

# Ferret Care Guide

Prepared by Dr. Lucy Haile on behalf of Wellesley Animal Hospital

## HOUSING

### Cage:

- Consider cages with multiple levels and ramps to give plenty of area for ferrets to play and climb
- Ensure cage doors can be securely latched
- Minimum of 2x4 feet for 1-2 ferrets but the larger the cage the better



### Litter:

- Avoid cedar and pine shavings – these can cause irritation to the nose and lungs and contribute to respiratory disease.
- CareFresh or recycled newspaper beddings (eg Yesterday's News) are recommended as they are good absorbable unscented materials.
- Always have a litter box available
- Avoid cat litter as your ferret may consume it
- Ensure to clean the bedding regularly – spot clean the bedding/litter box daily and change all the bedding 1-2 times a week.

### Bedding:

- Ferrets enjoy burrowing and hiding so be sure to provide tunnels, blankets, hammocks and towels for them to hide and sleep in
- Check the bedding daily for any signs that your ferret is chewing or ingesting it. If so provide a small cardboard box with clean straw/hay as a sleeping area instead and contact your veterinarian.

## NUTRITION

### Always have fresh water available

- Complete ferret diets high in protein are recommended such as Marshalls, Totally ferret or Wysong.
- Occasional treats can be given such as cooked boneless meat or small pieces of egg and used as rewards for training.
- Avoid sugary foods and carbohydrates as your ferret will struggle to digest them.
- Ferrets tend to eat multiple small meals throughout the day which is often easily achieved by having food always available to them.

## BEHAVIOR

- Allow your ferret daily exercise and playtime out of the cage
- Ferrets are very inquisitive and like to play and chew with household items which can be hazardous to them. Supervise closely any out of cage playtime and 'ferret proof' any rooms they play in.
- Be sure to remove any foam/rubber items, headphones, shoes, erasers or other objects off the floor to prevent your ferret ingesting them.
- Ferrets can also squeeze into very small gaps so be sure to seal off any narrow spaces or openings.
- Provide your ferret with plenty of attention and toys.
- Always supervise your ferret with toys and check toys regularly to ensure no parts are missing or being consumed.

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- Ferrets are very sociable animals and can live in groups (called a “business” of ferrets!). Most ferrets obtained from pet stores are already neutered and spayed but if unsure check with your veterinarian before housing with other ferrets to prevent unintentional breeding.

### HEALTH CARE

- New patient exams and yearly examinations are strongly recommended to help your ferret live a long and happy life
- Annual bloodwork is strongly recommended as your ferret starts to age as it can help detect the early onset of diseases.
- Ferrets can occasionally get hairballs that lead to intestinal blockages. Administering laxatone, a feline hairball remedy, 1-2 times can help prevent this.
- Ferrets need vaccines just like cats and dogs! Ferrets should be vaccinated against two life threatening diseases - rabies and distemper. They require initial doses as young ferrets and then boosters every year.
- Ferrets can get heartworms and in certain areas of the US require year-round heartworm prevention.
- Spaying and neutering of ferrets is recommended for health and welfare benefits. Most obtained from pet stores are already neutered but check with your veterinarian if you are unsure.
- If you notice any changes to your ferret’s behavior, appetite or bowel movements we would recommend contacting your veterinarian immediately.