

# “Hi there! I’m a first-time ferret owner! What are some things I need to know?”

***By Holly Ravenhill (Facebook) AKA Ais (Discord)***

First off, you will be much more involved in your ferret care than the typical dog/cat owner. I found I was pretty passive as a cat owner - once I got a ferret, I read books and had daily google searches, joined groups, volunteered at a ferret shelter to understand them better, etc. Be prepared for that! Check out [Ferrets for Dummies 2nd ed.](#) for a thorough read! (Note some of the info is a little outdated, but it's still a great start for someone just getting into ferret care). In my eyes ferrets are just as vulnerable as human infants and toddlers, and we as the care-givers are responsible. Accidents are going to happen, but we don't make light of it.

(NOTE: I use this doc mostly for copy-paste responses in Facebook groups, so the wording might be strange for some things)

## --FOOD & DIET--

Ferrets are “small pets” but they are far different from gerbils, guinea pigs, rabbits, etc. Ferrets are obligate carnivores! :) That means their body is designed to eat meat only - **no grains, no veggies, no wheat, no sugar, no dairy!** Their bodies are not designed to digest these foods. With such tiny bodies, anything they eat that they are not designed to eat can be very detrimental to their health. Make sure you know what you're feeding them, and read every label. Raw is the BEST way to go, but obviously not everyone can do that. Freeze-dried-raw is next best, followed by a \*select few\* high quality kibbles.

### RAW

If you want to feed **raw**, check out Holistic Ferret. They have a group on Facebook if you're interested in learning more! With raw, there are very specific guidelines of how to keep it a balanced diet, it can be spendy, and pretty gross at times. (Note: Must be RAW, never cooked). This balance is 65-70% muscle meat, 10-15% edible bone, 10% heart, 5% liver, 5% other secreting organs. They'll need at least 3 different types of proteins to eat, one being red meat (variety example: chicken, rabbit, beef, but AVOID FISH). But it is worth it, and the best you can do for your fuzzies. (Please note that it can be a STRUGGLE to switch to raw - most fuzzies don't recognize that it is something they can eat! Don't be discouraged if they don't even try the raw the first time you offer. Holistic has great info about how you can help them with this process! It can take weeks, even months to get them to accept it, but with patience from you, it can happen!)

BALANCE IS VERY IMPORTANT!! This ensures they get all of the necessary vitamins & nutrients in their diet they need to thrive. Many kibbles are fortified with extra vitamins & minerals to ensure ferrets get what they need. With raw, it's ALL on you to make sure they don't develop any deficiencies! Hamburger meat or chicken breast by itself is not enough!

I found it easiest to switch my boys from kibble to freeze-dried raw, then full raw. I only needed to buy one bag of Stella & Chewy's. This is great to help give you time to understand the diet and prepare for it, while also helping your fuzzies transition easier.

The soupie/transition recipe on Holistic is great to use. Some ferrets need help recognizing this new food - you can smear some on their gums, use a spoon to hold it to their mouth (for some reason this helps?), or hold them in your lap and feed it by having them lick it off your finger. If your fuzzies are slow to accept the new food, you can order raw Grinds from the raw websites - they are pre-balanced (though not for ferrets for a long period of time - if you plan on feeding grinds long-term you will need to add extra hearts to the mix for the proper taurine amounts.) and a great step from soupies to whole chunks.

Switch: <https://holisticferret.com/natural-diet/raw-diet-the-meat-of-the-site/raw-soup-recipe>

(Note: the bone meal you need is a human-grade supplement, it can be found in most health-food stores or vitamin stores)

<https://holisticferret.com/natural-diet/the-switch/introducing-raw-soup-and-hand-feeding/>

Below is a link to the Holistic website with intro-to-raw guides.

<https://holisticferret.com/natural-diet/the-switch/>

Cheat sheet: <https://holisticferretforum.com/newbie-info/cheat-sheet/>

Best raw websites to order from (US):

<http://www.rawfeedingmiami.com> - this is where I order from, cheapest shipping for someone who lives in the middle of nowhere on the west coast

<http://www.mypetcarnivore.com>

<http://hare-today.com>

<https://www.primitivechoice.com/collections/raw-meat-items>

And a cool break-down of nutrients in raw:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sz7U-RI0NwEmdmf6sCHxNHw6ouTg87ZINSNgQinwmTc/edit>

<https://www.nutritionadvance.com/types-of-meat/>

<https://www.nutritionadvance.com/organ-meats/>

<https://www.mensjournal.com/food-drink/7-nutrient-packed-animal-organs/>

<https://perfectlyrawsome.com/raw-feeding-knowledgebase/liver-other-secreting-organs/>

Other neat Raw resources:

[https://www.ferret.org/newsletter/2008/AFRvol18iss4\\_Nat\\_diet.pdf](https://www.ferret.org/newsletter/2008/AFRvol18iss4_Nat_diet.pdf)

<https://www.rawfeedingadviceandsupport.com>

<https://www.rawfeedingadviceandsupport.com/ferret-starter-guide>

<https://www.ferret-world.com/news/interview-with-bob-church-the-king-of-raw-feeding-respected-researcher-and-ferret-expert-anthropologist-biologist-photojournalist-and-enigma/>

<https://www.moesmeats.com/about-meat/>

<https://www.nutriment.co.uk/raw-feeding/glycemic-index-carbs-enzymes/>

<https://www.foodfurlife.com/why-you-should-feed-your-immune-compromised-cat-raw-food1.html>

<https://www.rawfeedingadviceandsupport.com/why-carnivores-dont-eat-carnivores>

Feeding hunted animals/game: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MX4FID-maOgx9I13-QEM9keakVH6LuZW8v4fM\\_xElvY/edit?](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MX4FID-maOgx9I13-QEM9keakVH6LuZW8v4fM_xElvY/edit?)

Small portion containers: <https://www.dollartree.com/betty-crocker-easy-seal-5-cup-plastic-storage-containers-with-lids/207022>

## **SALMONELLA?**

Salmonella is only a risk to you if you don't wash your hands (just like when you're preparing meat for dinner <3)

Ferrets have a few lines of defense to fight against salmonella and other bacterias:

- 1) Their digestive tract takes around 4 hours from start to finish. Salmonella takes much longer than that to incubate, so unless the raw you had was SEVERELY INFECTED, the risk is low
- 2) Ferrets have an extremely high concentration of stomach acid compared to humans. This kills off harmful bacterias much better than we can.
- 3) Typically if a piece of raw smells "off" to a ferret, they won't eat it anyways

So unless you don't wash your hands after prepping/feeding your fuzzies, or if you have a toddler that really wants to touch the ferret poo, the risk is just as minimal as making your own dinner 😊

## **RAW GROUND MEAT**

Not recommended. Ground meat from a grocery store has the potential to have higher levels of pathogens. When meat is ground it greatly increases the surface area where bacteria can multiply. It also spreads any bacteria present on the outside of the meat throughout the mix. Grocery store ground meat is intended to be thoroughly cooked. In fact, they are counting on the fact that you will cook it. Not that that all grocery ground meat is bad, just that the potential for trouble is higher.

## **COOKED RAW**

Cooking meat reduces & kills off some of the important vitamins and nutrients - since ferrets are obligate carnivores, they rely on their food for many nutrients & vitamins their body can't naturally produce like humans can. So it's like... white rice compared to brown rice.

This article is regarding cats, but cats & ferrets digestive systems are very similar, and they are both obligate carnivores, so the way they absorb nutrients & vitamins still apply 😊

<https://feline-nutrition.org/answers/answers-who-were-pottengers-cats-and-do-they-matter>

## **HOW LONG TO LEAVE RAW OUT?**

You'll see a lot of mixed responses on this 😊 One big factor is how hot/humid it is where you are, and if you're in a bug-heavy area.

I personally am NOT in a humid/bug-heavy area, and I leave it out overnight for them (12 hrs). My boys are weirdly smart and will stash any left-overs to keep them from drying out. In the morning, I'll collect any left-overs, add a bit of water, and put it in the fridge. If they don't eat it by the next night, it gets tossed.

If BONE dries out, even if it's raw and hasn't been cooked, I still throw it away, since dry bone = splintering and can cause internal bleeding or blockages.

Some people will say it's fine out for 24 hours, some people say no longer than 4 hours.

As far as your ferrets are concerned, if it doesn't smell "off" it's fine and they'll eat it, and their digestive bacteria will be strong enough to handle any bacteria on it (since that's what their system is built for!)

Food-service speaking, if it is between 40 - 140 degrees for over 2 hours, it's considered potentially harmful, since that's the temperature bacteria will grow. BUT this is considering our weak human digestive systems which are not very equipped to handle bacteria (unlike ferrets)

SO.....IN CONCLUSION..... just don't let it dry out and get stinky 😊

## **FISH**

Fish should only be fed maybe twice a month or so if you are feeding it as meals - there are toxins (including toxins from their diet and the water source, and thiaminase and mercury/methylmercury in larger fish) and fish regularly can make your ferret smelly. If you are feeding it as treats, you can cut it up into small bits and feed it more frequently, since they won't be getting nearly as much as a meals worth. Smaller and freshwater fish are the best way to go. Some fish that are good to try are atlantic salmon, trout, cod, carp, flounder, or sprats

Also fresh fish need to be frozen for 3 weeks to kill any parasites. Usually the smaller the fish, the better, since bigger fish can have higher levels of mercury :) You can use this list below for garter snakes to check for safe fish- only feed species that are thiaminase free.

Also never any fish from the pet store (feeder fish) since they are usually crammed full of antibiotics :( (In case anyone is curious)

<http://www.gartersnake.info/articles/2012/all-about-thiaminase.php>

<https://www.rfas.uk/fish-feeding-guide>

Vitamin B1 deficiency and thiaminase: <https://www.cat-world.com.au/thiamine-deficiency-in-cats.html>

<https://therawfeedingcommunity.com/2018/05/19/thiaminase-in-raw-fish/>

## **PORK**

Pork is totally fine! :) Some people worry about pork because pork can be infected with Trichinella. If you have 100% good source of pork, you can use it for your ferrets. ANY HUMAN-GRADE PORK will be safe for your ferret to eat (and honestly, any raw providers Holistic Ferrets suggest will be USDA-certified if it's in the US, so it should be fine!)

The natural salt content is nothing to worry about - but if you buy muscle meat from the store, you do need to check the packaging to make sure it's not injected with saline to preserve freshness, and that it has NO SEASONING. This is where the extra salt can come from.

My boys have pork every other week and they love it! They also enjoy pork heart, liver, and kidney 🥰

## **WILD GAME**

Never feed any species of wild pig or wild boar. They are host to a parasite that cannot be killed by freezing - Trichinella. Wild canines and bears can also carry this parasite, as well as some species of rodents.

Wild mice should not be fed - stick to domestic feeder-bred mice. Wild mice are carriers for a variety of diseases, and there is a decent likelihood that they could cause secondary poisoning if poison has been laid out for them anywhere nearby.

Know the diseases present in the area your wild game is coming from, especially sylvatic/bubonic plague, hantavirus, rabies, tularemia, etc.

It is recommended that you do not feed any cervid infected with chronic wasting disease. Deer, elk, and moose should always have their brain tissue tested before feeding. CWD is found not only in the brain and spinal fluid, but also in the muscle tissue itself. Do not feed meat from a CWD+ animal, and do not eat it yourself.

Do not feed predators/carnivores to your ferret frequently, if at all. Predator species typically carry a heavier concentration of heavy metals & environmental toxins due to biomagnification. Some commonly fed predator species are alligator and multiple fish species.

<https://holisticferret.com/natural-diet/diet-files/wild-game/>

## **MY FERRET WON'T EAT RAW**

Get a cheap coffee grinder (I got one from a thrift store) and grind the kibble up. Add some warm water and serve it as a soup!

Then, get some freeze-dried raw and grind that up too. Serve it mixed with the soup-kibble.

Eventually serve only the freeze-dried raw. (Note: you can still offer kibble at all times, and use these as a daily treat/meal)

Get raw grinds!! See what your fuzzy thinks of those. If your fuzzbutt is hesitant, mix in some freeze-dried raw that they're used to.

Slowly cut back on mixing in the freeze-dried raw and your fuzzy will be on raw grinds! :D Then you just need to work them up to eating whole pieces

<https://holisticferretforum.com/natural-diet/the-switch/>

## **KIBBLE**

For **kibble** suggestions, there are a few great kibble charts floating around! Sadly, not all kibbles marketed towards ferrets are actually healthy for them, and can actually cause damage over time. (A lot of pet stores will say to feed Marshall's kibble, but that's about the equivalent of feeding a kid deep-fried twinkies for every meal of their life :) Also, PLEASE CHECK THE INGREDIENTS on the safe kibbles before buying! Kibble companies are known to randomly switch up the recipes without notice. If you need help switching your ferret to a new kibble, [check out a handy guide](#) below! What I did for my stubborn boys was I went and got a coffee bean grinder from the thrift store (washed it real good) and then ground up some of the new kibble with some of the old and turned it into a soup (add a little warm water to the kibble-powder) 🥰 They pigged out on it. It gets them used to the taste of the new one, and then you can make a soupie with more of the new stuff and less of the old until they're only eating the new!

Reasons why it's a great idea to mix 2 or more kibbles:

- If a company changes their recipe and your ferrets stop eating it, they will still eat the other kibble while you work on re-introducing the changed one
- If you run out of one type of kibble (or you autoship and the order is late) you'll still have the other as a back-up
- Variety of proteins (some ferrets can develop sensitivities if only fed one type of meat)
- Balancing out fat & protein %'s

The most popular mixes are:

Wysong Digestive Support & Nature's Variety Instinct Ultimate Protein

Wysong Digestive Support & Orijen Cat & Kitten

Dr Esley's & Nature's Variety Instinct Ultimate Protein

Dr Elsey's & Orijen Cat & Kitten

...or you can mix all 4!! Wysong and Elsey's together without any other kibbles can cause loose poos, though

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTvMXyhwVBu5TLnYSvGhqJqr\\_vE\\_-x\\_1BADF7dPwatwIB9I--m02ZN23FqvPNqp3v-n5cJyOuSssVfn/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTvMXyhwVBu5TLnYSvGhqJqr_vE_-x_1BADF7dPwatwIB9I--m02ZN23FqvPNqp3v-n5cJyOuSssVfn/pub)

[http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/switching\\_kibbles.pdf](http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/switching_kibbles.pdf)

UK Food chart:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vROskzveatXSfR8mJFLf6H38qrNBS8Aai9UbWzmjF-\\_NPUDATU5iSppsPfpG\\_Sm2fJj3mwEPbFE8UOo/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vROskzveatXSfR8mJFLf6H38qrNBS8Aai9UbWzmjF-_NPUDATU5iSppsPfpG_Sm2fJj3mwEPbFE8UOo/pub)

Canada:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTnDviODZV0VpeIAVZtjcWSmCKTwemEvqXgyXrbY4BW1cnsEpghXciDmLnH9rB-lWLI8kzWdcCGdpL2/pub>

**Is any cat food good?**

kitten foods or all-life-stages (protein 35% or more, fat 18% or more), with little-to-no peas, garbanzo beans, lentil, sweet potato. Ideally the first 2-3 ingredients should be animal-based if you can!

**A healthy kibble should follow these general guidelines:**

- High protein (at least 35%, the higher the better)
- Crude fat (min 20%. [22%ish for kits & pregnant jills, 15-18% for ferrets older than yrs])
- Fiber (3.5% ish, lower the better)
- Ash (6.5%ish, lower the better)
- First 3 ingredients = MEAT. Not byproduct or meal.
- 75% MINIMUM of the recipe should be animal-based (usually you'll have to reach out to the manufacturer about this) - the higher the better.
- In a raw diet, 7% carbs max. With kibble, 24% or less per AAHA (less than 5% if diabetic)

Avoid:

FIBERS - Veggies, corn, peas, peanut butter, berries, soy, tendons, seeds, nuts - hard to digest, lowers the effectiveness of absorbing nutrients

CARBS - Grain, POTATO, rice, starch - unable to digest, contain sugar, create plaque growth, promote early aging, peridental disease, cancer, etc

Peas & Legumes - (Chickpeas, lentils, alfalfa, & sweet potatoes too) cause bladder stones (urine PH to rise)

Dairy - ferrets are lactose intolerant

Sugar, xylitol, TAPIOCA, molasses, malt, dextrose, corn syrup, maltodextrin, raisin juice - causes insulinoma, diabetes, etc

Grapes, chocolate, caffeine, xylitol, aloe, garlic, onions, avocado, tea - toxic

BHA, BHT, Sodium Benzoate - preservatives that cause cancer

Food colorings - This is a big red flag that says "the meat we used is so disgusting that we need the human to approve of this food by making it a better color

Some links:

<https://www.ferret-world.com/ferret-care/ferret-food/>

<https://weaselwords.com/ferret-articles/ferret-nutrition/>

There are **a lot more parts** to figuring out a good food than just looking at the **Guaranteed Analysis** and the **Ingredients** list, but this should give you a good start to going in the right direction and avoiding some BIG red flags ❤️ (If you need to grab something and for whatever reason can't pick something from the food charts).

**A healthy kibble should follow these guidelines:**

❤️ **High protein** (at least 35%, the higher the better)

❤️ **Crude fat** (min 18-20%. [22%ish for kits & pregnant jills, 15-18% for ferrets older than 6 yrs])

❤️ **Fiber** (3.5% ish, lower the better)

❤️ **Ash** (6.5%ish, lower the better)

❤️ **First 3 ingredients** = MEAT. (Listed as the animal [ex: chicken] or as meal [ex: chicken meal]. Byproduct is mostly organ, so it's not bad, but ideally you'd want to see a whole or meal ingredient too)

❤️ In a raw diet, 7% carbs max. With kibble, **24% or less** per AAHA (less than 5% if diabetic)

❤️ **AT LEAST 80%** animal-based ingredients (if it does not say it on the bag, be suspicious)

❤️ **AT LEAST 85%** animal-based protein (ex: if a kibble has 30% protein content in the guaranteed analysis, but only 70% of that protein content is animal-based, then the food really only contains 21% protein ferrets can digest & use)

**Avoid AT ALL COSTS:**

🚫❤️ **Unspecified meat sources** - (Examples: Animal fat, Poultry, Fish meal, etc). What kind of animal? What kind of poultry? What kind of fish? These are just placeholder words so that they can change up the ingredients as needed. Typically this also means the ingredients are low quality and could be 4D meats (dead, dying, diseased, disabled) that can come from roadkill, zoo animals, or even euthanized pets.

🚫❤️ **Dairy** - ferrets are lactose intolerant, and cannot digest the enzymes in milk. Stomach bacteria will consume the dairy instead, and produce what is basically bacteria-farts (lactic acid, acetic acid, Hydrogen gas, and CO2 gas.) This is what causes the diarrhea, bloating, upset stomach, etc.

🚫❤️ **Plant Proteins** - Your ferret can only digest animal-based proteins. These plant proteins allow the manufacturer to boost the protein % on the Guaranteed Analysis, but your ferret isn't able to digest it all.

