

# Care & Information Sheet

## Ferret

*Mustela putorius furo*



Ferrets are intelligent, playful, and mischievous animals that love to explore. They can be very affectionate and if given daily exercise and attention, they make wonderful pets. They love to collect and hide items and they love to dig, so be careful with house plants. Nipping is a natural behavior to get attention or show defensiveness when awakened. They are known for their happy, inquisitive nature and humorous behaviors. Ferrets have scent glands that produce a musky smell. The average size is about 15 inches and with proper care and nutrition they can live 8 or more years.

### Habitat

- The habitat should be large, multi-tiered and wire-sided with good ventilation, a secure door, a solid floor and a pullout tray for easy cleaning. Openings between wires should be small so the habitat is escape-proof.
- Be sure to include a hammock, tube, litter box, and plenty of toys.
- They will do well in the average household temperature. Avoid extreme temperature changes and you should never keep their habitat in direct sunlight or in a drafty area.
- Clean the habitat and its contents at least once a week with mild soap and water, rinse, and allow to dry completely before placing the ferret back into the habitat.

### Bedding

- 1–2 inches of bedding should be placed in the habitat.
- Proper bedding includes hardwood shavings and a pelleted or recycled product. Cedar-based products are not recommended as they may cause harm to your new pet.
- Scoop litter box daily; change bedding weekly or more often as necessary.
- Clean the habitat and its contents once a week with mild soap and water, rinse and allow to dry completely before placing the ferret back into the habitat.

### Food & Water

- High-quality ferret food and treats.
- Do not feed ferrets dairy products, chocolate, sugary foods and beverages, caffeine, alcohol, salty foods, seeds, or nuts as these can cause serious medical problems.
- All food given to ferrets 16 weeks or younger should be moistened for easy consumption.
- Clean, fresh, filtered, chlorine-free water changed daily.

### Grooming and Hygiene

- Monthly baths are recommended, or more often as necessary, using ferret shampoo. Ferrets have a natural musky odor that bathing will not remove. Fur may be brushed daily with a soft brush. Ferrets shed their coat twice a year.
- Outer ears should be cleaned using a cotton ball and ear-cleaning solution.
- Nails should be cut every two to three weeks.

### Supplies

Habitat Multi Tiered	Food Dish	Toys	Nail clippers & Kwik Stop
Bedding	Water Bottle	Soft Brush	Litter Box / Litter
Harness & Leash	Quality Food	Ferret Shampoo	Book about Ferrets

### Health

Because all ferrets are potential carriers of infectious diseases, always wash your hands before and after handling your ferret and/or the habitat contents to help prevent the potential spread of diseases.

Distemper vaccinations are required at 9, 12 and 16 weeks of age; rabies vaccinations are required between 13 – 16 weeks of age from an exotic animal veterinarian. After that time, ferrets require annual vaccinations.

***You should consult with an exotic animal veterinarian if you observe any of the following conditions.***

- Diarrhea or loose stools - caused by poor diet, stress, internal parasites, unclean housing, or other illness.
- Heat Stroke-Emergency condition; symptoms include heavy panting, seizures & loss of consciousness. Can be fatal.
- Ear Mites - Parasites that causes itching and brownish discharge in ears.

For information regarding ferrets and disease, contact the Center for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets>

**NOTE:** The information contained in this document is for general reference only. Please consult a veterinarian for medical advice and concerns.

### Sources:

Choosing a Small Mammal by Dennis Kelsey-Wood  
Ferrets for Dummies by Kim Shilling  
The ASPCA Complete Guide to Pet Care by David L. Carroll