a secure place to put your pet in the event that you need to be gone for an extended period of time, need to redo your house, or whatever life might throw at you.

The AFA recommends that ferrets receive a MINIMUM of 4 hours of time out of their cage daily. A more appropriate recommendation would be 6 hours, especially for ferrets under 1 year of age. One great way to accomplish this is to zip tie a play pen to your cage to allow full access to both cage and pen 24/7. This provides your ferrets with a safe playspace, and allows them to choose when they want to play.

- Here are some examples
 - My personal setup: <https://imgur.com/a/ZeYzIjK>

You want to ensure that your cage is roomy. Ferrets are not pocket pets, and VERY few cages are appropriate for their needs. The Ferret Nation cage is actually the only one that I will list here, as it is the only one that does not require any sort of modifications. Here is an infographic

of what can happen when ferrets are housed on wire flooring: <https://imgur.com/a/lc7niDM>. This just about the #1 caging NO NO! If there is one huge thing I would recommend, it would be to spend your money on a proper cage and playpen setup. The time and money you will have to spend to DIY modify EVERYTHING with a cheap setup can be astronomical.

Cages/Play Pens/Gates/Carriers:

- [Midwest Ferret Nation](#). ([Link for EU users](#)) This is truly the only cage I would personally recommend. If the 2 level is too expensive, start with the single and add on later. It is a very large cage--a single level is comfortable for 2-3 ferrets. This cage is a dream to clean and the safest, roomiest option. Note: The doors are removable, and this cage can be set up WITHOUT the base on it. When set up without the base, you can zip tie the marshall's playpen below to the sides to create a safe playspace. Remove doors to lessen climbing ability further.
- For those in EU, the Savic XL is also a very comparable option.
 - [Link 1](#)
 - [Here's a link to the standard size, also appropriate.](#)
- Marshall's small animal playpen. [Link 1](#) OR [Link 2](#) This is the only safe playpen recommended for ferrets. There are others similar (such as the MidWest playpen option in the cage link above) that are fine, too. Just be aware of height and distance between horizontal support bars when ordering--be careful not to order a pen made for rats/hamsters. Products such as the Tespo panels are NOT recommended, as these can crack/be chewed/etc.
- [Midwest Homes for Pets Carrier](#). I have this carrier for travel. It's large enough for up to 3 ferrets EASILY. Note that you will need some kind of blankets to go inside to make this comfortable. For longer travel, I'd recommend a dog kennel (bar spacing no further than 1") with maybe a hammock hung inside.

Cage Accessories:

Cages should never be filled with toys. Your cage should serve as a safe, cozy spot for your ferret to sleep or live safely while you are away. While a ferret nation doesn't necessarily NEED any of these things, they're nice to have as they provide extra comfort or cut down on noise.

- [Star-print fluffy hammock](#)
- [Double hammock](#)
- [Sleeper Sack](#)
- [FN Brand Liners/Accessories](#)
- \$2.50 fleece blankets found in the Wal Mart bedding aisle, or fleece, flannel, or cotton blankets, tee shirts, hoodies, etc. found in your home or at a thrift store. Doesn't have to be fancy.
 - If you are sewing-savvy, a \$2.50 Wal Mart blanket can be used to make a single set of ferret nation cage liners (large pan and small pan). You can sew a flap instead of having to use velcro or buttons to secure the liner.

Litter Boxes & Litter Options:

It is important to note that ferrets should not be living on bedding like hamsters. This can lead to respiratory infections and blockages. Ferrets should also NEVER be kept on clay/silica/etc. type clumping cat litters. These can cause deadly blockages, respiratory issues, and skin irritation.

- Some acceptable litters for the litter box: Back2Nature, Yesterdays News Cat Litter, Marshalls Pelleted Paper, Feline Pine, Tractor Supply pelletized horse bedding.

- I often see puppy pads suggested to anyone and everyone with a litter training issue. Please be aware that some ferrets do dig at and chew these up. Monitor your ferret VERY closely to ensure yours is not one of them OR opt for reusable puppy pads, available on Amazon.
- [Marshall High Back Lock On Litter Pan](#). This litter box is absolutely perfect, and has a good price point.
- [PuppyGoHere pan](#). This is another highly suggested litter pan.