🚫❤️ **Sugar, xylitol, tapioca, molasses, malt, dextrose, corn syrup, maltodextrin, raisin juice** - causes insulinoma, diabetes, etc

🚫❤️ **Peanut butter, whole seeds, whole nuts, etc** - Peanut butter typically has xylitol (even if it's not listed in the ingredients) which is toxic, and it is high in sugars. Whole seeds & nuts are a HUGE blockage risk. (Note: If a kibble lists "whole seeds", typically flaxseed, these HAVE been ground up for the kibble. But in the beginning of the process, they were whole)

🚫❤️ **Grapes, chocolate, caffeine, xylitol, aloe, garlic, onions, avocado, tea** - toxic

🚫❤️ **BHA, BHT, Sodium Benzoate, ethoxyquin** - preservatives that cause cancer

🚫❤️ **Food colorings** - This is a big red flag that says "the meat we used is so disgusting that we need the human to approve of this food by making it a better color"

🚫❤️ **Flavorings** - What's the flavoring made of? Where does it come from? What kind of flavoring? Why is a flavoring needed? (Typically because the food uses rancid fats or other spoiled ingredients). Too many variables with no straight answers. Better safe than sorry for this one.

**Keep these TO A MINIMUM:**

❤️ **Fibers** - (Veggies, corn, peas, berries, soy, tendons) - hard to digest, lowers the effectiveness of absorbing nutrients



💔 **Carbs** - (Grain, POTATO, rice, starch) - unable to digest, contain sugar, create plaque growth, promote early aging, periodontal disease, cancer, etc. STARCHES are the main offender for stomach and digestion issues when you transition to a new/different kibble.

💔 **Peas & Legumes** - (Chickpeas, lentils, alfalfa, & sweet potatoes too) cause bladder stones (urine PH to rise). If your ferret has a history of cystine stones, AVOID!!

💔 **Fruits & Veggies** - These can be high in sugars, and are indigestible. This can cause stomach irritation and is basically like a human filling up by eating cardboard. Yes you feel full, but you got no nutrients out of it! Some fruits & veggies can affect ferrets more detrimentally than others (too in-depth to get into here, but see above for basics)

💔 **Guar Gum, Cassia Gum, Carrageenan, Kelp, Xanthan Gum** - Used as a thickening/binding agent, usually for wet foods. These are unnecessary ingredients that typically cause inflammatory issues and irritates the digestive system.

💙 **And then after all that, you need to consider:**

💎 ...if it was made for **quick digestion** (a ferret food, kitten food, or all-stages cat food)

💎 ...**HOW MUCH of the unsavory ingredients are in it** (ex: Orijen has 90% animal ingredients, only 10% veggie; compared to low-end kibbles where the animal-based ingredients might only be 70%) since **obviously there will be SOME plant-based ingredients**, grains, veggies, and etc

💎 ...**if the Dry Matter Analysis affects the Guaranteed Analysis** (ex: Wysong is 16% fat on the label, but after Dry Matter calculations is 17.78%)

💎 ...**how much total CARBS** are in the food (determined by the formula:  $100\% - \text{Crude Protein}\% - \text{Crude Fat}\% - \text{Fiber}\% - \text{Moisture}\% - \text{Ash}\% = \text{Carbs}$ )

💎 ...if any of the ingredients were **outsourced from China** (MANY health concerns, poor standards, illness, etc)

💎 ...and probably some more I can't think of right now.

💙 **THAT'S A LOT OF STUFF.**

Yes it is! And this is just scraping the surface. That's why we reached out to all the food companies and asked the hard questions so we have an easy list of the kibbles, wet foods, and freeze-dried raw foods available that are THE BEST out there for your fuzzies.

## HIGGINS IN TUNE

This food actually is a pretty decent mixer for Wysong, let me break it down for you 💙

The first few ingredients are Chicken meal, eggs, tapioca, fat

Tapioca isn't ideal, but all kibbles need a binder. Tapioca is a bit higher in sugar than other binders, but it doesn't risk stones like peas do, so that's good!!

After fat comes potatoes, fish, beet pulp. The fat content in most kibbles is not just from the "fat" ingredient alone. If you look at UK kibbles (where they list the percentage of each ingredient), most "fat" ingredients come out to around 3-6%. So we can assume anything listed after the "fat" is not a very big part of the ingredient make-up 😊

The guaranteed analysis is excellent for ferrets (40% protein, 20% fat). Yes, a raw diet would be ideal, but not everyone can do that.

So... yes!! Higgins is a great choice for a mixer with Wysong or Elsey's 😊

Also there is a way to calculate the carbs in a food.

$100 - 40 - 20 - 10 - (\text{higgins doesn't list it, but ash is usually around } 8) = 22\% \text{ carbs.}$

The typical rule of thumb is no more than 24% carbs in ferret food. So this is a bit on the high-end, but is still ok! I wouldn't feed it solo, but as a mixer it's a good choice!

## JUST GOT THE WYSONG SAMPLER!

Awesome!! Just a few notes...

-The Archetype FDR contains chia seeds, which gives many ferrets SEVERE stomach issues (think exploding diarrhea..)

-The Dream Treats also contain chia seeds

-AND the Epigen 90 (yellow label) contains chia seeds

-Optimize contains a lot of cheese ingredients, which ferrets can't digest and can cause gas, upset tummy, nausea, etc

## SAMMY'S/MORE DOOKS FERRET KIBBLE CHART

That chart you linked is not accurate because not only is it out-of-date, it uses a \*made up\* scoring system. It assigns points to where ingredients are listed on label and then ranks them. Ingredient placement on a label can be very deceiving as to its true amount in the food after being processed/cooked (companies are allowed to use the ingredients \*weight\* BEFORE it has been cooked. Considering whole raw animal ingredients are about 70% water, they will weigh MUCH more before being cooked and processed to remove that water for extrusion). We have also learned a lot about how ingredients are digested & absorbed in ferrets since that chart came out, and now know many of the kibbles listed as great, really are NOT.

Our chart only lists facts about the kibbles and does not rank them. They cannot be ranked without knowing the true percentage of every ingredient AFTER processing. The smartest way to judge a kibble is by how much of that kibble is animal-based as a whole (some companies are transparent about this info, but most are not ), and how much of the crude protein is from meat vs plants (again some companies are transparent and list this info). Look at the guaranteed analysis and make sure protein and fat meet a ferrets needs. Then look at the ingredient list, and avoid foods that list multiple plant-based ingredients as main ingredients. If a company will not disclose how much of the food is animal-based, then they are hiding it because it is low. Most kibbles are using well under 70% animal-based ingredients.

## I'M FEEDING THIS AWFUL FOOD CAUSE MY VET SAID SO

I know your vet is ferret-friendly but a lot of ferret vets don't recommend good foods... even the BEST vet I have ever been to recommends Mazuri, which is not a very good food for ferrets. I can at least speak for the admins in saying we aren't shaming anyone, we are trying to educate. Did you feel shamed or bashed when your teachers in school corrected you on your homework? This is all we are doing - correcting and educating. We present facts on why the foods are unhealthy, how they can harm your ferret, and offer suggestions for better kibbles. We also help members try to grasp why recommendations from their vets aren't always the be-all-end-all. :( We really do just want what's best for your ferrets, and it's very

unfortunate that a lot of people are unwilling to open themselves up and do a bit of reading to understand on their own why one food is better than the other, rather than just taking a vet's (or a FB group admin's) word for it 😊. Vets typically learn about disease, illness, and surgery, but only go over nutrition for a day or week, unless they elect to take a full separate course.

I ALWAYS encourage people to learn so they can understand WHY a food is suggested. I feel it's empowering to the owner to know what goes into their ferret's food and how it affects them. Especially with all the health issues they can run into, I think it's very important to do a bit of research. Just because your ferret may be doing fine on a poor-quality food now doesn't mean there aren't issues building up. Someone can smoke for 15 years and "feel fine and look healthy" before finally being diagnosed with cancer.

Being a ferret owner means doing a lot of your own research. I highly suggest looking into what a healthy ferret diet means, and what is harmful in their foods. Below are some ferret nutrition links.

<https://weaselwords.com/ferret-articles/ferret-nutrition/>

<https://www.ferret-world.com/ferret-care/ferret-food/>

<https://www.fairoakferrets.co.uk/feeding-your-ferrets>

Peas & Bladder Stones: <http://ferretbiology.com/Urolithiasis>

BHA & BHT: <https://www.ewg.org/research/ewg-s-dirty-dozen-guide-food-additives/generally-recognized-as-safe-but-is-it>

<https://www.ferret-world.com/news/an-unholy-union-the-relationship-between-vets-and-pet-food-companies>

## **FREEZE DRIED RAW**

Also, you can feed **freeze-dried raw**, but make sure the fat/organ/etc ratios are correct! (65-70% muscle meat, 10-15% edible bone, 10% secreting organ, 5% liver, 5% heart). Once re-hydrated, the food can sit out for up to 2 hours - anything left after that should be discarded. Please note! Vital Essentials looks great, but I emailed and asked what their break-down was. They responded "45% muscle meat, 45% organ meat, and 10% bone and blood. All of the protein sources follow the exact same formula as I previously mentioned."

Freeze-dried raw should be rehydrated, not only to prevent choking cause it's so dry, but because ferrets aren't very thirst-driven. Adding water to the food will give them the water and moisture they need to stay hydrated. Some ferrets prefer it more like a "broth" consistency, and others prefer more of a "chowder" consistency. FDR should NEVER be microwaved - this damages nutrients, can cause it to spoil, cook bone fragments. If they want it warm, you can use hot water to mix with it.

**Shelf life for Freeze Dried is 2 years unopened – 1-2 mos. if stored properly after opening**

Because it's raw, it will sustain them longer than kibble will. Typically they'll only need a meal in the morning, afternoon, and evening (but feel free to offer more if they are begging!). It shouldn't stay out for more than 2 hours to prevent bacteria growth, but you can put any leftovers in the fridge for next time!

Always serve more than is needed so you can make sure everyone is getting their fill 😊

For immune-compromised, sick, pregnant, or ferrets on medications, I recommend Stella & Chewy's, or Northwest Naturals. They use a HPP process that is designed to make their foods safe from harmful bacteria naturally, while retaining the food's nutrient value and flavor. The High Pressure Processing process is 100% natural and recognized by the FDA and USDA as an anti-pathogen treatment since harmful bacteria can't survive in high pressure environments. Many other companies do not use this process because it is extremely expensive to buy or lease and operate.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vSVsLp-kFafRKeptwX0ffrHFahima4ThPfJf1rP3aH7DihQagJnpv\\_iClai9qg9lrZg9qc7HfC9tEy5/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vSVsLp-kFafRKeptwX0ffrHFahima4ThPfJf1rP3aH7DihQagJnpv_iClai9qg9lrZg9qc7HfC9tEy5/pub)

## **WET FOOD**

Yes, you can feed your ferrets ONLY wet food! (Make sure to read the label to confirm it is "complete and balanced" - a lot of wet foods are toppers or supplemental and not always clear on the label unless you really look). You will still need to brush their teeth though!

The percentages for wet food actually needs some math, since the percentages we know and love (ex: 30-40% protein) are in terms of dry food. So in order to get the correct percentages for wet food, we need to convert it to dry matter.

The article listed below spells it out really good - it refers to dog food, but the math applies for cat food and ferret food (and any others!) too. The formula is:

*Dry Matter Protein = (Protein% (Guaranteed Analysis) / (100% – Moisture% (Guaranteed Analysis))) x 100*

So looking at the first food on the canned food chart, the Stella & Chewy's Pate, it's got 10% protein listed and 78% moisture. If we plug those into that formula...

*Dry Matter Protein = 10 / (100 - 78) x 100 = 45.5%*

The same can be applied for fat content and fiber.

Initially, looking at the Guaranteed Analysis, it looks like there's WAY too little protein or fat. But since the guidelines for ferret foods are based on dry, we'd need to take the moisture into account.

<https://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/choosing-dog-food/dry-matter-basis>

SOME INGREDIENTS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN WET FOOD:

Guar gum (causes VERY upset stomach in ferrets)

Tapioca (very high in sugars, unnecessary thickener)

Peas, chickpeas (cause bladder stones)

Xanthan gums, agar gum, etc gums (Thickeners, high in sugars, not needed)

Wet food list: TBD

## TREATS

For **snacks & treats**, they really don't NEED much, but an egg yolk (no more than one a week) and salmon oil are great motivators!

Bandits treats (any flavor, excluding the freeze-dried treats) have carcinogens and high sugar, as well as ferret chew sticks. Using these products are the equivalent of humans smoking. Treats you'll want to look for are anything that have MEAT ingredients, and that's it! (Usually they are freeze-dried) No milk, no veggies, no spices, no flavorings, no weird words you can't pronounce. (As a warning, I wouldn't use freeze-dried liver treats, since they have high amounts of Vitamin A and can cause Vit A toxicity overdose.)

Suggestions:

<https://www.chewy.com/stella-chewys-beef-heart-freeze-dried/dp/177500>

<https://www.chewy.com/stella-chewys-duck-duck-goose-dinner/dp/129983>

<https://www.chewy.com/stella-chewys-chicken-breast-freeze/dp/177508>

<https://www.chewy.com/purebites-chicken-breast-freeze-dried/dp/35896>

<https://www.chewy.com/sojos-simply-lamb-freeze-dried-raw/dp/104470>

<https://www.chewy.com/wellness-core-grain-free-100-boar/dp/141797>

Also as a note: Ferrets on a healthy diet shouldn't need any supplements, so don't worry about making sure they have some kind of supplement. That should be covered already by what they're eating! 😊 Besides that, Furovite, Nutri-Cal, Tomlyn, etc have SO MUCH sugar in them, they can contribute to insulinoma.

FDR (treats & food) isn't cooked, it's still raw, so it retains its nutrients. Water soluble means that it can be excreted in the urine (hence us saying you can't overdo taurine), vs fat soluble, which is instead stored in the liver and fatty tissues for later use, etc (thus like Vit A which can build to a level of toxicity if just continually accumulated in too high an amount).

You should be **avoiding any vegetables, carbs, or dairy** anyways, but specifically watch out for **PEAS**. They can cause bladder stones, which means an expensive visit to the vet. List of toxic ingredients below!

- <http://holisticferret60.proboards.com/thread/19461/ingredients-good-bad-toxic>  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YbzfSWkuuDPbyBSQ3Y6hh27E5DPO3ySXEmNNZtp0XOU>
- <http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/poisons.pdf>
- No Dairy!! - <https://holisticferretforum.com/natural-diet/diet-files/216-2/>

## **BULLY STICKS, PIG EARS, WEIRD CHEWS**

The smaller ones are fine (bigger bully sticks are just too big and the fuzzies won't even bother or will have trouble trying to chew on it) under supervision 😊 I'm always weary with things like bully sticks and dehydrated pigs ears or snouts, etc, because they're bigger and typically for dogs for intense chewing - this means they're basically rock hard and are meant to soften up with a lot of slobber and chewing. Since ferrets don't slobber or chew for the sake of chewing and will just swallow, I'd be nervous about splintering. Also a lot of ferrets have a smaller attention span and will just give up on them. Blockages, splintering, choking, possible cuts on their gums which can lead to infection, and sometimes they are treated with chemicals to turn them into jerky which aren't listed on the label - are all concerns.

Ferrets aren't like dogs in that they don't chew for the sake of chewing. (With ferrets who are chewers, they're weirdly obsessed with the specific texture - it's not an instinct though). They chew meaty bones while they are eating, but I wouldn't recommend giving them dried chewies. However if these are a bit softer, that should be fine!

Avoid smoked meats too - even if you smoke them yourself and don't add any seasonings. The smoke adds a lot of carcinogens and carbon to the meat. A dehydrator or freeze dried would be better for that style of treat.

<https://ronproject.com/veterinarian-warns-rawhide-bones>

## OIL

Salmon or pollock oils are great because the oil helps support your fuzzy's overall health—including skin and coat, immune system, heart, cognition, fertility, vision, and other nerve-based functions. You'll want to look for one with no added rosemary or anything else - the ingredients should say "Salmon Oil, Mixed Tocopherols (a preservative)" and THAT'S IT. A max of 1 tsp a week (no more than 1/8 tsp a day) - otherwise there's a risk of vitamin A toxicity, and too much can be hard on the liver. I actually don't recommend giving them some DAILY, and save it for special treats, cutting nails, etc. There's no difference between "salmon oil for dogs" or "salmon oil for cats" other than maybe the portioning suggestion on the label 😊. I would suggest getting a smaller bottle, since it can go rancid after a while. Ferretone and Furotone are acceptable substitutes if your ferret REFUSES to try salmon or pollock oil, but be mindful that Ferretone contains BHT and parabens, and Furotone contains multiple parabens. Both BHA and BHT have been proven to cause cancer, and are banned from foods in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and throughout Europe.

**Some suggested brands:** Grizzly, Alaska Naturals, Wild Alaskan, Well & Good, Iceland Pure, Zesty Paws...

Salmon oil is actually counterproductive for hairballs because it is 99% fat; ingested fur is bound by fat which is what causes hairballs in ferrets and cats to begin with.



# WATER

Quick note on water - A ferret's natural diet (raw) is full of water & juicy meats, so their thirst-drive isn't very strong. Water bottles should never be used on their own, because there's not enough water that comes out, and they'll stop drinking before they're actually quenched. Also the metal ball on water bottles will damage their teeth. ALWAYS have a water bowl available - you can have a bottle as a back-up, but never as the only option. If your ferret digs the water out of their bowl, you can raise the bowl up a bit (the clip-on water bowls for cages) and/or attach a small tray to catch the water they dig out. Make sure your bowl is big enough, and metal preferably. Smaller bowls can cause whisker fatigue, which results in ferrets chewing on the bowl from frustration.

<https://holisticferretforum.com/care-and-enrichment/cages-and-bedding/water-dishes/>

## EGGS (From Tara on FB)

Feeding 1- 2 raw egg yolks per week during the shedding seasons (when they are actively shedding) can greatly aid in the prevention and elimination of ingested fur in ferrets. Ferrets cannot \*cough-up\* hair balls like cats can, and ingested fur can bind with fats and form into lethal obstructions in their gastrointestinal tract.

Below is a very simplistic summary of why raw egg yolk can help prevent and eliminate ingested fur:

- The **yolk** contains **lecithin** and **Choline** (*they work the magic*).
- **Lecithin** is a fat emulsifier, which emulsifies the fat binding the hairball(s) in the stomach (fat from foods is what binds the fur in the stomach to begin with).
- **Choline** (and its component **acetylcholine**) improve gastrointestinal motility, essentially propelling the fur through the GI tract so it can move out of the body (*laxative effect*).
- **Biotin** (vitamin B7) is found in yolks and helps the body utilize fats, carbs, and amino acids.

👉SIDE NOTE: on the **white of the egg**: The white is not needed in this process of hairball prevention/ elimination. Also, the amount of **avidin** (*a protein that binds to biotin strongly*) that is found in egg whites has the potential to *rob the biotin* from your ferret's body - **causing a biotin deficiency if only egg whites are being fed** (*do NOT feed just the whites of the egg*). Many people have stopped feeding the whites entirely because biotin is very important to the ferret and the white is not. The yolk contains a good amount of healthy biotin for your ferret, but, if fed with the white (whole) the *avidin will bind to that biotin* and your ferret will not absorb it.

**FUN FACT: Eggs are the most bioavailable source of protein. Bioavailability means the degree to which your body digests, absorbs and uses food.**

**ALSO FACT:** To test if your egg isn't spoiled, prior to cracking it open, put it in some water. If it floats, they're bad. If they sink, they're good. If they sink but are standing up straight at the bottom, they're going to spoil soon (but still good)

## KIBBLE & RAW

I've been looking into this topic a lot since it often comes up, and unfortunately there's just no studies (that I can find) on the effectiveness of a partially-raw diet 😞

💖 There are some concerns about feeding kibble & raw together, with arguments that kibble depresses the digestive system, changing the stomach acid pH/acidity and making it less effective against bacteria and decreasing the ability to break down bone. Unfortunately, all I'm able to find are theories and blogs about this, but no real studies to prove/disprove it.

💖 Ferrets with insulinoma need as little sugars in their diets as possible. Many people do Wysong & FDR. To stay on the safe side, many people will choose FDR processed via HPP (high pressure processing). The High Pressure Processing process is 100% natural and recognized by the FDA and USDA as an anti-pathogen treatment since harmful bacteria can't survive in high pressure environments, while retaining the food's nutrient value and flavor. (Some FDR's that do this are Stella & Chewy's and Northwest Naturals)

💖 The issue of spaced meals - ferrets eating kibble & raw in the same meal can definitely cause some funky stomach issues. Some people are comfortable feeding kibble & raw as long as there is a 3-4 hour space between the two meals. Again, I haven't been able to find any studies on if this is helpful or not. Some argue that this gives the GI system enough time to clear out and "reset" the stomach acidity, others argue that there's no point, since the kibble will still depress the system and decrease the effectiveness/benefits on feeding raw.

💖 Raw & FDR - All FDR is processed to minimalized bacteria, but some use the HPP process (see above) to further help. FDR is still raw though! True it's not pink or juicy, and there are no bones to chew on, but otherwise the nutrients are still there. You will see some added vitamins/minerals and minute amounts of veggies in some to help create a fully balanced meal, and help bind the FDR patties/nibs together

💖 Digesting at different rates - THIS one has been busted! Kibble & FDR digest at about the same rate. This study was done on a doggo, but I assume it wouldn't be too different in ferrets

<https://therawfeedingcommunity.com/2015/01/08/digest-this-kibble-may-actually-digest-faster-than-raw>

💖 Nutrition & balance - If a ferret is getting chicken breast half the day, and kibble the other half, they may not be getting enough nutrients. Kibbles are balanced to provide all the vitamins/minerals/etc needed, but this may not be enough if the raw isn't balanced. It's best to try to keep raw meals as balanced as possible (65-70% muscle meat, 10-15% edible bone, 10% heart, 5% liver, 5% other secreting organs. This can be done through a week, or there is an excellent raw soupie recipe on Holistic Ferret) to avoid any possible deficiencies/vitamin toxicities.



♥ TAKE-AWAY: Since we don't know for sure, some people will play it safe and not mix kibble & raw at all. Others will do spaced meals and have no issues. I really wish we knew more on this, but right now it's mostly up to the owners to understand the facts we do have, and make their own decision

<https://thelittlecarnivore.com/en/blog/can-you-mix-raw-food-and-kibbles-dangerous-or-not>

Kibble is so carb-heavy and raw is protein-heavy, that the stomach digests these completely differently. Some say kibble takes longer to digest, and raw much quicker, so the raw will sit and wait in the stomach while the kibble is being digested, turning the raw sour. Others say kibble & raw digest at about the same time, and it's the processed foods vs raw bioavailable foods that causes the issue. Either way, this can cause upset stomach, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

When both kibble and raw are eaten as part of the over-all diet, the kibble-digestion process can cancel out the efficiency of absorbing nutrients from the raw. Their bodies aren't made to digest some of the things in kibble, and these ingredients can cause inflammation, where the body fights off the effects of these foods (similar to an infection). During this time, their ability to break down foods is reduced. This also means the pH in their gut isn't strong enough to break down bone.

When one feeds a mixture of raw and kibble, the stomach acid can never reach that very acidic level that could kill bacteria, digest properly, nor absorb nutrients. It takes more effort for the body and can slow the elimination of waste as well as cause digestive upset which can include vomiting and diarrhea. Once the predigested food leaves the stomach, it needs to be at the proper pH to trigger the release of the pancreatic enzymes that do most of the digesting. If there's starch in the meal, the higher pH means fewer of those enzymes will be released and undigested food particles can trigger inflammation and an immune response called leaky gut syndrome. Leaky gut can allow undigested food and bacteria to pass through the wall of the small intestine, where they enter the body and cause immune disorders. If undigested food enters the colon, the last stop in the digestive tract, it can disrupt the friendly bacteria that live there and cause inflammation ... which can cause diarrhea and irritable bowel syndrome.

Ideally your ferret's digestive system can handle bacteria in the gut without a problem. Healthy animals have 30% more stomach acid than humans. When food hits their gut, the acid kills trace bacteria. They survive in the world on meat, be it fresh killed or already deceased. Ferrets' bodies are built to prevent harmful bacteria like salmonella from invading the body and upsetting the healthy balance of intestinal flora. Ferrets have highly acidic stomachs as well as natural digestive enzymes and bile that help them process *Salmonella* and other bacteria without becoming ill.

It's when ferrets are fed kibble that things become an issue. **Kibble doesn't contain those live enzymes, so your ferret's digestive system can become overrun.**

Because processed food is made under high heat, kills off probiotics and enzymes. The body is still in a depressed state actually making them more susceptible to illness and disease. This is why so many pet foods are removed from the shelf when a recall of listeria or salmonella is announced. It's easiest to think about this in terms of people. People who eat more processed food, junk food and carbs are more likely to get a cold or the flu. Normally, if that animal were on a 100% raw diet they would be able to handle the bacteria load, neutralize it and destroy it often never being affected by the actual bacteria. When the pH of the gut is increased (less acidic), then pathogenic bacteria like E coli and salmonella are more likely to survive and cause digestive upset or illness.

Kibble & raw together aren't really that ideal Because the digestive system needs to be running at 100% while eating raw so that it can effectively digest the raw, kill off bacteria, and break down the bone.

When the digestive system is adjusted to kibble, the acidity levels are different, making bone digestion & killing bacteria less effective. This can create complications with bone intake (which IS a much-needed part of raw - it's not advised to cut it out of a raw diet) and potentially cause blockage since the bone can't properly break down, OR cause illness from bacteria from the raw

If you must feed raw AND kibble (or plan on feeding some raw as a snack), they need to be fed 4 hours apart from each other - this is how long a ferret's digestion takes, and a safe amount of time between the two for the gut to be able to handle one or the other. Also I HIGHLY suggest adding probiotics & prebiotics. Adding probiotics to your ferret's meals will help crowd out the harmful, pathogenic bacteria like E. coli, salmonella, listeria and campylobacter. And salmonella activity can be inhibited friendly bacteria. Probiotics can also help because the friendly bacteria assist in the production of digestive enzymes, which can improve digestion. If you're going to add probiotics don't forget the prebiotics too! Prebiotics are various types of preferred foods that nourish the probiotic bacteria and keep them active. Feeding prebiotics along with probiotics gives your ferret symbiotics.

<https://www.rfas.uk/mixing-raw-and-kibble>

<https://feline-nutrition.org/nutrition/raw-meat-and-kibble-dont-mix>

<http://www.whitneyliving.com/dangers-feeding-kibble-morning-raw-night/>

<https://www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com/can-you-mix-raw-dog-food-with-kibble/>

<https://www.dailydogstuff.com/half-raw-half-kibble-diet/>

<https://www.nutriment.co.uk/raw-feeding/glycemic-index-carbs-enzymes/>

Kibble causing bacteria: [http://dogcathomeprepareddiet.com/commercial\\_pet\\_food\\_contaminatio.html](http://dogcathomeprepareddiet.com/commercial_pet_food_contaminatio.html)

# **SWITCHING**

Ferrets CAN STARVE 😞. They imprint on their food, which means they will not recognize other food as something edible. They are only familiar with one thing as a "food", the rest of it is like you offering a tennis ball. They literally do not know they can eat it, and many ferrets have starved to death when owners try to switch "cold turkey" 😭

Below is a link on info on how to help your ferret switch to a new food and recognize that it IS edible. Some ferrets are VERY picky and it can take a lot of time and patience from you. There are some ferrets who may have eaten a few different foods at a younger age, so their palate is wider and they are easier to switch 😊 This is one great reason we suggest mixing 2 or more kibbles for their diet, so they are used to diversity!

But please, never go cold-turkey and give your ferret something new and basically starve them til they eat 😞 They are your babies, and need help understanding that this new food is good for them! ❤️ Feeding a poor quality food just because you are struggling to transition them may be easier for you short term, but will end up in expensive vet bills due to poor diet in the long run.

To switch, they need to be transitioned slowly to understand what you're offering is edible. What I did for my stubborn boys was I went and got a coffee bean grinder from the thrift store (washed it real good) and then ground up some of the new kibble with some of the old and turned it into a soup (add a little warm water to the kibble-powder) 😭 They pigged out on it. It gets them used to the taste of the new one, and then you can make a soupie with more of the new stuff and less of the old until they're only eating the new!

<https://sites.google.com/site/ferretcareeducation/food/switching-foods>

[http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/switching\\_kibbles.pdf](http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/switching_kibbles.pdf)

<https://www.ferret.org/newsletter/1999/junkfood.pdf>

# **FOOD ALLERGIES/SENSITIVITIES**

Food allergies are diagnosed by doing a process of elimination of all proteins but one for a while (ex: only feeding pork for a bit, then adding chicken, etc). I don't believe they will perform environmental allergy tests on ferrets like they do on humans. Ferrets with suspected allergies are typically given an antihistamine injection at the vet to see if that clears up any issues. If the vet suspects allergy (not food related) they may prescribe antihistamines to be taken orally at home (typically children's Benadryl). In my experience, most sensitivities will show right away within minutes to a few hours after eating it. It can be something minor like a mucousy poo, to something drastic like severe vomiting, pooping blood, needing an emergency vet visit.

<https://holisticferretforum.com/health/irritable-bowel-disease-ibd/protein-trialelimination-diet-for-ferrets-raw-diet>

# **WHY FERRET LIKE SUGAR? BUT CAN'T HAVE SUGAR?**

So, interesting facts! Ferrets DO have a sugar receptor on their tongue (Tas1r2 gene). In a natural setting, ferret's cousins Polecats will resort to berries and things like that in harsh seasons when their regular food (small prey) is hard to find.

That said... your ferret is not starving and scavenging for food, so don't let those beggars win you over! 😊

Sources: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264981213\\_Ferret\\_Nutrition](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264981213_Ferret_Nutrition)

<http://www.ferretcentral.org/faq/history.html#carnivores>

# **I JUST RESCUED A REALLY SKINNY MALNOURISHED FERRET FROM A BAD SITUATION, HOW TO FATTEN IT UP?**

Just keep transitioning them to your new food and they'll bulk up in time! Putting weight on too fast and introducing a lot of fats to their diet suddenly can upset their stomachs a lot, especially if they're used to poor quality food or just not eating a lot in general 😞

# **PROBIOTICS VS ENZYMES**

Per Tara! Not my wording.

Probiotics can be helpful for food transitioning, and also while on antibiotics or even right after antibiotics. Digestive enzymes are different, they can be added to any food that contains plant-based ingredients to aid their bodies in processing those ingredients. You can give both probiotics and digestive enzymes even during illness - which may help prolong life and help them be more comfortable when inflicted with chronic disease.

# **PROTEIN BENEFITS (RAW) FROM CARNIVORA.CA**

And [springmeadowsnaturalpetfood.com](http://springmeadowsnaturalpetfood.com)

The canine and feline's natural diet is whole prey animals and occasionally fruits and grasses. A whole prey carcass is low in carbohydrate and fat and high in animal protein, bulk, and roughage - not plant fiber, but less digestible parts, such as bone, cartilage, scales, fur, feather, skin, tendon, and teeth.

Muscle meat makes up the greatest portion of a whole animal carcass. Carnivores have evolved to also eat all of a prey animal's organs and glands. These foods have variable content of protein, fats, vitamins and minerals, collectively they provide a remarkable range of nutrients. These nutritious foods serve numerous functions in your pet's body, including muscle growth, tissue repair, enzymes, blood, immune functions, hormones, and energy.

Dogs and cats do not have an essential requirement for carbohydrates found in vegetables, fruits or grains. They are able to maintain energy levels by making glucose in their body from protein and fats. Muscle meat, fat, and liver in a whole animal carcass provide your pet with a source of energy.

A diet consisting of meat alone is unnatural and nutritionally unbalanced.

Along with meat, dogs and cats require bones to maintain their health. Bones in a whole animal carcass act as a source of fiber, but more importantly, they supply calcium, which in cooperation with phosphorus in meat builds and maintains bones and teeth. Calcium plays many other roles in your pet's body including muscle contraction, nerve transmission, and proper blood clotting.

Whole carcasses supply other key dietary components. Glycosaminoglycans (GAGs) are a group of natural substances found in and around the cells of cartilage, joints, tendons and organs that contribute to normal joint function. Some of the more commonly known GAGs are chondroitin, glucosamine and hyaluronic acid. A whole animal carcass also contains various classes of fats that provide energy, form hormones, and, regulates temperature and normal nerve function. Fats also supply fat-soluble vitamins and various fatty acids crucial to your pet's skin, coat, and immune system.

When provided a whole animal diet, dogs and cats have the ability to produce their own antioxidants. Whole animal carcasses support this production with nutrients like vitamins A, C, E, and the minerals copper, zinc, and selenium. Another group of disease-preventing nutrients called zoochemicals are provided from iron, coenzyme Q10, and the fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA).

#### CHICKEN

Chicken is one of the most popular raw diets, often based on price. Compared to other whole animal diets, it is not as nutritious. Chicken (Goose and Duck) store most of their fat in a layer under the skin and in the body cavity. Chicken tends to be higher in fat than many other whole animal species because the skin of the carcass is usually included. The fat contains higher amounts of omega 6 fatty acids. Chicken diets that are higher in fat are unsuitable for dogs that are not active or for those with inflammatory diseases or problem skin disorders. Compared to many other protein sources, chicken is low in zinc and iron.

#### BEEF

Beef diet is lower in protein than some of the other whole animal diets. Our pasture raised beef is lower in polyunsaturated omega-6 fatty acids and saturated fats than feedlot beef making it healthier. As it is lean, it is good food for less active pets, but still very valuable food for any carnivore. It is a rich source of iron and therefore a good food for building blood. Beef is a popular rotational food for those animals that do not have an intolerance to it.

High-quality protein that is complete with all nine essential amino acids

Best source of protein, zinc, vitamin B12, B6, niacin, and riboflavin with significant amounts of thiamin and pantothenic acid

Zinc is essential to growth, a healthy immune system, and wound healing

Vitamin B12 aids production of red blood cells

Riboflavin promotes healthy skin and eyes

Rich in selenium (an antioxidant), phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium, with good quantities of sodium and copper

An important source of iron, which aids in brain development and supports the immune system

Small amounts of Vitamin E and folate. Grassfed beef is higher in vitamin E, which is an antioxidant and may lower the risk of heart disease and cancer

Contains omega-3 and omega-6, the essential fatty acids, half of which are monounsaturated

#### LAMB

Lamb diet has moderate to high in fat levels. It is an economical protein source for rotation in the dog's diet. Lamb is rich in easily absorbed minerals and B vitamins - particularly B6 and B12. Lamb is nature's best source of carnitine, an amino acid that the body uses to transfer fatty acids across the membranes of the mitochondria, where they can be used as a source of fuel to generate energy. It is an especially important nutrient for the heart. Lamb fat is stable and nutritious. It is a good source of palmitoleic acid, a 16-carbon monounsaturated fatty acid that has strong antimicrobial properties.

More lutein, an antioxidant

Excellent source of high quality protein

Excellent source of iron, zinc and B vitamins

Zinc is essential for growth, healing and a healthy immune system

Contains the trace elements copper, manganese and selenium

Half the fat is unsaturated

#### RABBIT

It is one of Nature's great food animals. Rabbits produce whitish meat that is fine-grained, high in protein, and can be substituted for poultry. Rabbit is lower in fat and therefore valuable for weight reduction or suitable for less active pets. It is a good alternative protein source for the allergy sensitive, pets, those with heart disease or as part of variety in any dog or cat's weekly menu. Rabbit is higher in protein than other meats, lower in fat, and has fewer calories. It is one of the best white meats available on the market today! The meat has a high percentage of easily digestible protein. It's perfect for weight loss. Also for pets with allergies to everything else!

Rabbit meat is almost cholesterol free and low in sodium.

Rabbit contains selenium that works as an antioxidant to remove free radicals before they can do damage to your body. Some types of cancer, as well as the ravages of aging, can be battled with selenium. Selenium is also very important in maintaining good thyroid functioning and supporting a healthy immune system.

Rabbit meat also contains Potassium that helps with fluid regulation and helps remove salts from the body.

Vitamin B2 or riboflavin is another nutrient found in rabbit meat which is important to keep the digestive track healthy. It is also important in breaking down protein and fats. Another nutrient, Vitamin B12 is necessary in the proper function of the nervous system. It is needed in the production of protein and red blood cells.

Rabbit meat, which is a high-protein low fat diet, is perfect for weight loss.

#### DUCK

Like other meats, duck is an excellent source of high quality protein containing a well-balanced array of amino acids. Duck also contains generous amounts of iron, phosphorus, zinc, copper, selenium, and lesser amounts of the minerals potassium, magnesium, vitamin E, A, C and folic acid. Duck is rich in fatty acids. It is an excellent food for performance or highly active dogs or as a novel protein source for allergic pets. For pets that require a lower fat diet, duck can still be fed, although less often or in smaller portions per meal is recommended.

#### TURKEY

Turkey is high in protein and lower in fat than most red proteins. It provides a rich source of iron, zinc, phosphorus, potassium and B vitamins. In terms of minerals, turkey is richest in selenium. Zinc, copper, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, and iron are also provided by this food in noteworthy amounts. Turkey is a good protein source as part of a varied diet. Turkey contains more protein per ounce than other meats. The white meat of turkey is generally considered healthier than dark meat because of its lower saturated fat content, but the nutritional differences are small. Turkey is a very rich source of protein, niacin, vitamin B6 and the amino acid tryptophan. Apart from these nutrients, it is also contains zinc and vitamin B12. White meat of turkey is low on fat and proves to be an excellent source of high protein.

Turkey also contains anti-cancer properties. It is a very good source of the trace mineral selenium, which is an essential component required for thyroid hormone metabolism, antioxidant defence systems, and immune function. Scientific studies have suggested that selenium intake can bring down cancer incidence.

Turkey is low on saturated fat and total fat. It also contains less cholesterol than chicken, pork or beef.

Tryptophan also plays an important role in strengthening the immune system, as suggested by scientific evidence.

The vitamin B6 and niacin present in turkey are essential for energy production. Niacin is also important for converting the proteins, fats and carbohydrates into usable energy.

The tryptophan present in turkey promotes sleep.



## LLAMA

Camelids, including llama, are not true ruminants. They have three instead of four stomach compartments. Llamas are raised for wool, meat and hides, and sometimes used for carrying loads. Recently, the nutritional relevance of llama meat has increased, because this kind of meat is an important source as a unique protein for both pet and human consumption. It is a very lean meat while still having a high protein content. Being a unique protein it is an excellent alternative for those pets with food sensitivities.

## GOAT

Goat is the most widely consumed red meat in the world while comprising 63% of all red meat consumed in the world. It also leaves a very small environmental foot print. Some estimate as efficient one tenth that of beef. It is lower in calories, total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol than traditional meats. Less saturated fat and less cholesterol mean healthier red meat for the health-conscious pet owner. Additionally, goat meat has higher levels of iron when compared to a similar serving size of beef, pork, lamb, and chicken. Comparatively, goat meat also contains higher potassium content with lower sodium levels. Goat meat closely resembles that of beef and lamb regarding essential amino acid composition.