Bowls:

- [Stainless steel 10 oz crocks](#). These are great for food and water.
- [Ceramic bowls](#). These are best for food. Hard to toss around, and can't be chewed on.
- [Translucent quick lock crocks](#). I prefer these for water so that I can easily see how much is in the bowl, and whether the bowl needs to be cleaned, without needing to be near the cage.

A Guide to Toys

Toys/Tunnels/Etc.

- [Cat tunnel bed](#). This is an awesome toy/bed. Mine freakin love the tunnel, especially because it's a little crinkly on the inside.
- [Cat crinkle tunnel](#). This is another great tunnel. SUPER crinkly. I'm finding it doesn't stay expanded very well, but they still love tunneling through it when it's collapsed.
- [Marshall super thru-way tunnel](#). Be advised that you need to pay attention to the ends of this toy. Some users have had the wire poke through. Also, you can use binder clips to attach to cages/pens to keep the tunnel expanded.
- [Barkaboo Octopus](#). This is our all-time favorite toy. All the legs crinkle and the head has a soft squeak, but is fluffy enough they can't get to the squeaker.
- [Kong Squeak-Air Tennis Balls, XS](#). Warning that tennis ball play MUST be supervised. They do de-fluff the balls pretty badly, and the main construction of the ball is rubber. However, mine go CRAZY for these.
- [Kong XS Dog Toys](#) These are a favorite for mine to stash. These can be found very cheap at Petco, HEB, Tractor Supply, etc. Note that the squeakers are removable. Bonus!
- [Marshall ferret sports balls](#). Many users LOVE these.
- [Zippypaws Toys](#). This one is just an example. There are MANY available on Amazon and Chewy, as well as at HomeGoods.

Other toy ideas:

- Golf ball tied in an old sock
- Plastic easter eggs filled with beans, with a crochet cover
- Large plastic bin filled with dry non-instant rice, ball pit balls, biodegradable packing peanuts, etc.

Toys to avoid at all costs:

- Rubber chew toys made for dogs (these are easily torn up by ferrets and can cause deadly blockages)

- Marshalls plush toys (specifically alligator, turtle, and octopus)--these are made with VERY cheap materials that are easily torn up by ferrets and have attributed to multiple suffocation or strangulation deaths. These can also cause blockages.

A Guide to Ferret Proofing

I do not personally allow free-roam to my ferrets, but many owners like to offer their ferrets a full room, or ferret-proof even their entire home to let their babies roam. There are many things to consider when proofing an area for your ferret. This is not an exhaustive list, it's only the beginning of what it takes to proof an area or home.

- An official guide to ferret proofing: <http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/proof.pdf>
- Removal of anything and everything made of rubber, foam, cork, sponge, latex, and soft/thin plastics like bags and wrappers. Some items to consider include shoes, rubber feet on furniture, pacifiers, rubber door stops, etc. These items are very enticing to ferrets and will cause a life-threatening blockage.
- Securing or removal of all cords. Severe burns or even total electrocution can happen from a single good bite into a cord. When possible, run your cords up the wall and secure them under hard plastic cord covers. Remember that most cords, even at the base, are coated in a chewy plastic. Consider using outlet covers to cover the base and beginning of the cords.
- Fully blocking off kitchen, dining, garage, laundry, and sometimes living spaces is highly recommended. These areas of the home are typically filled with too many cables, large appliances, and outside exits to properly and safely manage. If you cannot block off these areas, pay close attention to blocking off the space around and under appliances like the fridge, dishwasher, washer and dryer, oven, etc. Remember that these large appliances often have wiring on the bottom and sides which ferrets will go after. It is imperative that they not be able to access them.
- Secure anything with an outside exit, including things like dryer vents and window AC units.
- Ensure that your ferrets cannot access couches, mattresses, etc. in a way that they can tear them up and get inside of them. They WILL want to burrow/tunnel in these.
- Ensure that your ferret cannot access a height greater than approx. 2 feet. Heights greater than this pose a massive fall risk that can result in breaks or fatal organ damage and internal bleeding. Free and unsupervised access to things like high beds, cat towers, desks, etc. are a no-no.
- Ensure that all hazardous materials and sharps are thoroughly locked away, including soaps/shampoos, cleaning supplies, pesticides, human foods and drinks, shaving razors, knives, etc.