## PORK

Commonly pork has been referred to as "the other white meat"! In fact, pork is actually considered a red meat. This is because all cloven-hoofed animals, like pigs, are classified as "red". It is the most commonly consumed red meat worldwide, especially in eastern Asia. Being high in protein and rich in many vitamins and minerals, lean pork can be an excellent addition to a healthy diet for your pet. Pork contains varying amounts of fat depending on the level of trimming and various other factors. The fatty acid composition of pork is slightly different from the meat of ruminant animals, such as beef and lamb. It is low in conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and is slightly richer in unsaturated fats.

## STEELHEAD TROUT

Fresh Water Steelhead is a member of the salmon family. This light-tasting fish is a very healthy choice and a great addition to feeding variety in your pet's diet! It contains approximately six grams of omega-3 fatty acids per 8oz patty. Omega-3 fatty acids help protect against disease and arthritis.

<https://nw-naturals.net/ingredients-glossary/>

# --BEDDING--

Their respiratory system is sensitive and prone to illness and infection, so **any paper/wood/shredding bedding should be avoided!** Even the 99% dust-free stuff, because they are also very clean animals and often groom themselves or eat things they shouldn't - if they ingest of this bedding, it will cause blockage. (Unfortunately, this shredding type of bedding is what you'll see ferrets in at a lot of pet stores. You'll also notice most ferrets in pet stores are having trouble breathing or are sickly. Can you imagine sleeping in paper shreds? My nose would get gunked up too!) Plus... the shredding bedding would be such a hassle to clean out all the time!

<https://holisticferretforum.com/health/blockages/>

Spoil your babies with **blankets**. From towels, linens, baby blankets, even scrap fabric from thrift stores. Please watch your ferrets at first, since some like to chew on certain fabrics (mine goes crazy for towels) which could result in a blockage. Usually **when you have a chewer**, linens (bed sheets) are a safe way to go. If you want to get fancy, there are some lovely designers for hammocks and full ferret bed-sets on Etsy.

<http://www.cypresskeep.com/Ferretfiles/Hammocks.htm>

If your ferrets don't make a mess of things, usually **washing the blankets once a week** is fine, though more may be needed if there's a potty accident or someone throws their food/water all over. To wash, any normal detergent you use for your laundry is fine. Try to avoid anything overpoweringly scented or any dryer sheets, since too much fragrance can irritate their noses and set them into a sneezing fit, as well as having various ingredients in the soaps/dryer sheets that are toxic.

Shops:

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/CarpetSharkSugarShop>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/FreakishlyGood>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/senkacraftfactory>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/FuzzyFrenzyCrafts>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1162391297456164/>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/furbabybedding>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/littlelemonseed>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/secondchancedooks01>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/petThreads>

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/unicornswhimsy>

[www.ferretbeddingbyjules.co.uk](http://www.ferretbeddingbyjules.co.uk)

# --POO--

Ferrets **can be potty trained**... but their little one-track minds mean that there's guaranteed to be accidents. Why run all the way back to the cage when there's a nice corner right here?! People like to say they're 95% potty-trainable. Link for potty-training help below:

<https://holisticferret.com/care-and-enrichment/common-behavior-problems/litterbox-boot-camp/>

You'll be looking at your ferrets poo a lot more than you would with a dog or cat. Their poo can tell you a lot about what's going on inside. See some poo charts (caution: pictures in the first link!) and color explanations for help!

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kBfVcJZ0jGf3deuvf87X9p8E-REe9-Fj/view>

<http://myferretpet.com/2017/05/ferret-poop-colors-what-does-the-color-of-my-ferrets-poop-mean.html>

## What litter to use

A lot of people use Yesterday's News, I haven't tried it so I can't speak to it. I suggest Wood Stove Pellets (not BBQ wood pellets), walnut pellets, or pee pads. Pellets can be found at any hardware store, usually \$5 for 40lbs. With two ferrets, that lasts me about 4 months. Potty pads are a good option if you have someone who likes to dig/eat/sleep in their litter box, but they're a bit wasteful. Your internal environmentalist will hate you for using them, but sometimes it's the best thing. There are eco-friendly pee pads, but of course they're a bit more expensive. (There's also the reusable ones!)

Holistic Forum Litters (with pics!)

<https://holisticferret.com/care-and-enrichment/cages-and-bedding/464-2/ferret-litters/>

AFA Litters:

<https://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/bestlitter.pdf>

**Cat litter/clay litters are NO BUENO** - they clump and cake to the ferrets paws (much more than cats - I've seen a ferret paw that was a solid little clay brick from someone using cat litter). They are also super dusty and can cause a lot of respiratory issues. Ferrets are lower to the ground than cats, and like to SNORF. These factors can get clay in their lungs (or eyes, nose, genitals) and cause infections.

## As for boxes..

They prefer something big enough they can fit their whole body into, do a dance in, and then some. **Big boxes with low entry-points!** Marshall's High Back box is pretty good generally, though I've been leaning towards Puppy Pans lately.

You'll want a box on each floor of the cage, and in at least one corner of their room for play-time. If they free roam, you'll probably want one in each room of the house they're allowed in, since their attention spans aren't long enough to go through the hassle of running ALL THE WAY back to one box. If a nearby corner looks nice and poopable, they'll poop there instead.

Also here's a great link for some litter box ideas - especially for ferrets being little boogers about using their box.

<http://www.disabledrabbits.com/litter-boxes.html>

<https://www.chewy.com/marshall-ferret-litter-pan-color/dp/128779>

<https://www.chewy.com/puppy-pan-dog-cat-small-animal-litter/dp/167815>

<https://kittygohere.com>

<https://www.petco.com/shop/en/petcostore/product/so-phresh-dog-litter-box-small-2745516>

<https://www.chewy.com/oxbow-enriched-life-rectangle-small/dp/303720>

<http://www.bingalingstore.com/geriatric-litterbox>

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0013LI4GM>

<https://www.greenhousemegastore.com/tidy-tray>

## REUSABLE PADS?

I use reusable! I recommend PoochPad - they are one of the few white ones that have minimal staining (though I do need to spray with some stain remover every now and then). White is ideal to detect anything off in their pee (extra dark, blood, etc)

The hardest part is rinsing them and keeping them somewhere til laundry time. I do fert laundry every 4-ish days. With 2 ferrets and 6 pads through the house, I swap out the two in their room daily, and the others through the house every other day or so (sometimes less depending on the area of the house)

I used to pick off the poos with toilet paper and rinse them in the tub, then let them hang out there until laundry time. It could get pretty smelly in there We recently got a mop sink in the garage, and it's MUCH EASIER NOW. I know other people will spray them off with a hose outside, or use a cloth diaper pail

I have about 4 mediums and a 6 smalls, and then 4 Large's for the trouble corners. What I did was bought just ONE to test them out, and replaced it in a free-roam area they frequently used. The next paycheck, I decided I liked em and bought two more. And then the next paycheck, bought one or two more...until I felt I had enough 😊

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0002I0ODS/ref=ox\\_sc\\_saved\\_title\\_2?smid=ATVPDKIKX0DER&th=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0002I0ODS/ref=ox_sc_saved_title_2?smid=ATVPDKIKX0DER&th=1)

## HOW DID YOU GET YOUR FERRET TO USE THE BOX?

Mine took a while, but the litterbox boot camp worked! When I first adopted them, they didn't care about corners, blankets, anything. Poopy blankets daily. I let them sleep on a blanket for a day or two, and then transferred THAT blanket to the under-the-box one (so it smelled like sleepy-time and they were less likely to want to poo on their "bed"). I put a box in the spot they liked to go potty best.

Honestly they had to go without ANY litter or pee pads for a while. They'd dig in litter, and pee pads were toys or things to nap on. So it was just this.. empty nasty box I had to wipe down daily. 🤢 I started putting a pee pad down in their room during play time (not in a box, just plain pee pad by itself), and FINALLY they started using it. After a while I put one in the box and taped it down to the sides with duct tape 🤪 But it worked!

As for a box - I used the High Back Marshall's box. Until my boy kept GROWING AND GROWING. He's 3 lbs now! And he stopped using the box. So his brother stopped. I got fed up and put in my puppy pan - SURPRISE!! NO MORE ACCIDENTS! Now I have a few more of the puppy pans and it's been wonderful.

I still keep them fairly confined when I wake them up, until I see they go potty. They took a while to get there during free-roam, but I experimented with different litter boxes and placements and we've finally got it worked out. For some reason, me standing right next to their pee pad draws them to it. I wake them up, let them drink water, wander around, but I'll make sure to set them on a pee pad so they know I'm waiting for them to potty before they can go run around like crazies 😊

<http://holisticferret60.proboards.com/thread/108/litter-box-boot-camp>  
<https://www.chewy.com/puppy-pan-dog-cat-small-animal-litter/dp/167815>

# --PLAY TIME--

Ferrets are interactive and need a lot of attention, exploration time, and play time. **At least 4 hours out of their cage a day!** I let my boys out in the morning while I get ready for work, and they are immediately out again when I come home up until I go to bed. On the weekends, they are only in their cage when I sleep. Think of them as cats - would you lock up a cat all day? Heck no! They are crepuscular, which means **they are most active during dawn and dusk**. (My boys prefer 7AM - 10AM, a little play time around 1PM, then 7PM - 9PM) You will never sleep in on a weekend ever again.

You must **ferret-proof** the room that your little guys will play in! Most people have one room, but I caved to their guilt-tripping and let them have the whole house. Make sure you ferret-proof beforehand, or they might find a hole to disappear into and you'll never see them again!

If you are gone/sleeping more than half the day, get 2 ferrets. Ferrets are very social.

Ferrets need ROOM. When you are gone - Big cage with multiple floors, or a ferret-proof room. Minimum free roam space should be at least 17.02 ft<sup>2</sup> (1.58 m<sup>2</sup>) but the more you can do, the better! (This is the dims of a 11 panel playpen)

<http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/proof.pdf>

Ferrets love digging, so a **dig box** is a great idea! Long-grain NON-INSTANT rice will help absorb the oils from their skin, but some see it as a perfect place to poo. (Non-instant so that if they swallow some, it won't puff up and cause a blockage in their intestines). Dried beans & noodles are a great option, too. (If dried beans are ingested, they can be toxic - if your ferret chews/eats things a lot, avoid this option!) Others have done biodegradable packing peanuts (watch these - some will just eat them), thrift-store puzzle pieces, ping pong balls, easter eggs (they're available all year online) etc!

Ferrets also like chewing... **DO NOT let them have ANY RUBBER TOYS** - they chew HARD and WILL bite off chunks of rubber, swallow, blockage, vet bills... not fun. Just as a PSA, always be careful with those soft/rubbery toys. Ferrets can easily chew through them and bite off little pieces (whether they're avid chewers or not) and get a nasty blockage that can result in emergency vet visits and worse

The BEST ferret toy... is YOU! Sit down with your fuzzy, let them climb all over your lap, try to stash your socks. Tickle their little sides and wardance with them! (Make sure another second crazy fuzzy isn't under your feet!). This is wonderful bonding, and ferrets LOVE to play with their big hooman!

Cat toys with **catnip** in them are fine, as long as they can't rip it open and get to the catnip. You'd want to supervise play-time with these toys. There are some that have refillable bags and you can just pull the catnip out easily. Stuffed animals are a pretty big hit as far as toys go - just make sure to check them often for chewing and wear&tear, and try to find ones that don't have plastic eyeballs that can rip off and cause a blockage. Cat feather-on-a-stick toys are pretty good too! I usually go for the ones with ribbon attachments or something that can't be ripped apart as easily. And as always, those little plastic jingle balls are great!

Some ferrets aren't interested in toys. I've noticed there's four main types of "toys" - some ferrets prefer one over the other. First are the object toys - dig box, easter eggs, stuffed animals, etc. Second is the "fuzzy" toy - their friends! Some ferrets enjoy wrestling and playing with their buddies the most! The third is YOU, their hooman. Some fuzzies are more "people persons" and will want to play with you over playing with toys or their friends. Finally, some are explorers - they want to go to new places, and will stop at nothing! These are the ones most likely to guilt-trip you into taking them for a walk. Make sure they are up-to-date on vaccines and protected by flea/tick/heartworm preventatives before they go outside!

My toys! <https://www.instagram.com/p/BqbnwFAhJAv/>

Something my fuzzbutts LOVE is to "help" with dinner. Whenever we're chopping things, we'll hold them up to sniff (no licking though!). The only things I don't let them sniff are spices, garlic, onion, or spicy things like peppers/jalapenos. This video is what gave me the idea [https://youtu.be/5530I\\_pYjbo?t=80](https://youtu.be/5530I_pYjbo?t=80)

<http://www.cypresskeep.com/Ferretfiles/Toys.htm>

## WHY DOES MY FERRET PUT TOY IN LITTER BOX?

It's a natural instinct! Hiding food (or their toys) where they go potty will mask the scent from predators/scavengers, so when they have too much food they can safely store it for later.

😬 Basically your ferret is saying "mom I really love this toy" in the nastiest way possible



## SWIMMING

Contrary to popular belief (cause I know you've seen those cute videos!) most ferrets are not big on swimming. Ferrets don't need to swim by instinct (though some of them are big, big splashers!) so it's not something all of them enjoy. Their feet are not designed for swimming the bodies are not constructed for swimming. When they do fall in, they fight to keep their heads above water. If you watch a mink (which is the closest to a ferret) it handles water far differently. It is actually designed to go in water, and if you watch you will see a huge difference in their reactions. Ferrets who are not enjoying bath time will swim towards the edge of the tub, and maybe jump, to try to get out.

True they DO swim immediately, but it's not something they need unless it's for physical therapy. Even if they love running around in the shower, under the sink, digging in a water bowl, I'd keep the actual swimming to a minimum 😊 You can fill the tub less so that they can still stand in it and splash, but without needing to swim. Throw some floaty toys in there and you're golden! If you find that they actually DO want to swim (some do!) more power to them, but always make sure they have an elevated spot they can stand and catch their breath.

(Please make sure she has an elevated spot she can stand and catch her breath during baths! <3 Ferrets aren't really built for swimming and can tire out REALLY easily. Always provide an elevated spot so she can stand, so you can be sure she's not just swimming so she won't drown rather than swimming because she's enjoying it)

For water fun, a shallow pan (small litter box, big baking pan, etc) filled with water is perfect to splash around in without having to swim. Some will snorkel, some will dig at the water, or just run by for a quick drink. You can put little floaties (balls, easter eggs, etc) in for even more fun!

## BABY GATE

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BhYDQIJBIbo/>

Here's what I did with my baby-gate!! I reinforced it with the box it came in (😊 it works!) and then put some vinyl on top - it's soft and easy to cut with scissors, but is smooth and tough. Attach it all with zip-ties. (You can put the vinyl on both sides but I was lazy). SUPER CHEAP, the gate was around 15\$ and you can get custom-cut vinyl mega cheap at any home-improvement stores. I made this in 2014 and it's still going STRONG.



## CAGES

**Ferret Nation & Critter Nation** are the best cages to use - the others are too small, too flimsy, or just unsafe for them (falling off the very top shelf - ouch!). It's also a good idea to get a "double" (two story) critter/ferret nation, that way if you need to separate a ferret, they both have their own living space during cage-time. Pro Tip: If your ferret is **biting the bars of the cage**, it means he's bored and WANTS OUT!!! (Remember, they're most active in the mornings and evenings!)

A lot of cages aren't built for the shenanigans ferrets can cause - the shelves can fall off, the ferrets can fall and hurt themselves, the ferrets can figure out how to get out, they can pinch their toes, etc etc :( I've seen some posts where they try to squeeze through the cage bars of cheaper cages and.....don't make it :(

If you're on a budget, you can search FB marketplace or craigslist for FerretNation or Critternation (someone in the group just found one for 60\$ the other day!). But I would definitely not risk their safety to save a bit of money 😊

<http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/cages.pdf>

Please remember to **ALWAYS cover the cage floor** so they have a stable (and soft, preferably!) support to walk on. Would you like to walk around on wire or thin metal bars all day? No! It's very uncomfortable and their toes can get stuck and broken. It has happened, so please furnish their cage in a way that you'd be happy to live in, too. :)

Here's a horror story of a ferret who had no liners/support and only had wire to walk on:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/ferret-care-education/the-dangers-of-wire-flooring/288412355200289/>

### **PERVUE FEISTY FERRET CAGE**

1) Only one side of the doors open, making it very hard to clean

2) The flooring is not ferret-friendly - there are no trays to cover the wires, so you'll need to DIY with some hard plastic or vinyl to zip-tie it down and protect their feet

3) Much smaller than the FerretNation/CritterNation 😭

### **I'M USING A CRAPPY SMALL CAGE AND PEOPLE MAKE ME FEEL BAD ABOUT IT**

With these cages, people can get so heated and concerned because there have been a lot of stories of ferrets escaping the cage and getting hurt while unsupervised, or TRYING to escape the cage and getting stuck in the bars and being injured/killed 😭

Since we're online, it's hard to tell how everyone's ferrets act or if they're big enough to squeeze through, so it's like a big flashing warning sign so that people with these cages know of what's happened with other ferrets in the past, and can make decisions based on that knowledge (Like the CAUTION: HOT labels). Not meant to make anyone feel bad at all, just to enlighten and inform ferret owners who might not know! From there people can either ferret-proof as needed, save up for a more sturdy ferret-safe cage, or leave it as is based on how their fuzzies handle their time in the cage 😊

### **TO STOP FERRETS FROM CLIMBING CAGE**

Cut thick cardboard, vinyl, etc to fit each side/panel of cage, just from the bottom bar to first horizontal bar on cage.

Clip to bottom bar with large binder clips, and fix tighter if needed with tiny binder clips to the bars of cage, at horizontal bar.

These can be taken off when they're in cage, put on easily when they're out of cage, playtime.

### **OUTSIDE ENCLOSURES**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BmYxEbMhtdr/>

## **BEHAVIOR & BITING**

Ferrets baby teeth ("milk teeth") are replaced by the permanent canine teeth at about age 7-9 weeks of age. (Their food should be moistened a little until they are 12-14 weeks). However...Ferret kits can be pretty nippy! This is how they communicate, and many ferrets bite to initiate play. They communicate A LOT with their mouths, so a nibble can mean "play with me!" or "I'm hungry!" or anything else! Ferret skin is a lot rougher than human skin, so if the biting is HARD, your fuzzibutt may not realize that you are more delicate than ferrets are! I got my boys when they were 4 months old and they were nip-monsters, but once they hit 6-7 months old, only one was nipping when he's really excited. Or if I'm wearing lip balm...

Give her some time to grow out of it, while using the yelping/squealing method in the link below. If she gets to 5-6 months old and is still really bitey, I'd get more serious with the training.

What you can do in the meantime is work on building trust with her. Hold her close to you and get them used to the affection and being handled. Usually this means the best time to snuggle them is when they're sleepy. I gave my biter nose-kisses when he was super tired, and now he barely bites

If she is LATCHED ON, you can gently run her under a little stream of water in the sink - this will distract/confuse her and make her let go. Another thing you can do is dip your finger in some white distilled vinegar and give her a whiff while she's latched on. It'll shock her little nose and make her let go.

One thing I've seen (but haven't tested) suggested a lot, is putting a little bit of salmon oil on your hand/arm. They'll lick it off, and learn that your skin is for LICKING and kisses, not biting!!

Also - time outs RARELY work. Their attention spans are too short, and they won't know WHY they are being put in time out unless it is IMMEDIATELY after the bad behavior. All it will do is teach them that you are a grumpy mom (just FYI!) With that said, SOME people have had success with time-outs - creating a "sin bin" (small space with no toys, NOT their cage or a carrier). But this requires you catch them in the act and put them in the "sin bin" immediately. Only for a minute or two. (after that they'll have forgotten why they're there). You need to catch them EVERY time, otherwise they'll think that they can get away with it.

Also in case anyone suggests - Please never flick a ferret on the nose - their noses are very sensitive and have many nerve ending. This is the equivalent of punching a toddler in the face. Also, please do not bite them back, push your finger down their throats, or

use hot sauce or cayenne pepper as a deterrent. These are a cruel type of training that only enforces fear by infliction of pain. The only thing they learn is to be afraid of you.

And because someone always DOES suggest - NEVER use bitter apple spray or hand sanitizer!

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oe09R8pDfw0c9pwSGZ5O0-gdZaM3f4k-/view>

<https://holisticferretforum.com/care-and-enrichment/common-behavior-problems/ferret-bite-training/>

## **DIGGING AT FURNITURE**

You can get a spray bottle and fill it with white distilled vinegar and spray it on whatever they're digging/chewing at. Some people say it'll stop them for good but my boogers come back after a few hours. The vinegar smell goes away after 2-3 minutes. My couch is probably half padding, half vinegar.

Another option is sadly just getting rid of the furniture...haha. Or blocking it off! If it is upholstery or something, you can also get a cover they don't like the texture of that you don't mind if they rip to shreds.

IF it is carpet, you can get plastic carpet runner, cover your floor with vinyl, or buy a rug (or cut of carpet fitted to the area) to put over it for them to dig to their hearts content 😊

Some people suggest spreading spices such as cayenne pepper or Tabasco, but I would NOT recommend that. It can burn their noses/eyes, and if ingested (via scratching and licking their paws) this can cause severe urinary pain.

Bitter Apple Spray contains Isopropanol, an alcohol that can be lethal to ferrets even if it is only inhaled 😞 It also causes severe nausea - ferrets often lose all appetite for a few hours, up to a day, which can be very dangerous since kibble-fed ferrets need to eat every 4 hrs. Please do not suggest this method

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK208299/>

## **CHEWING**

Sadly a lot of toys are blockage hazards.. ferrets jaw strength is INSANE so they can chew pieces off most toys. The safest thing you can do is get them raw, unseasoned chicken leg or wing 😊 Though in my experience, not too many will take to it, but it doesn't hurt to try! Under STRICT supervision, heavy duty braided rope dog toys are ok (the smallest size). Remove AS SOON AS ANY WEAR IS VISIBLE.

PureBites and Hare of the Cat have a Jerky treat that are safe - make sure the ingredients are MEAT with no salts, seasonings, etc. You can also make your own with unseasoned raw meat and a food dehydrator if you have one. Or you can dehydrate with your oven: <https://food-hacks.wonderhowto.com/how-to/dehydrate-food-without-dehydrator-0161531/>

Otherwise... ferrets aren't chewers by nature (it's not needed/instinctual), they just have a weird obsession. Even if they did have a safe chew-toy, they get obsessed with the specific item they like chewing. It's best to take away whatever it is they're chewing on and replace with something safe. For big things you can't do it with (ex: a couch) either block it off or spray the specific area with some distilled vinegar.

## **SCRUFFING**

The main reason people avoid scruffing to curb behavior is because scruffing is needed during teeth brushing and giving meds. Mothers may use this for kits, but their mother isn't around correcting their behavior their whole life. It's just a few weeks/months.

If you scruff to curb behavior, you are teaching them that scruffing means they are in trouble. When you have a sick ferret and you scruff them for meds, they think they are in trouble, and stress out even more :(

This also applies when a ferret's nail is caught on something, flailing around trying to get free. Scruffing should mean safety. There are plenty other ways to teach ferrets "no" 😊

Holistic Ferret's link on ALL the behavior issues and what you can do:

<https://holisticferretforum.com/care-and-enrichment/common-behavior-problems/>

## **COLLARS**

Please be careful with collars! Even break-away and very loose collars have caused broken bones, neurological issues, or death via choking, hanging, strangulation in many ferrets, even when worn only under supervision 😞 Ferrets are too light for the break-aways to always break when needed. Most collars do not break and if stuck on something, a ferret will alligator roll until they pass out from strangulation.

Furthermore, collars with bells can cause irritability and irreparable hearing damage. Not worth it just to know where your ferret is! If you can't supervise or make sure their area is ferret-proof, I'd block off an area with a play-pen so you can be sure they'll be safe

Collars with bells: <https://animals.onehowto.com/article/why-you-should-not-put-a-bell-on-your-cat-562.html>



## WHEN TO BREAK IT UP

The general rule is “no pee, no poo, no blood, no foul” - they can wrestle HARD, and you may hear some meeps, dooks, squeaks, and hisses.

However, I think there are some exceptions. When a ferret SHRIEKS, I would separate them (unless it's a deaf ferret... deaf ferrets have weird vocalizations to begin with. Keep a close eye on those play times to make sure the shriek is just the deaf ferret being a dork, and not something serious).

Also, when you notice one running away from another ferret - not even trying to play back or engaging at all, just trying to escape to somewhere away from their fuzzy friend. Especially if they're older, they CAN be overwhelmed and stressed out by a happy little kit jumping all over them wanting to play.

Other times I'd separate is if one ferret is scruffing the other (biting the neck) and not letting go for longer than 5-10 seconds. That's just mean..break it up, kiddos! (You don't need to separate them for this, just kind of “resetting” the playing field).

Otherwise, especially if they are new to each other, they will need to have that dominance fight to figure out the pecking order! Like I said, they wrestle HARD and sometimes they get a little carried away. Let them have their fun unless you notice any of the above behavior.

<https://www.ferret-world.com/ferrets-as-pets/ferret-behaviour/>

## COUCHES

Digging from the bottom: Get a bed sheet and staple it to the bottom, or measure a piece of wood to fit the underside and nail it to the bottom.

Digging from the top: Hot glue, staple, or if you have a friend/family member who's a sewing master.. canvas or other heavy-duty fabric to reinforce it. OR get a couch cover. But they can usually figure out how to crawl under these

## DOGS AND FERRETS

There have been SO MANY horror stories of dogs/cats and ferrets.. even gentle play on accident can cause injury or death, ferrets are just so small and delicate 😞 A lot of people will comment and say their dogs and ferrets get along fine, but it's just a matter of time.. One of the members was telling a story about a lady who had a german shepard & ferrets for 10 years. Play got a little rough one day and the dog accidentally injured the ferret so badly, it had to be put to sleep 😞

It might seem difficult to keep them separated but I personally would not be willing to risk the life of my ferret for the sake of letting your fuzzy have a giant playmate.

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/ferret-care-education/ferrets-and-other-animals-and-why-they-shouldnt-co-exist/311517809556410/>

# --GROOMING--

## NAILS

Ferrets do not get declawed - they need those things for balance, walking, etc, and removing may cause foot problems. This means you will need to **clip their nails**! Cat nail clippers are preferred, as they are designed to cut round nails, whereas human nail clippers “crush”. This can cause nails to split or thicken as they age.

The easiest way to cut nails is to put a few drops of salmon oil on their belly. Once they're distracted and licking away, clip away. (If you're new to this, it can be nerve wracking. Their nails are SO SMALL!! Keep styptic powder nearby if you are nervous you'll cut too short). Otherwise if they are deep sleepers and don't startle easily, you can stealth-clip while they're sleeping.

Learn how to properly scruff your ferret - scruffing the wrong way can choke them, put pressure on their wind-pipe, and possibly cut off their air flow. It's best to support their lower half so they aren't just free-dangling. See video below. Some ferrets don't like oil and are light sleepers, which makes nail-clipping, teeth-brushing, and ear-cleaning a two-person job.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luBDD79WR5U>

## TEEFS

Tartar and plaque build up in their teeth (just like humans!) so brushing is required. I recommend daily since that's how often we brush, but once a week is OK. **Kibble-fed ferrets MUST have their teeth brushed**, since the kibble is dry and absorbent and has carbs, and will sit on the teeth - especially the gum-line. “Soft diets and gravies/soups cause a rapid buildup of tartar, resulting in gum disease and tooth loss if the ferret does not have its teeth brushed.” (Raw-fed ferrets don't need to worry about teeth-brushing, since eating bones has the same effect of brushing teeth. Always raw bones - never cooked or dehydrated!)

You can use a DIY holistic paste made from a mixture of human-grade bone meal powder (or cuttlefish powder) and warm water to make a gritty paste, then use a q-tip to brush, or wrap some gauze around your finger tip (to use as a non-abrasive brush) and

GENTLY massage along the gum-line and where there is any visible tartar build-up. Just like you'd brush your own teeth :D If they bite down on the q-tip, bonus points! Scruffing is the easiest way to keep them still, sometimes I steady them by gently holding their butt between my knees.

As far as "commercial" dental products for pets:

- "MaxiGuard OraZn" Pet Oral Care or MaxiGuard Oral Cleansing Gel. They are an unflavored gel, and very little is needed at a time. PLEASE NOTE THOUGH, both of these contain parabens, which is an endocrine disruptor in large amounts (can affect illnesses like insulinoma, cancer, etc).

- CET toothpaste for cats (the fish or chicken flavor is usually most accepted). It does contain a small amount of sugar, but not a lot is needed for brushing.

- This stuff: [https://www.etsy.com/listing/804598230/ferret-toothpaste-pet-toothpaste-powder?ref=shop\\_home\\_active\\_2](https://www.etsy.com/listing/804598230/ferret-toothpaste-pet-toothpaste-powder?ref=shop_home_active_2)

<https://www.ferret-world.com/news/interview-with-bob-church-the-king-of-raw-feeding-respected-researcher-and-ferret-expert-anthropologist-biologist-photojournalist-and-enigma/>

<https://www.nutriment.co.uk/raw-feeding/raw-benefits-depth/>

## **STINKY FERRETS & BATHS**

Ferrets **shouldn't be bathed regularly**. They are a bit smelly by nature, so hopefully you grow to love their musky smell. If bathed with ANY soap, it strips the oils from their fur and skin. This dries out their skin, and their body works over-drive to replace the oils that are suddenly gone...making them even stinkier! I would suggest a bath (with oatmeal) no more than once a year. Otherwise, any warm-water bath/spot-cleaning is fine!

If your ferret gets into a potted plant (keep these out of reach, some soils & plants can be toxic!), rolls around in poo, or anything else, and NEEDS a bath, an oatmeal bath is recommended. Most of the time I just do a warm water bath and it's good enough (even when washing poopy butts!) Even a wet wash-cloth wipe down is usually effective in most situations.

A lot of ferrets **don't like being submerged in water** - with my boys I plug up the bathroom sink or I use a small cat litter box to use as a "ferret tub" while supporting their tummy underneath.

Oatmeal contains compounds that have anti-inflammatory and moisture-retaining properties - so it can help freshen up your fuzzy and get them smelling good without drying out their skin or stripping oils 😊

If you NEED to use a shampoo, Biogroom Lanolin shampoo works well and protects their skin (they used to have a ferret recipe but it didn't sell enough. Someone reached out and confirmed it's the same recipe though)

<https://biogroom.com/dog-products/shampoos/protein-lanolin/>

Oatmeal bath: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y57zX92-nH\\_bQV8BiZgSO9KvctOAZZuE/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y57zX92-nH_bQV8BiZgSO9KvctOAZZuE/view)

How to bathe video!: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDNMgcTTWEA>

Link regarding grooming & ear cleaning: <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=4951543>

Ways to keep your ferrety scent down:

- Scoopin poo daily - Don't forget to clean the actual box every once in a while too

- Washing their blankets every week, or more if they're messy

- Air purifier - GermGuardian is the best! (it's kinda expensive but if you can afford it, yay! Make sure it's ozone free/not ionic. Ozone is dangerous for small animals. \*Note: humidifiers/diffusers are different than air purifiers, and use water. They just make the air more moist. If you use humidifiers/diffusers, don't use any essential oils! They are toxic to ferrets & cats)

- Leaving a window open a tiny bit

- No baths - that generates even more oils and smell (for emergencies, just do warm water. For REAL BAD emergencies, you can use an oatmeal bath - [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y57zX92-nH\\_bQV8BiZgSO9KvctOAZZuE/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y57zX92-nH_bQV8BiZgSO9KvctOAZZuE/view) )

- Good diet - less fillers & veggies means less stink (freeze-dried raw or full raw diet instead of kibble can greatly help with this!)

- Rice dig box - only non-instant rice! (If it's instant, it can puff up in their stomach if ingested and cause a blockage. The non-instant rice absorbs the skin oils without totally stripping it like soap does) Note: This should be a dig-box outside of the cage, never in the cage.

- Vacuum/mop on a more regular basis!

- If you are currently transitioning their food to something better quality, they can be going through a "detox" for a few weeks where their poos will be smellier and they may be more oily

- ...it's unlikely, but are they in-tact? If they are in-tact and in season, this can increase their odor for sure.

Note they'll always have a mild musky odor, just like dogs have that doggy odor. Not much you can do about that :( Hopefully you learn to love it

(What NOT to use: scented candles, essential oil diffusers, air fresheners, incense, fragrances, spritzers, sprays, dryer sheets. These are toxic to ferrets and should be AVOIDED)

Please note that **ESSENTIAL OILS and a lot of other scents are TOXIC to ferrets**. Here's some ferret-friendly scents for you to use:

<https://holisticferretforum.com/safe-scents/>

<https://acultivatednest.com/diy-fall-scented-wax-melts>

<https://www.etsy.com/listing/537784069/ecofriendly-beeswax-wax-melts-set-of-6>

Paraffin wax, used in Scentsty wax warmers & other candles: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8211543.stm>

## EAR SUCKING

Ear sucking/suckling is often a comfort action performed by very young/anxious ferrets and many times babies taken too young will exhibit this behavior. Its best to stop it as it can damage the ears and cause pain/bleeding.

You can rub an Antiseptic called Sudocrem on the ears of the "victim" of ear-sucking (it's one of the few first-aid creams that's ferret-safe) to deter your chewer and help the ears heal. I'd try that out when you can keep an eye on them for a while, just to make sure the chewer isn't a weirdo and tries to lick it off.

## BONDING

They bond a bit different than cats and dogs if that's what you're used to <3 You can tell because they'll follow you EVERYWHERE, they'll groom you, and eventually you'll just kind of... know where they are and what they want. It does take some of them a while to bond with you, but most eventually will (some bond more with other ferrets than people).

I've found my best bonding moments are when they're sleepy. Massaging their little heads and scalp, and if they let you I go ahead and massage the rest of them (not just petting, but actually poking around and gently rubbing along the muscles). Also giving little nose-kisses when they're sleepy will help them to not bite as much.

During play time - Sit down with your fuzzy, let them climb all over your lap, try to stash your socks. Tickle their little sides and wardance with them! (Make sure another second crazy fuzzy isn't under your feet!). This is wonderful bonding, and ferrets LOVE to play with their big hooman!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2maPwp9-M3Q>

I saw this video recently which is a GREAT trust exercise

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BxiqUazH4kV/>

## COCONUT OIL?

Coconut oil should be avoided. It will clog their pores, which is not good because they have such active skin oil production. It is plant-based, and when they groom it off, it is ingested, which is not good in the long-run. If you have multiple ferrets, this can cause over-grooming which can result in hair loss and poor quality skin and coat.

Some people have heard it works for fleas - it suffocates the fleas on the ferret, but does nothing to the eggs, or the fleas in your home. This is a risky treatment at best and should be avoided.

# --THE VET & HEALTH--

Ferrets are prone to many diseases, and it's good to have a savings in case of medical emergency. The top 3 are [Adrenal Disease](#), [Insulinoma](#), and [Lymphoma](#). Please read about these, since nearly every ferret owner will deal with these at some point.

Adrenal: <https://holisticferretforum.com/health/adrenal-disease/>

Insulinoma: <https://holisticferretforum.com/health/insulinoma-2/>

Lymphoma: [https://www.petmd.com/ferret/conditions/cancer/c\\_ft\\_lymphoma](https://www.petmd.com/ferret/conditions/cancer/c_ft_lymphoma)

Since ferrets are not “common” pets, it is a good idea to scope out your vet BEFORE they get sick. When you first adopt, bring them in for a wellness check. A lot of vets say they treat ferrets, but only know some basics about them. Sometimes, not even that... you might need to jump from vet to vet to find one that's truly knowledgeable! Here's a list of vets that have proven to know their stuff about ferrets. Links below to find a ferret-vet in your area. Note that both are a bit out-of-date, so call to confirm they still see ferrets!

- <https://www.all-about-ferrets.com/ferret-vets.html>
- <https://goo.gl/maps/7UP4ZLthgtGzgAqr8>
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ka\\_ERZf0mFfKsPumxriKP0UcB1X-jBuFFpSKL5D7Mfw/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ka_ERZf0mFfKsPumxriKP0UcB1X-jBuFFpSKL5D7Mfw/edit)
- Natural vets, may offer chiro, etc - <http://www.civtedu.org/usa/>
- And! Good things to ask your vet (you can download or print a copy, and fill out as needed):  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/19\\_iuhi3FsODY1L7tPLOaaSrgZ-hwOLbuQZCZ53qc2k/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19_iuhi3FsODY1L7tPLOaaSrgZ-hwOLbuQZCZ53qc2k/edit?usp=sharing)

Ferrets & the flu: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/ferrets/index.html>

## VACCINES

Ferrets require a yearly vet check-up, and your state/city law may require yearly rabies and distemper vaccinations, as well as possible heartworm preventives depending on where you are. Vaccines must be given 2 weeks apart so they don't overwhelm the fuzzy, and if there is a reaction you'll know which vaccine it was in response to. Please note that ferrets can have reactions to vaccines - it is recommended you stay afterwards for 30-45 mins to make sure that if your ferret has a reaction, you are still at the vet and they can handle it quickly. Do not let this discourage you from getting vaccines for your fuzzies in the future, as RABIES AND DISTEMPER ARE DEADLY AND INCURABLE ONCE CONTRACTED.



Reactions are believed to be more likely in a pet that has been overvaccinated. A titer test is used to measure the amount of antibodies left in a pet's system from their last vaccine. This can help you determine if another vaccine is needed or not. However, there is no set titer level for rabies. Also, many jurisdictions won't accept a positive titer in place of a vaccination record, so keep this in mind if you plan on traveling or having your ferret in public. (Note: Titer tests must be sent out from the vet's office, so you will need to go home and wait for results. They are not an immediate result!)

There have been studies in cats & dogs that the rabies vaccine is active for at least 3 years (or longer) in their systems, and it is believed to be the same for ferrets, though not enough proof is out there to change the "yearly requirement" law. Distemper vaccines have been tested to be at passable titer levels for up to 7 years in a ferret.

If you adopt a ferret and have no health history and are unable to get this info from the previous owner, it's best to vaccinate for both rabies & distemper just to be safe.