Ferret Proofing Products:

- [Outlet Covers](#)
- [Cord Covers](#)
- [Cord Winder for Blinds](#)
- Baby gate example: <https://imgur.com/a/LiTN3u8>

Veterinary Care and First Aid

[Ferret Vet Map](#)

- [Here is a great resource](#) for questions to ask your vet to help ensure that they are a good fit for your ferrets.
- Please keep in mind that vets are NOT nutritionists. It's rare to find a vet that is truly knowledgeable about ferrets at all, much less one that is up to date with feeding options. Please see the food guide portion of this guide or visit reddit or discord to discuss with knowledgeable individuals.

[Pet Poison Helpline](#) (855)764-7661 - This site contains a list of poisonous substances.

Basic Ferret Care:

- When you first bring your new ferret home: See a vet within 2 weeks to ensure your ferret is in good health and to get a round of rabies and distemper shots. Marshalls babies only come with their initial vaccinations, you NEED to follow up!
- Daily: Gently pet your ferret and feel along their body for any new lumps and bumps. This will help you get a feel for what is normal and give you a great advantage in allowing you to get to the vet early when you notice something wrong.
- Weekly: Brush teeth (for FDR or kibble fed ferrets) and clean ears. Both can be done using water and a q tip. No fancy tools are needed.
- Every 2 weeks: Trim nails. I like to use baby nail clippers for this.
- Yearly: Visit the vet for an annual wellness visit and receive annual rabies and distemper vaccinations.
- Never:
 - Put a collar on your ferret. These are DEADLY. Beyond that, collars with bells can also cause permanent damage to hearing.
 - If you need a harness for outings, use a figure 8 harness. These are the only safe harnesses, as they are the only ones that will fully adjust down to truly fit your ferret securely. The materials to make one can be found at any craft store. [Here is a DIY video](#). They can also be found on Etsy.
 - Bathe your ferrets unless they have gotten into a harmful substance or are excessively dirty. This dries out ferret skin and leads to unhealthy oil overproduction.
 - An exception is oatmeal baths. There is no limit to these, as they help to soothe skin and do not exacerbate oil-production issues. [Here is a guide](#).
 - If your ferret does get into a harmful substance, using a puppy shampoo with lanolin is your best option. [Here's an example](#).

[Ferret Poop Chart](#): Always watch for 2-3+ consecutive yucky poops before becoming alarmed. One-off gooeey, nasty poops are relatively normal and can happen when ferrets simply get over excited. Also remember that weird-looking poops are normal for up to a couple of months when switching a ferret onto a new food.

[List of Harmful Ingredients](#): Some ingredients on this list are a bit alarmist, but I am going to put it here anyway because it's a great guide. Long story short, the best way to keep your ferret safe from toxic ingredients is to NEVER share any of your food or give your ferret alcohol or drugs of ANY kind.

Resources for Chronic Illness & Serious Health Issues:

- [Adrenal disease](#)

- [Insulinoma](#)
- [Insulinoma crash kit](#)
- [Blockages](#) (warning - surgery pics)
- [Blockage protocol](#)
- [Signs of pain](#)
- [Heart disease](#)
- [Lymphoma](#)
- [Rabies, Distemper, Vaccinations](#)
- [Bladder stones](#)
- [GI issues](#) (ECE, Helicobacter, IBD, etc)

I don't really trust you... where can I learn more?

Welcome to the end of the guide! I'm glad you're questioning me and want to continue learning more! I am by no means the end-all be-all of ferret guidance. Here are some great resources for more guidance:

- reddit.com/r/ferrets (and the discord @ <https://discord.gg/aeGuVs>)
- [Ais' Intro 101 Ferret Guide](#)
- [ILMH's Ferret 101 Guide](#)
- [Holistic Ferret Forum](#)
- [Ferret Survival Guide Facebook group](#)