<https://vetspace.2ndchance.info/ferret-health-articles/which-vaccinations-should-my-ferret-receive/>

## **FEELING UNWELL**

Some of the common symptoms you'll first notice are:

- Lethargic (flopping around a lot, not playing very much, lack of energy)
- Grinding teeth (slowly chewing at the same spot, like a piece of kibble is stuck in the teeth. This means they are in pain)
- Pale gums
- Grumpy
- Runny nose
- Abnormal poos (too runny, off-color, extra stinky)
- "Missing" the litter box more - going potty in the middle of the floor. (This is hard to tell since ferrets are so hit/miss with their litter box as-is, but when they start going in REALLY strange places that are not normal for them, don't be so quick to write it off)

How to [handle a blockage](https://holisticferretforum.com/health/blockages/blockage-protocol/) - <https://holisticferretforum.com/health/blockages/blockage-protocol/>

How to give meds - <https://holisticferret.com/health/how-to-give-ferrets-difficult-medications>

Link for other medical issues: <https://holisticferretforum.com/health/medical-files/>

Signs of pain: <https://holisticferretforum.com/health/emergencies/signs-symptoms-of-pain-in-ferrets/>

## **GIVING MEDS**

Meds help link below! With this technique I wouldn't give ALL the syringe of the oil, since typically it should only be 1/8th tsp. But I think there's a bit of wiggle room in these situations

With my difficult boy I found the best way to get him to hold still without him peeing/spazzing/flipping out is sitting on the toilet seat, perching your feet up on the tub, scruffing him, and then holding him back on my legs so he's laying down at an angle  
I could never get burrito-method to work 😊

<https://holisticferretforum.com/health/how-to-give-ferrets-difficult-medications>

## **LIGHT & ADRENAL**

Ferrets need approx. 14 hours of total darkness (or as close as possible) a day. The reason they need complete darkness while they sleep isn't because it helps them sleep better. It's because when they are asleep and in complete darkness, their body kicks into gear to produce melatonin.

Melatonin helps regulate the reproductive organs. When ferrets get less melatonin (less darkness), their body creates more hormones and kicks into "breeding" season (spring & summer - when there is more light and less darkness to produce melatonin)

BUT most ferrets are neutered/spayed. It can't breed. So all these hormones being created are being made by the adrenal gland instead of the ovaries/testies, and putting extra stress on the adrenal gland. Eventually the overworked adrenal gland can develop growths, leading to adrenal disease. When they are neutered too early, their adrenal glands aren't fully developed either, which means extra stress.

So basically, the more darkness they get, the less stress their adrenal gland will get, and you can help slow down the onset of adrenal disease.

When you notice your fuzzies zonked out in the middle of the floor in the sunlight or where the lights are on, you can throw a blanket over them (or move them to their dark snuggle spot) and that's plenty good. This is why a lot of people get cage covers as well, especially for the summer hours when the sun is up extra early and extra late in the day 😊

<https://ferretassn.org/about-ferrets/health/illness-disease/common-major-illness/adrenal-disease-treatment-options>

<https://us.virbac.com/home/health-topics/adrenal-disease.html>

<https://holisticferretforum.com/health/adrenal-disease/> - a break-down explanation of how adrenal works

<https://weaselwords.com/ferret-articles/ferret-light-sensitivity-study/> &

<https://weaselwords.com/ferret-articles/ferret-photo-sensitivity-study-update-> a study in light exposure

# DES AS ADRENAL PREVENTATIVE

When ferrets (well, all animals, but ferrets see this disease the most) get neutered/spayed, the signal to produce hormones gets rerouted to the adrenal gland instead of the ovaries/testies, since there are none anymore.

THEN, the more light they get will kick them into "breeding" mode and try to produce more hormones. So their adrenal gland gets EXTRA stress. Melatonin is created during the dark (AKA winter, mostly when they are sleeping) and helps regulate this "time to breed" mode.

So basically melatonin helps the body regulate the hormones, and the DES implant releases hormones help take the stress off the adrenal gland. Otherwise the adrenal gland works in over-drive and often grows tumors from being overworked for years and years 😞

It releases hormones and takes pressure/stress off of the adrenal gland, so I believe that it can definitely slow down the onset of adrenal issues, since adrenal disease occurs after the gland has been agitated so badly so long and forms a mass on it. But it is not officially proven that it can PREVENT :( So some people do, some people only implant once the symptoms are there. The only negative impact of having the implant as a preventative is that it can cover up the symptoms and it can be harder to diagnose if your ferret does have adrenal. But my thoughts are... if your ferret has adrenal disease anyways, why does it matter that the symptoms would be covered up? You'd be getting the implant anyways, so with this your fuzzy would at least have a head start.

<https://holisticferretforum.com/health/adrenal-disease/> - a break-down explanation of how adrenal works

<https://ferretassn.org/about-ferrets/health/illness-disease/common-major-illness/adrenal-disease-treatment-options>

<https://us.virbac.com/home/health-topics/adrenal-disease.html>

<https://weaselwords.com/ferret-articles/ferret-light-sensitivity-study/> - a study in light exposure

# MELATONIN VS DES

Melatonin just kind of kicks the body into winter/snooze mode 😊 So with too much light, their body might be trying to produce extra hormones to breed, since they think it's spring & breeding season.

Melatonin says "NOPE, NOT BREEDING SEASON!!" and the body will reduce the amount of hormones being created.

The DES implant releases hormones, so the body doesn't send the request for extra hormones to the adrenal gland, cause they've already got a good amount 😊

..if that makes any sense

# INTACT FERRETS

HEAT LOOKS LIKE...

Females: A big puffy vulva, more exciteable/nervous

Males: Aggression, humping, excessive oil production, scent-marking (jelly), stinky

FEMALE HEAT/ESTRUS

If unable to mate, estrus can become toxic and cause thinning of the fur, similar to adrenal, infections, bone marrow suppression, anemia, bruising, blood loss, death. **They can pass at 4-6 months in. Toxicity becomes a concern at 1 month from max size.**

To prevent this, you can:

- Put her with a whole male (this will probably create babies)
- Put her with a vasectomised male (this will not create babies)
- Jill Jab - A hormone injection (ex: cystorelin), the jill jab is given during heat and often prevents heat for the full period, although some jills may need more than one injection per breeding season. **It is best to get the jab as soon as the vulva is fully ballooned (a few weeks from first heat symptoms, up to 14 days after max size)**

WHEN TO NEUTER

Sexual maturity at 6-9 months of age

Females: Recommended after the first heat - jill jab for the first year. Sometimes they can go into heat twice in one year, but you want them to be able to fully mature before neutering. Hormones from the implant can halt maturity. So it's best to wait to implant/neuter no earlier than 10 months. It is safe to implant/neuter the winter after her first season. It can be done as they are starting to come into season, also, if it is past the 10 month mark. If you have jabbed and they are not responding in 10 days, jab again. If there is still nothing, neutering/implant is required

Males: Neuter after first rut, close to 1 yr old - make sure both testies are visible (means that he is mature). They can still be in season when you implant/neuter. Rut goes away after approx 4 weeks from being neutered.

HOW TO NEUTER

Surgery - Similar to cats/dogs so honestly any vet should be able to do it. Girls may be more challenging though.

Chemical (DES implant) - Takes around 8 weeks to kick in, so it should be done before a season. Will need to keep separate from opposite-sex ferrets until then

# **DEAF FERRETS**

Deaf ferrets don't need any "special care" and can get along with hearing ferrets just fine! If they are not getting along, that would be a personality thing, not because they're deaf :) Your deaf ferret may make eye contact with you much more than hearing ferrets. It is VERY helpful to teach them a few hand commands (doesn't have to be official sign language!). My deaf boy knew "come here", "wait there", "stop it", and "go potty".

How to test if your ferret is deaf:

- 1) Find your fuzzies in a deep sleep and squeak a toy near them. Whichever one doesn't wake up might be deaf
- 2) Start a vacuum when the ferrets are sleeping (outside their cage - in their ferret-room or free roam). Whoever does not come out to investigate might also be deaf.
- 3) Find your fuzzies sleeping and talk to them a lot when you approach. Keep making noise - you'll notice some may rouse or expect you. When you touch your suspected-deaf one, this one may jolt awake, having no idea you were there before. This one is probably deaf

Things to look out for:

-Accidentally sneaking up on your deaf ferret and startling them. I solve this by gently touching my boy, or blowing on him gently (like you would with hot soup)

-Have you heard a profoundly deaf person? They grunt, groan, hum. Deaf ferrets are the same! Their vocalizations are WEIRD. Some are totally silent, some will SHRIEK during just normal play time. My deaf boy sounded like a dying goose!

-A lot of deaf ferrets have a strange way of walking, and will roll over upside-down a lot more than normal ferrets. Deaf ferrets with Waardenburg syndrome have a slightly misshapen skull. I haven't found any research on this, but my theory is, this & the deafness messes with their inner ear balance.

-Since they didn't get any audio cues from their littermates growing up, they can be a little awkward socially... this can mean extra biting, or funny vocalizations. Just remember that they're not trying to be difficult, they're just a little different 😊

# **BLIND FERRETS**

<http://www.second-opinion-doc.com/how-to-tell-if-a-ferret-is-going-blind.html>

# **MY FERRET IS SKINNY**

Ferrets range from all sizes - some can just be petite! Trying to get them to put on extra weight can be harmful 😞 unless you can SEE his ribs and a vet has confirmed he is underweight, or he has drastically been losing weight, I wouldn't worry! 😊 Also females are much smaller than males naturally, so a tiny girl is totally normal.

They also lose weight for the spring/summer months - with some ferrets this can be an extreme change (up to 30% body weight). If the winter coat has shed out (or is in process) the weight loss is most likely due to the seasonal changing.

If you feel bones (or see them), or your ferret looks sunken in at the hips, make an appointment with your ferret's vet to rule out underlying illness/ disease before trying to put weight on them.

# **MY FERRET IS FAT/EATING TOO MUCH**

Ferrets regulate how much they eat and they don't over-eat - so it is very hard for a ferret to get overweight. Ferrets range from all sizes, some can just be extra chunky! If kibble-fed, they should ALWAYS have food accessible, and you should never take food away to make them lose weight, no matter what diet they're on.

If your ferret is a kit (under 1 yr old) they will be eating A LOT because they are growing! This is normal - let them pig out and grow up healthy <3

They also gain weight for the fall/winter months - with some ferrets this can be an extreme change. If the winter coat is coming in (or is in process) the weight gain is most likely due to the seasonal changing.

If this change is sudden, or notice your fuzzy isn't playing as much or having trouble walking, breathing, etc, make an appointment with your ferret's vet to rule out underlying illness/ disease.

# **SUMMER & HEAT**

Here are some great tips and links:

-Portable AC unit (usually they're on wheels and pretty heavy, but worth it!)

-Cold pads - <https://www.chewy.com/green-pet-shop-self-cooling-pet-pad-x/dp/133197>

-Fans (pointed indirectly at the cage, or far away enough they won't get blown to heck. Fans should be coupled with these other ideas, since fans alone only move air around, not actually cool the temp)

-Cold freezer packs (wrapped in a shirt or kitchen towel)

-Freeze as much water as possible (empty milk gallon/juice bottle/ etc), wrap in a towel and leave in their cage, or connect to a fan to blow cold air.

-Place cage in a cool dark area

- Pool or tubs available for a dip (small litter pans, baking pan, etc so they can stand)
- You can make ice cubes and put it in your fuzzies water

\*\*Fresh water needs to be available at all times.

Of course you can use air conditioning if you have it, but be careful about the direction in which the A/C is blowing. The best position is near the cage, placed diagonally so it doesn't blow directly into the cage.

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/ferret-care-education/ferrets-and-heat/199152607459598/>

## **BUMPS**

Only your vet will be able to determine what a growth/lump/scab/etc might be. Mast Cell Tumors are common in ferrets (a bump on the skin that comes and goes, in the same spot. Usually benign and surgery is not needed, but warn the vet if there are new ones popping up or if one is growing - they can become cancerous. Some do need to be removed depending on where they are), but please don't dismiss any bump as a MCT and make sure it is checked by your vet.

Some good readings on lumps and bumps so you can ask your vet any follow-up questions:

<https://www.2ndchance.info/test.php?page=ferretskinlumps>

<https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&catId=102923&id=4951361>

## **MY FERRET IS ITCHY**

Ferrets are pretty itchy by nature - it's common to see them explode out of their sleeping spot to scratch an itch, or to pause mid-play to aggressively scratch something for a few seconds 😊 Sometimes it can take a few tries to get the itch (and totally ruin a good video you were taking of them :( ) but this is still normal!

I'd guess my boys get around 4-6 super dramatic itches a day that are taken care of within 10-20 seconds of scratching. If it's noticeably more than that, I would get a vet appointment scheduled to rule anything out

Fleas: Please do not add apple cider vinegar to their drinking water (another member did this and it caused explosive diarrhea and vomiting in her ferrets).

## **FERRETS IN THE CAR**

It is super dangerous to have them free in the car like that :( A sudden stop can throw them around, or if they decide to move anywhere they can go under the seat or under the gas/brake pedal 😬 Even if they're calm and snuggly, even if they are sick and lethargic and dying and don't want to move, I would put them in a carrier for their and your safety :( Even if they are on a leash, ferrets can get out of leashes easily, and that doesn't stop a ferret from being thrown around everywhere, especially if you need to stop suddenly or get in an accident. Just like you would never hold an infant on your lap in the car or let it crawl around on the back seat - please make sure your ferret is safely secured while you're driving.

## **SHOULD I NEUTER THIS HOB**

I would wait until they're at LEAST 6 months old, but if you are comfortable waiting longer then until you notice him starting to go into season (becoming aggressive, getting extra fragrant, etc).

Surgically neutering too young (before their reproductive organs are even fully developed) can cause a lot of health issues, stunted growth, and puts stress on the adrenal gland. As soon as they are surgically neutered, the signal to produce hormones goes to their adrenal gland instead of their boy/girl parts (since they aren't there anymore). The extra stress of that over the years creates a HIGH RISK of them developing adrenal disease - tumors on the adrenal gland. Which is why it's so important to wait at least 6 months 😊

The other option is chemical castration. The same treatment for adrenal is used for chemical castration - the DES implant (Deslorelin/Suprelorin). It releases hormones (which for adrenal will help take the stress off the adrenal gland, and for in-tact hobs will keep them from going into season). I've heard this can last for a few years in some hobs, and wears off slowly so you have plenty of heads up to renew it.

HOWEVER - some places (like the US) REQUIRE that your pet is surgically neutered if not for breeding :( So make sure you read up on your local laws as you make your decision

## **COLLOIDAL SILVER**

When thinking about using Colloidal Silver, remember that it's unregulated and of questionable efficacy. It's made up of bits of silver. Silver will build up in your system, imagine how fast it will accumulate in a ferret! We can't stop you from using it on yourself, but think before using it on your fur kids. (If anything, I would opt for the topical ointment, but NEVER anything orally).

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/colloidalsilver>



## **LONGEVITY**

So... a lot of this is up to genetics and their diet :(

Ferrets from mills (most commonly Marshall Farms in the US - MOST ferrets you see at pet stores are from Marshall's) have really poor health history because they are more focused on breeding cute ferrets and getting the babies out FAST than making sure they are healthy. A lot of these ferrets have poor genetics, and more often than not will succumb to illnesses much sooner than ferrets from respectable breeders. These ferrets typically live to around 6-8 yrs old. HOWEVER, there have been plenty of exceptions to this!

Ferrets from respectable breeders have a much higher chance of having a longer life, since the breeder focuses on HEALTHY background and making sure they develop and mature properly before being adopted out. Usually ferrets from breeders live til they're 8-11 years old.

The next factor is quality of food - MOST ferret kibbles are full of junk that can be very bad for their health :( We have info in the files on what we've found to be the best things you can feed your ferret. High quality kibble, freeze-dried raw, or a full raw diet are great choices.

That said... there are exceptions!!!

There have been Marshall's ferrets on AWFUL diets that happen to live until they're 11 years old.

There have been ferrets with spotless health backgrounds, raised on raw diet and eating only the best, that will pass at 4 years old.

The BEST thing you can do is make sure your ferret has a good health history, and is eating the best food you can provide for it! 😊 And then... routine vet visits and making sure it doesn't get into trouble or eat your flip-flop.

## **SHOULD I LET MY FERRETS SAY GOODBYE?**

YES, it definitely helps them to see their friend, sniff them, and understand where they are now.

Keep in mind that not all of them will outwardly react. My boy barely sniffed his friend's body and then wandered off to sniff the door of the vet's room. That was it. But the next few weeks at home he'd sleep in the spots that I'd only ever find his buddy. 😞 He never slept there before until his friend passed.

I've heard stories of other ferrets who don't get to see their friends after they've gone, and they will search the house for weeks/months trying to find their friend. I can imagine it's heartbreaking to see :(

Some ferrets won't show much grief (like I mentioned with my boy, all I noticed was he slept where his friend used to - he was just as energetic as always). Some will become VERY depressed, you might need to encourage them to eat and play. The best way to handle this is to smother them in love. Give them extra kisses, carry them around with you while doing chores, just be close to them even if they don't feel like playing. Give them extra head rubs, take them somewhere new or let them explore a room that's normally off-limits to take their mind off things. And if you want to... IT IS NEVER TOO EARLY TO ADOPT ANOTHER! Don't think that you're \*replacing\* your old ferret - think of it like you're bringing in a new opportunity to heal and love. Where dogs and cats might be shocked and unwelcoming of a newcomer so soon, I've only heard good things when it comes to ferrets and adopting after one passes.

Other stories:

<https://holisticferretforum.com/care-and-enrichment/helping-ferrets-cope-with-grief/>

## **I WANT TO BREED FERRETS**

<http://www.ferret.org/read/ferretBreeding.html>

[https://www.ferret.org/newsletter/2002/AFR\\_12-2\\_ferret\\_breeder.pdf](https://www.ferret.org/newsletter/2002/AFR_12-2_ferret_breeder.pdf)

# **“AM I READY TO OWN A FERRET?”**

Do you have at least 4 hours daily to commit to them?

Are you okay with getting 2 ferrets?

Can you shell out a little more money monthly than a typical cat/dog expense?

Can you keep a savings in case of medical emergency?

Do you have a space they can roam in that is big enough and can be ferret-proofed?

Are your kids old enough to take care of the ferret too?

Do you live anywhere other than California/Hawaii?

They are usually \$190.00 at Petco but there are ferret shelters around too. Ferrets are extremely expensive pets. They require raw food or a high quality food (not Marshalls or any ferret brand), a mix of Wysong Digestive Support (found online) & Orjen cat is the best but it is \$60 for a 12 lb bag. They are also prone to a lot of different cancers and the medications range from \$50 - \$100 a month. They require at least 4 - 6 hours of playtime outside of their cage. The best and safest cage for them is the ferret nation. Do not use store bought bedding in their cage, it is bad for their respiratory system, you would need to use soft fleece blankets. Do not use water bottles in their cage, a bowl that locks to their cage is best. Ferrets do require annual visits to the vet for annual vaccines. They are required by law to get their rabies and distemper vaccine. Ferrets can have reactions to the vaccines and would have to be hospitalized.

Ferrets are honestly not a good pet for kids due to the fact they are extremely expensive and require a lot of attention and maintenance.

## **MISC FACTS**

- Domestic ferrets have a life-span of 6-10 years. At 1 year old, they're considered an adult.
- Males are noticeably bigger than females. This is normal!
- Ferrets cannot be declawed. You must be okay with clipping nails!
- In-tact males are hobs, in-tact females are jills. Desexed males are gibs, desexed females are sprites.
- Ferrets see black, white, and red. Their line of sight isn't great, and blindness/deafness is possible (you can help determine this by their coloring)
- Ferrets steal things. No matter how well you hide them. Then sometimes they will stash their findings.
- Ferrets have great senses of smell and hearing. Unless you have a deaf ferret!
- Ferrets sleep around 18 hours a day, but healthy, free-roaming ferrets sleep only 15 hours a day and get lots of exercise!
- Ferrets can be descented (and usually are before reaching the age to be sold) but still have an odor. IMO dogs have a stronger smell than ferrets! Bedding should be washed once a week.
- Some ferrets might get too excited with babies. If you have kids, make sure they have enough cognitive abilities to be gentle with them, and know how to deal with a possible bitey ferret.
- Some places require a license to own a ferret. Check your local/state Fish & Game dept website, and your county animal regulations.
- Ferret noises: <http://myferretpet.com/2017/05/ferret-making-noises-what-do-ferret-sounds-mean.html>

## **GIRLS VS BOYS**

--GIRLS--

PROS

Will not drag pee all over

Much more active for longer periods of time (could be a CON...?)

Usually described as “hyper” (also could be a CON depending what you’re looking for)

I actually don’t know, someone help me out here, I’ve never had a girl!

CONS

Much smaller - can get into tinier spaces (under the oven, behind the fridge, etc)

Reproductive organs are inside which make a lot of surgeries more invasive

Pee goes right on top of poo - can discolor things if you’re looking out for any abnormalities

A lot more fidgety and can be buttholes when introducing to new ferrets (so I’ve heard)

From Ferrets for Dummies: “spaying is a medical necessity. Unlike some mammals that go into heat for short periods of time, the female ferret stays in heat until she’s bred. The unending heat cycle more often than not leads to a life-threatening condition called aplastic anemia. Spaying your ferret can save her life.” (Note: People with in-tact girls do the Jill Jab procedure)

Swollen vulva (ladyparts) is a common symptom of adrenal problems or improper spaying - can cause potty leakage among other things, and needs a vet ASAP. (This can also be a PRO since it is a good indicator of adrenal issues)

--BOYS--

PROS

Bigger - can’t get into smaller spaces for ferret-proofing

More “chill” typically

Pee is an inch apart from poo so it’s not just one heap of a mess

Reproductive organs are outside so you can see if weenie is irritated - also less invasive surgeries

CONS

Wet peepee weenies can drag on the floor

From Ferrets for Dummies: “neutering is more of a behavioral necessity. It lessens aggression toward other male ferrets and urine marking on the ground (which also dramatically decreases the odor of boys).”

## **How Many Ferrets?**

Ferrets are like people - some are introverts and are totally fine alone, and prefer their human. Most are extroverts, and thrive with a buddy. (Note: Usually the introverts were raised alone, or bonded closely with one other who passed, then were by themselves and now have trouble bonding with others. They may need more time to acclimate to a new friend, but in the long run they will benefit

from a buddy). Either way, they are very social little fuzzbutts, and if you have a single, you'll need to spend a LOT of time with them. You're their main source of entertainment, so keep that in mind! (Unless you have a cat - that counts as a buddy!)

If you are out of the house over 35 hours a week, or have a busy schedule otherwise, I'd suggest getting at least two, or even three!

Generally though, I highly advise having at least two ferrets, even if you will be home all the time for them. The daily cost for two ferrets isn't much more than the cost for one - and your fuzzy will have a friend to play with and cuddle with whenever you're not there. If you're adopting from a shelter, try adopting a group that are cagemates. That way they are already familiar with each other, and will be adapting to their new home together.

## **SINGLES**

Since you have a single ferret, that fuzzbutt will need TONS of interaction time with you! Think of your ferret like a really, really tiny dog <3 You will be your fuzzy's other half. Minimum of 4 hrs out of the cage is recommended (though people prefer to have them out as much as they humanly can), and lots of that time being spent with you.

## **INTRODUCING FERRETS**

Opposite genders seem to have the easiest time being introduced to each other, as well as males to males. Females to females, however, have the most difficulty. Again, it's not always a guarantee, but do keep this in mind.

<http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/quarantine.pdf>

Quarantine the new ones first for a minimum of 2 weeks!

- Some illnesses are undetected by vets, but still contagious. Stress of a new home can bring out illness and make it more spreadable, so a 2 week period can help your new ferrets overcome this and not risk getting your other ferrets sick
- Establishing the new ferrets into their home without the stress of other nosy ferrets who might fight with them and stress them out even more
- Giving the new ferrets some time to bond with you!
- This quarantine time is great to switch the new ferrets to the food you feed your current crew 😊

Once two weeks is up, you can start switching their bedding with each other's to familiarize the new ferrets with the old ferrets smell, and vice versa. An introduction in a large area that everyone is familiar with, where any of them can run and hide if needed is preferable. 😊 Some people do an oatmeal bath for all of them as an introduction, as an awful experience they can all share... Also watch for some dominance fights! These are totally normal but can look a bit rough. No pee, no poo, no blood, no foul. Try not to break it up unless you see any of these, or if one of them is SCREAMING.

<https://sites.google.com/site/ferretcareeducation/play-time/intros-quarantine>

<https://www.pets4homes.co.uk/pet-advice/ferrets-and-their-need-for-companionship.html>

It's common for ferrets meeting for the first time to "dominance fight"! The common rule is "no pee, no poo, no blood, no foul." They'll play HARD to determine who's the "alpha" and obviously you should separate if one starts REALLY screaming, but squeaks and squeals and whines are to be expected!

This should calm down after their first few days together. 99% of ferrets will get along with each other, and after that they'll still wrestle but not quite at this intensity. The rare ferrets that don't get along... it will take extra work and much patience from you, but they'll get there!

Very rarely do new ferrets NEVER get along with each other (even after years), but it has been known to happen. (I've heard that ferrets who are raised as a single ferret from a super young age are the ones that should truly be considered fine as a single ferret, and might have most difficulty making new ferret-friends).

## **Pet Store or Shelter?**

PET STORE:

Most pet store ferrets come from mass producers, or "ferret farms" (most common Marshall Farms). Ferrets from farms tend to be smaller, since they have been neutered/spayed at an earlier age, and more docile. These farms are more focused on making money than taking care of the ferrets, and they are very prone to health issues. Buying from pet stores directly is supporting these farms. In pet stores, it is uncertain if the workers are devoted to caring for the ferrets as needed, or simply cleaning their cages when it's necessary. This can lead to bad socialization, behaviors, health, and cleanliness. Make sure the pet store workers are keeping their area clean and are knowledgeable about the ferrets.

SHELTER:

Shelters keep extensive health records on their fuzzies, while ferrets from pet-stores may not have as much info.

Shelters shower their ferrets with love and make sure that each one is taken care of in the way it needs. Shelter ferrets can be perfectly healthy! Most people surrender their ferrets because they didn't properly educate themselves before hand, and their ferret is too much work. It could be their owner died, or that their ferret is just too energetic for them. The lady who owned my ferrets before me gave them up because she was expecting a baby, and didn't think she would be able to give them the time they needed.

Most shelter workers work there because of their devotion to ferrets. You know they mean it!

Most shelters will interview you to see if you can truly care for a ferret effectively. This shows they care about where their fuzzies are ending up. Also, most have a veterinarian they work closely with - this is a perfect way to know who to bring your ferrets to. They already have a history with this veterinarian, after all!

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1LshqitqDeyL9RpIP6Nw1c200yV8VpCM3&ll=47.126351567082125%2C-120.58392138503504&z=8>

<https://ferretshelters.org/shelters-directory/>

<http://ferret.org/links/shelters.html>

<http://ferretsdook.org/Dooks-for-the-Day/index.php/ferret-shelters/>

#### PRIVATE BREEDERS:

Private breeders can be hit-or-miss. You'll need to research them to determine if they take good care of their ferrets, or if they are basically as bad as a ferret mill.

Ferrets from REPUTABLE breeders are typically much more curious troublemakers than the docile mill-ferrets. They will need a lot more stimulation and ferret-proofing. (This doesn't mean mill ferrets are dumb - stimulation and ferret-proofing is still very important for them. They may just be more easily appeased). Also, many reputable breeders will require that you have experience owning a ferret prior to adopting from them.

<https://www.ferret.org/links/bdrMemberships.html>

<http://www.hofarescue.org/breeders-circle.html>

<https://www.ferret-world.com/buying-ferrets/ferret-breeders/>

List of US breeders:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vQrFRuOgTJTKKceZgFWUzrv68U4PY7kMJdCB7nQBYkzlu5MulBMcaT3uY8ZIVgL RUE1vqKHHJ3vCikf/pub>

## What Do I Buy Before I Get My Fuzzbutt?

- Cage
- Toys
- Bedding (blankets)
- Bowls
- Litter boxes & litter
- Food

First Aid Kit (starred are HIGHLY SUGGESTED)

- ★ 24 hour emergency veterinarian phone number
- Adhesive bandage tape
- Antibiotic ointment (like Sudocrem)
- ★ Baby wipes
- Betadine solution
- ★ Canola or Olive oil
- Cotton balls
- ★ Cotton swabs (Q-tips)
- Ear cleanser
- Eye dropper
- Eye wash/rinse
- Flashlight
- ★ Gauze pads
- ★ Gauze wraps
- ★ Health records
- Ice/heat pack
- ★ List of any medications your ferret is currently taking
- Meat baby food
- ★ Nail clippers
- National Animal Poison Control number (888-426-4435)
- Nolvasan
- Pediatric Liquid Benadryl
- ★ Petroleum jelly (like Vaseline)
- Pill crusher
- ★ Rubber or latex gloves
- Saline solution
- ★ Salmon/pollock oil
- Scissors
- Small blanket or bath towel
- ★ Styptic powder
- Tongue depressors (popsicle sticks)
- ★ Tweezers
- ★ Veterinarian's phone number
- Wash cloths

## PROS AND CONS OF OWNING A FERRET

PROS:

-Even people with dogs and cats said they bond closer to their ferrets and mourn even harder when they pass
































-All the laughs

CONS:



- # FERRET COLOR CHART

Alt link:

FERRET COLOR CHART										
<p><b>Guard hairs:</b> The hairs on top - keep moisture in, dots as insulation. Longer, coarser, nearly straight. Usually the ones you find on your clothes or in your food.</p> <p><b>Undercoat:</b> Bottom layer of hair, wavy and thin. Usually the ones you find in your mouth somehow.</p> <p><b>Changing coats:</b> Happens seasonally, as they age, and during ruts (if in-tact) - so they won't just switch back &amp; forth between "summer coat" and "winter coat". Most ferrets with a lot of white will progressively get lighter - some silvers roan out to DEWs. (Roan means at least 50% of the guard-hairs are white)</p> <p><b>*It is possible for your ferret to be in between colors or patterns. These are just the different definitions.</b></p>										
P A T T E R N S	Can be any color.	Can be any color.	Can be any color.	Can be any color, commonly roaning guard hairs.	Can be any color, commonly roaning guard hairs.	Can be any color, most commonly roan.	DEW with weird dark markings - commonly the tail, a whole arm, etc.			
	Body will appear lighter in color. Legs, tail, and mask are much darker.	Typically same color guard hairs as undercoat.	Legs, shoulders, hips, tail. Shows distinct color difference between body color & points.	Thin white stripe on the top of head, can go down to back of neck. Can also be a small white spot on the head. Usually used when referring to Badger patterns too. Commonly has white mitts/milk toes, bib, and other mix white details. Doesn't normally have a full mask.	Wide white stripe on the top of head, can go down to back of neck. Can also be a small white spot on the head. Usually bunched with Blazes in conversation. Commonly has white mitts/milk toes, bib, and other mix white details. Doesn't normally have a full mask.	White head that extends to neck & shoulders. Commonly has white mitts/stockings.	Prono to Waardenburg Syndrome and/or deafness.			
	Bar or T-mask.	Minimal markings on face if any.	Usually have a minimal or V mask.	Very prone to Waardenburg Syndrome and/or deafness.	Very prone to Waardenburg Syndrome and/or deafness.	Very prone to Waardenburg Syndrome and/or deafness.				
										
	<b>STANDARD (AKA POLECAT)</b>	<b>SOLID (AKA SELF)</b>	<b>POINT (AKA SIAMSESE)</b>	<b>BLAZE</b>	<b>BADGER</b>	<b>PANDA</b>	<b>MARKED WHITE</b>			
	"Natural" color (occurs in the wild).	Guard hairs: White or cream. Undercoat: white or cream.	Guard hairs: Grey/silver mixed with white, like salt & pepper. Undercoat: white or cream.	Guard hairs: Tan, light chocolate, or sandy. Undercoat: white or cream.	Guard hairs: Rich light reddish brown. Undercoat: white or cream.	Guard hairs: Dark brown to black. Undercoat: white or cream.	Guard hairs: Black/grey mixed with white, like salt & pepper. Undercoat: white or cream.	Guard hairs: Black. Undercoat: white, cream, or apricot.		
	Guard hairs: White or cream. Undercoat: white or cream.	Might have a few black hairs. No one's perfect. A yellowish tail is normal.	During season changes, the changing coat can give a lilac hue. Mitts & bibs are common. Darker legs & tail, minimal mask.	Legs and tail typically a bit darker. Often very faint masks.	Very rare to have a true cinnamon. Legs and tail are darker.	"Natural" color (occurs in the wild). Most common color.	Heavier mask than light silver. Legs not usually one solid color. Usually wash out ("roan out") to white as they age. Bibs & mitts are common.	Nose is usually black or dark.	Very intense mask.	
	Might look slightly yellow due to normal oils.	Nose usually pink. Brown or burgundy eyes.	Nose usually pink.	Nose is usually pink. Typically burgundy or brown eyes.	Usually have a mask.	Typically brown eyes.	Has great personality.			
	Ruby red eyes, pink nose.									
										
	<b>ALBINO</b>	<b>DARK EYED WHITE (DEW)</b>	<b>ROAN</b>	<b>LILAC</b>	<b>CHAMPAGNE (AKA SANDY)</b>	<b>CINNAMON</b>	<b>CHOCOLATE</b>	<b>SABLE</b>	<b>BLACK ROAN (AKA SILVER, BRN)</b>	<b>BLACK</b>
M A S K S	Solid band of color around & between eyes, does not connect to top-of-head color. Can have white eyebrow-dots.		Thin strip of color around eyes & down to nose. Can have white eyebrow-dots.							
										
	<b>STANDARD (AKA FULL, BAR)</b>		<b>V-MASK</b>		<b>BROWN</b>		<b>BLUE</b>		<b>BURGUNDY</b>	
	Solid band of color around & between eyes, leading up to top of head. Can have white eyebrow-dots.		Broken-up coloring on face, typically with markings under the eyes with broken-up (or none at all) coloring on nose bridge.							
										
	<b>HOODED (AKA T-MASK, T-BAR)</b>		<b>WAR PAINT</b>		<b>BLACK OR NEAR BLACK</b>		<b>RUBY RED</b>			
	Very boopable.		Can be a few spots of brown, or heavy spots. Speckles can change with coats over time.		Only on left noses. Small tufts of hair - can be tiny patches or a full strip coming down from nose-bridge.					
										
	<b>P</b>									



## MY FERRET IS CINNAMON?

Cinnamons are like RED HEADS and are very rare. Unfortunately Marshall's mislabels their cinnamons so a lot of people get confused 🤔 (The cinnamon guideline people go by are what is defined by the ferret shows & competitions, not Marshalls)

Here's a picture of a cinnamon ferret!



## Ferrets as ESA

Posts asking about emotional support always get into a big argument back and forth, so I'm gonna answer and then close comments (sorry!!) but you can PM me or the other admin/mods for more info!

Emotional Support Animals (ESA's) are different than Service/Therapy animals (see chart below). In the US, the way to have your pet become an ESA is with a written letter by your therapist, counselor, etc. Any websites that have you "register" an ESA are a scam. A doctor's note is the ONLY way to make it official.

ESA's don't provide much benefits, other than being required to stay with you in a place a landlord may not usually allow this type of pet. Your ESA cannot go into the store with you, does not get a special vest, and does not need to be trained for anything.

So, the only time it would really be worth having your ferret be an ESA is if you are seeing a therapist and your landlord does not allow ferrets (maybe you are moving somewhere new?)

Ferrets cannot be Service animals (because they can't open doors, pick up pencils, etc), and a lot of people confuse ESA's with service animals.

# PERSONAL ANECDOTES

## FERRET PROOFING

So I've been in 5 different places with my one ferret and we've got it down to a science.

1) Go around your house (without any ferrets) and look around the edges - go around the walls/boundaries of the place they'll be in. (I let mine free- roam so this is the whole house for me - adjust as needed if you're just opening up a room to them!). Ferrets tend to scope out the boundaries of a new place they're in - they'll stick to the walls, so you stick to the walls! Is there a weird hole in the wall? Can you plug it up with a sock or patch it somehow? Any wires they can get into? Get down on the floor and see from their level - are their holes in the cabinets (kitchen or bathroom) that they can crawl up under? Can your air vents be pulled off easily? Can they fit behind your washer/dryer? Or under/around your oven? Are there low-hanging curtains they'll want to climb? Can they get under your couch? Dressers? China/display cabinets? Entertainment center? Fireplace? Into the garbage? Behind the fridge? Under the dishwasher? Block off or fix anything you can! Most people block off the whole kitchen, but sometimes this isn't doable based on your house floor-plan.

2) Assuming your ferret is new to your home, introduce slowly. Start with their "safe" room. Watch them like a hawk, make note of whatever they get into and... if you can't figure out how to ferret-proof it, ask us!

3) If you want to open up your whole house to them, do so once they're familiar with their "safe" room. Work them through the rooms - from their safe room, open it up to the hallway. Then the bathroom. Then another room. Etc until they are comfortable (and know where to go potty).

4) If you have more than one ferret, I think it's best to do one at a time. Usually your best-mannered ferret first..... since they won't find EVERYTHING to ferret-proof. (That being said - my good boy found a vent hole that was missing a cover in my in-laws new house. He's deaf so I PANICKED cause I couldn't call him out. I coaxed him out by wafting salmon oil in there until he smelled it and came out. SO scary..) Fix/adjust what you need to. Did they poo in a corner? Honestly that's probably fine for the first time, they're exploring and don't know any of this stuff. Also maybe you might need to put a litter box there... (ferrets don't like running all the way across the house for a litter box. If that corner looks nice, they're gonna use it)

5) Work your way up using your goodest ferret to your naughtiest ferret. Once each of them has had a good look around your house (or whatever area), you should have a good idea of what you need to work on... Ferret-proof as needed.

6) Supervised play time! Let all of them roam! KEEP AN EYE ON ALL OF THEM! If this seems too daunting, keep letting each one explore one at a time til you're fairly confident there's nothing else for them to get into. Make sure none of them get out of your sight (or if you can listen for them and know where they are). Repeat this a few times til you're confident.

7) Honestly that's it! They will always learn new things... some might figure out how to climb up something, or maybe you vacuum and don't notice that you moved the coffee table so close to the couch, and now your ferrets can jump up onto the TV, or maybe they realize OMG CABINETS OPEN and figure out how to open the bathroom sink cabinet with all the cleaning supplies... whatever it is, make sure you always have an eye on them (or at least a very attentive ear!)

NOTE: ALWAYS BE CONSCIOUS OF WHEN YOU CLOSE A DOOR AND WHERE YOU STEP.

My boys like to hop into the fridge... that could go bad in SO many ways. They also like to check out the garage door when I go in there... and that door is HEAVY.

A lot of people have learned to do the "ferret shuffle", never really picking up their feet when they walk, so they don't accidentally step on an eager fuzzy.

<http://www.ferret.org/pdfs/education/proof.pdf>

## **HOW TO KILL FLEAS FOREVER**

1) Gather up all ferret bedding, blankets, sleep-areas, etc that can go in the laundry and wash it on hottest setting. BUT don't start the laundry yet, cause.....

2) Give ferret(s) bath. A tiny bit of baby shampoo for suds. I put my guys in the shower, got them wet, turned it off, suds em up, let them stew in their rage for a few minutes while just being soapy/killing fleas, and then rinse and scrub it off. Give them a towel to dry off in. Put that towel in the laundry (along with any clothes you were wearing while bathing them) THEN start the load. Keep ferrets locked in bathroom (or in their freshly-made cage) while you...

3) Vacuum. Focus on places against the wall, dark corners, against furniture, under couch, in closet, etc.

3a) If the infestation is BAD and your carpets are in jeopardy, I get Diatomaceous Earth from the gardening section of home improvement stores and sprinkle it all over the carpet (esp dark corners and edges of walls). This will most likely ruin your vacuum when you vacuum it up, FYI :( but... when the fleas are bad, it's kinda like... eh. I went out and got a cheap vacuum specifically for sucking up this stuff. I let the DE sit for a few days and let the ferrets only play in the kitchen/bathroom (ferret-proof'd obvs) while the powder is on the carpets. They MUST be kept away from the DE because it can cause serious damage to their lungs if they inhale it. DE is very microscopically sharp - which is how it kills fleas so well (cuts them up). After 1-2 days, vacuum all of it up and bathe them again before giving them carpet permission again. (If it's not a horrible infestation, you can just do along the edges of your rooms, and any dark corners, rather than the WHOLE ENTIRETY of the carpet)

4) Meanwhile, wash all their bedding and anything they sleep on EVERY DAY like it's diseased. Wash any clothing, upholstery, blankets, etc that your ferrets have been in contact with. Vacuum like a crazy person.

5) Keep doing laundry like crazy. I give them a bath every other day until the DE is all vacuumed up. Then keep a CLOSE eye on them for any fleas.

Sadly my poor guy has had fleas 3 times, and doing that has completely demolished the fleas every time

(one from annoying downstairs neighbor's nasty kitten, another from when I lived with roommates and roommate adopted kitten with fleas, 3rd time in same roommate place cause roommate let cat go outside for a few days and it brought back friends. I swear I'm not a bad momma 😞 )

## **LIAM STORY**

I had two boys - Liam and Jasper. Jasper passed May 2017, his health declined over 2 weeks. Liam came with him to the vet to help him pass, and I think he knew it was coming.

Liam took his passing quite well - maybe he'd already come to terms with it during the 2 weeks Jasper slowly slipped away. I kept a close eye on him, but since my hubby and I were hoping to stay with his parents (who hate ferrets) for a while to save money, it seemed Liam was doing fine and didn't need a new friend.

Liam needed MUCH MORE one-on-one time with me than he did before. I learned new ways to play with him, I feel like I learned to communicate with him better (he's deaf), and our bond grew stronger.

However, in 2018 we had an emergency and needed to move. The in-laws let us stay with them for a while, but Liam had to stay with a ferret-sitter while they were trying to sell the house (they were moving with us). The sitter was strictly ferrets-only and used to own a rescue, so she knew what she was doing!!

After a week of being at the sitter, Liam stopped eating. His poo's were awful, he had no energy, he wasn't drinking. The sitter explained to me that ferrets CAN become EXTREMELY DEPRESSED if they believe that they have been abandoned by their owners. She said she has seen the ferrets literally lose the will to live. I visited Liam as often as I could, and each time he perked up a little, but not much.

He ended up staying at the vet for 2 weeks. They tested him (found some upset tummy issues due to not eating) and treated him as best as they could. He went from 1200g to 800g. They were preparing me for the worst... (I recently learned that he may have had a toxicity reaction from my MIL going extremely overboard on dryer sheets for his blankets. I'll never know for sure, but the dangers of chemicals & fragrances is REAL.)

...one of the vet techs brought her ferret in from home (I think it was going to be a long day??). She kept him with Liam, and saw a massive improvement. She kept bringing him in with her every day, and Liam started eating again. They would snuggle together SO HARD and were always together. Liam FINALLY recovered (in-laws took sympathy on me and let me bring him home since they

were done showing the house!) and I brought him home.

Once we moved, I adopted two kits for Liam within the same month. Usually when you introduce new ferrets, they will have dominance fights to determine who the alpha is. Liam never got rough with them once. The first play-time they had together, all he wanted to do was snuggle them. It's 3 months later now and they are inseparable! Every time I check on them, Liam looks so obscenely happy, it's ridiculous. He's more active and plays more with them than he was when it was just me trying to play with him. He seems so much HAPPIER than he did alone - which is scary because I didn't even notice that he seemed unhappy before.

I feel so awful that Liam was alone for a year, but I'm happy that he hung in there long enough for me to realize and give him what he needed.

## WHY MARSHALL'S SUCKS

They breed for quantity, not quality - they force the females into heat, breed too often.. They also breed for "cute" ferrets, even if this means they also get genetic mutations from inbreeding and high risk of passing on hereditary disease. :( THEN they neuter/spay FAR too early, and take the babies from the mother before they're barely even weaned.

Also a video walkthrough of their breeding facilities is pretty horrifying, I hear. I couldn't bring myself to watch the video :(

They tout around that they have the BEST quality kibble, when in reality it's got a lot of things in it that ferrets should NOT be eating. The Marshall's food has a lot of plant-based fillers (which ferrets can't digest), sugars, a preservative that's a known carcinogen, and in some of their recipes they have peas (which cause bladder stones). It is a really poor choice for kibble - basically like feeding your growing child McDonalds every day. Other kibbles have figured out the secret to a much healthier recipe, but Marshall's makes no attempt to. Their treats (banana flavored, peanut butter flavored, etc those ones) were designed DECADES ago when people thought feeding fruits and nuts to ferrets was OK. We have studied and learned, and now it is common knowledge they are obligate carnivores, and these things are NOT okay for them. But Marshall's still makes money off them, so why take them off the market? :(

They have a guarantee at pet-stores where "if you feed your Marshall's ferret nothing but Marshall's food within the first year of it's life, and it DIES within that first year, we'll send you a new one!!" Like you're expecting it to die within a year.. :( NOT worth the guarantee. When your ferret does live past that year, then they've got all the health complications of basically being raised on McDonalds til they're an adult. AND... even having that guarantee is like... ?? Does this happen often? Do Marshall's ferrets often die within a year? Why?

<https://rescuefreedomproject.org/marshall/>

Marshall ferret themselves... is a catch 22.

If you buy Marshall's baby from petstore, you are supporting Marshall's Farms :(

If you don't buy the Marshall's baby from the petstore, it will stay there in the crappy "temporary" pet store setting that is very unsuitable for ferrets. (There is a page called "Petco Do Better" trying to raise the conditions & quality of products that Petco has in store - check em out!)

The ferrets have a very high risk of diseases and genetic mutations due to inbreeding, poor breeding practices, forcing the females in heat constantly to pump out more kits, being neutered & descented 5 months too early (they have these surgeries done just as their eyes are opening.. they aren't even weaned yet!), higher risk of adrenal, poor bloodlines and genetic dispositions to health issues, etc etc etc. Most Marshall's lifespans are around 5-7 years. 😞 Healthy ferrets from reputable breeders with clean bloodlines typically live 7-10 years.

That's why it's SO IMPORTANT to read up on all these ferret diseases and really know your stuff, so you can be prepared for what you will most likely run into 😞 Marshall's basically has a monopoly on the ferret breeding industry in the US - MOST ferrets in pet stores are from Marshalls, so it's very hard to avoid.

Breakdown of a Marshall's food real quick:

So, here's a link to Marshall's Carnivore Protein Plus (bottom of the post so it's not cluttered).

Let's keep it simple and focus on two things: Peas and the BHT

Pea flour is the 2nd ingredient, and pea fiber is the 6th. Why are peas bad? Peas/ chickpeas/ lentils/ sweet potato are linked to "cystine" stones in ferrets and dogs (this is a genetic condition they have to be born with). If they are born with this, then their body actually produces cystine (when it should not) and if they are fed foods with those ingredients (and some others, but aren't listed because they aren't common in kibbles) then they get TOO much cystine and it becomes stones.

Thing is, there's no way to test if a ferret has this genetic predisposition. There's no way to know if their body will react badly to peas and create bladder stones. Bladder stone removal is a VERY expensive and invasive surgery, and not all ferrets survive it. So... I would definitely not want to risk that. But ALL ferrets can get struvite stones if they are eating a lot of plant-based protein. So one more reason to avoid plant-based proteins.

Secondly!

BHT as a preservative. It is also proven to cause cancer, and has already been banned in many areas of Europe. Ferrets are already so at-risk to cancer, I wouldn't want to add any risk to that. I feel like this doesn't need further explanation.

WITH ALL THAT SAID!!!!!!

Marshall's Premium kibble does NOT have peas, though it still has BHA (an even worse version of BHT). This kibble is taken with a grain of salt, and is kind of the "best of the worst" ferret foods. If you're in a pinch and cannot afford healthier food or need to grab something from the store cause you ran out, this one isn't as bad as all the other cheap foods out there.

Marshall's Carnivore Plus:

<https://www.marshallferrets.com/store/product/carnivore-plus-premium-ferret-diet>

Stones & Peas:

<http://ferretbiology.com/Urolithiasis>

<https://www.all-about-ferrets.com/urolithiasis-in-ferrets.html>

BHT:

<https://www.bestfoodfacts.org/what-is-bht>



# MARSHALL FERT ILLNESSES

Most ferrets in the US are from Marshall's!

1) Adrenal - since they are neutered so young, their adrenal glands get more stress early on. Whenever he's napping, make sure he's got total darkness (or as close as possible). Darkness is linked to lower hormone production, which takes stress off the adrenal glands

<https://holisticferretforum.com/health/adrenal-disease/> - a break-down explanation of how adrenal works

<https://weaselwords.com/ferret-articles/ferret-light-sensitivity-study/> - a study in light exposure

2) Insulinoma - Any sugary, carbs, fructose foods can contribute to insulinoma (tumors on the pancreas from high sugar intake, resulting in blood sugar issues). Once a ferret is diagnosed, the typical life expectancy is 1-2 years. Make sure you feed as high meat-ingredient foods as you can!

Insulinoma: <https://holisticferretforum.com/health/insulinoma-2/>

Kibble chart:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTvMXyhwVBu5TLnYSvGhqJqr\\_vE\\_-x\\_1BADF7dPwatwIB9I--m02ZN23FqvPNqp3v-n5cJyOuSssVfn/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTvMXyhwVBu5TLnYSvGhqJqr_vE_-x_1BADF7dPwatwIB9I--m02ZN23FqvPNqp3v-n5cJyOuSssVfn/pub)

Freeze dried raw: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oPaO1R5MSMYdJlv9clPLqDyKj2fhzwFc/view>

3) Cancer, cancer, cancer! Marshall's does not take genetics or family history into account, so many are imbred with many genetic issues. Avoid ANY BHA or BHT ingredients in foods, even treats, since they are carcinogenic and banned in many countries. This is one more reason to feed high quality food, since the less plant ingredients will cause less stress on their systems.

4) Bladder stones - again, too many veggies can cause bladder stones. There are a few different types, all caused by too much non-meat ingredients. One type of stone (cystine) is genetic, and caused by peas, lentils, chickpeas, and sweet potatoes. Unfortunately, it is impossible to test if a ferret has this genetic disposition, so most people play it safe and completely avoid these ingredients with ALL their ferrets

That said, not all Marshall's ferrets will get all (or any) of these illnesses, but they are at a much higher risk than ferrets with healthy bloodlines from private breeders.

But make sure you do your research and know what to keep an eye out for!

# WHAT’S WRONG WITH MARSHALL’S FOOD?

Good question!

Most of the Marshall's recipes have peas in them, which contribute to bladder stones   stones usually end in a very painful experience for the ferret, expensive vet bills and surgery, and sometimes they don't survive the surgery 😞

The one Marshall's recipe that is decent is Marshall's Premium. My issue with it is that it contains corn (typically hard to keep corn in good quality, so some mold may come with the corn...) and they use BHA/BHT as preservatives (carcinogenic). Also, they refuse to disclose how much of the recipe is animal-based

Many people have reported that their ferrets STINK SO BAD on Marshall's kibble.

HOWEVER... it'd good to have around for the following reasons:

Your ferret may get sick and lose their appetite. They may revert back to their childhood comfort-food = Marshall's! (Similar to how people want chicken noodle when they're sick).

If you adopt a new ferret and don't know what food they were on, Marshall's Premium is a good one. Most ferrets are raised on Marshall's and they will recognize this food instead of rejecting your current food and starving!!

If you run out of food and can't get any until next payday/need to order online/etc, Marshall's Premium is a decent kibble you can grab from most pet stores and a few grocery stores (Walmart) until you can get your regular food.

No ferret has DIED directly from Marshall's food (Zupreem, Wild Harvest, Kaytee and other brands cannot say the same). While it is not the best kibble out there, it is far from the worst.

# LONG CAR DRIVES

Here are some tips for day-long or longer car rides! (Shorter rides can be adjusted as needed!)

Get a big (cheaper) cage that you can put in the back seat - if you have a ferret nation, one level might be able to fit in the back seat nicely depending on the size of your car. Let them get used to it at home and test it to see if they can get out of it... the worst thing would be them figuring out how to escape while you're driving 🤖 (You can also just get a giant dog carrier from the thrift store, just wash it really good). If you do the FN, bring an extra carrier, cause that thing is heavy!

Make sure it can fit a litter box, food, hammock nicely! (Recommend clipping the litter box to the carrier, and using a cage-attach bowl for the food/water) Then when you're ready to travel, get them situated in it in the back seat (make sure it can't move around or slide) or buckle them into the front seat.

For trips over a day long, bring with you a play pen. Make sure you have a tarp or HUGE pee pad or something to lay down to protect from burning concrete on their feet and dirty yuckies, if you decide to let them get some fresh air at a rest stop or anything. These are also nice to put down on the floor in hotel rooms.

You should be pretty familiar with their sleep schedules and know when they like to get up and play. Make sure they play A LOT before you head out on the drive! That way they'll sleep for the first few hours easily. If your trip will take more than 8 hours, it's not necessary to stop, but if you take a lengthy pit stop you can bust out the play pen to let them release some energy and see if they want to eat/drink. Sometimes even if it's in their little cage/carrier they won't bother to drink/poo while the car is moving around, so people choose to stop.

For hotels... call in advance and ask if they allow dogs. If not... they probably won't allow ferrets so there's your answer. If they DO allow dogs, you can ask about ferrets at that point! (You could just ask point blank, too). In the US, Sleep Inn or Comfort Suites or Red Roof are pretty ferret-friendly.

ALSO for the cage in the car - water bottles will jiggle and jostle and leak water through the drive. I learned this the hard way - had to pull over and throw some napkins in the water bowl underneath it cause it was almost overflowing! I'd just fill a cage-attach water bowl about halfway - that way it can slosh around a little without spilling over.

Awesome travel cages/temporary set-ups: <http://www.martinscages.com/ferrets.html>

## FERRET ROOM

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BwOWRXRh5Gy/>

# CAROLINA FERRETS

DO NOT ADOPT FROM CAROLINA FERRETS.

I don't really care that my boys are a bit bitey. I've heard many bad things about Carolina Ferrets...after I adopted from her. But here's my experience.

She didn't ask me any questions about what kind of home her babies were being sent to. She didn't make sure I would be a good owner, there was no contract for me to sign, and the only questions I got were "which ones do you want?" 🙄

Kathy was very nice on the phone and helped with the shipping process, but once I got my boys, I asked her what kind of kibble she sent with them so I could help with the transition process. She never told me, despite me asking multiple times. I believe it was Meow Mix based on how it looked. After she shipped them she didn't check in to confirm I received them, that they were in good health, that they were happy, that I was satisfied. Nothing. Radio silence.

I also asked for their medical records so I knew where they were at with vaccines and what their birthdays were. I asked multiple times and never got anything. The most "proof of adoption" I have as far as paperwork goes is the shipping bill from Delta Airlines. I don't know my boy's birthdays, and I had to take a gamble on if I should give them vaccines or if they already had them. (Note: She did reply to me a few times in email corresp, but dodged my questions regarding food, health records, etc.)

I have heard that Kathy has BEEN KICKED OUT OF THE AFA for poor breeding practices, does not keep bloodlines/health records, and keeps her ferrets in very poor conditions.

Both boys I adopted from her are a year old now (ish). One of my boys from her is in great health, the other is so small (possibly a runt?) with prolapse issues. Both have standard noses but squeaky little noses and I'm nervous about respiratory issues down the road. Like Marshall's ferrets, I love my boys, but I am so disappointed with the breeder.

As a last peeve, I emailed one last time a few months later giving her an update on how they were settling in, and attached a photo of them. She never replied. But now my photo I sent her is up on her Facebook! Without permission or even acknowledging I reached out :)

# WHAT'S YOUR PERSONAL CLEANING ROUTINE LOOK LIKE?

2 ferrets - no cage (ferret room instead) - free-roam the house all day (I work from home) - raw fed - hard wood floors

DAILY

- Switch out the 2 reusable pee pads in their room
- Pick off poos - flush
- Rinse pee pads. Either let them soak if there is stuck-on poo, or put them in the washer
- Pick up stashed raw. Toss if it is dry or over a few days old. Otherwise, put in bowl with some water and back in the fridge for later.
- Wipe down any floor that had raw on it (just hot water & a wash cloth)
- Refill water in their water-dig tub and put down new towel b/c they splash all over

EVERY FEW DAYS/AS NEEDED

- Switch out the less-used pee pads around the house
- Switch out the blanket their raw-stashing igloos are on
- Sweep up any crumbs from the blanket
- Wipe up poo trails on the floor (hot water & wash cloth)
- Do laundry (eco-friendly soap, I use scented but not BURN THE SMELLS OUT AND REPLACE WITH EXTRA COMPRESSED FRAGRANCE OF LAUNDRY type of scented 😊 The scent washes out mostly, and doesn't cling to the blankets/pee pads through the wash/drying process)

WEEKLY

- Vacuum
- Mop (water & vinegar)
- Switch out sleeping blankets
- Receive kisses for job well done

WHAT’S THEIR DAILY ROUTINE

(They have a room, no cage. They eat raw, and I work from home)

- Wake up at 6:15AM and juggle the door
- Let out to play at 7AM
- Play like crazy
- Eat breakfast at 8AM
- Play play
- Snooze from 9A - 1PM
- Play play play and have a light lunch
- Snooze til 5PM
- Wander aimlessly
- Snooze til 8PM
- PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAY PLAYPLAY
- PLAY
- PLAYPLAYPLAYPLAY
- HAVE DINNER
- PLAY
- PLAAAAAAAAY
- Go to bed at 10pm with food left out for any midnight snacks
- Stash food around room some time through the night for mom to find in the morning

\*Poop not included

Links

<https://www.reddit.com/r/ferrets/wiki/index>