BABY FERRETS

You should have your baby ferret for a minimum of a month before trying to add another ferret.  Ferrets from pet stores have usually been weaned two to three weeks too soon, shipped on a plane, held in a small cage in a distributor's warehouse, shipped in a truck without food or water, and held in a cage in the pet store where people are constantly banging on the cage to wake them up. Stress in a ferret can cause medical issues, including ulcers, bacterial infections, and inflammatory bowel disorders. These things can affect the ferret for the rest of its life. The stress can also cause bad bacteria to take over in the baby ferret's gut. The baby ferret can carry the bad bacteria and not be affected by it but affect another ferret in the home.

If your ferret is stressed from anything - arriving or going to a new home, moving, vet visit, new ferret, a new person, or pet in the home, having had a bath, trip outside of the house, etc. – **Then do not do anything else to stress it for a few days.** Extra stress can be enough to push the ferret over the edge and cause it to get a stress-induced illness. Keep it calm. The greater the stress, the longer the recovery time. Any time the ferret has been stressed; it will likely sleep more than normal. Let it sleep as much as it wants. This is its body's way of protecting it and keeping it from getting sick. The ferret may also have stress-induced diarrhea for a day or so. If the diarrhea is constant or infrequent diarrhea lasts more than two days, it should be seen by a vet. Long-term stress can result in an inflammatory bowel disorder or an ulcer, which can be very hard to treat and be life-threatening.

A baby ferret should have a minimum of eight hours a day out of the cage to run and play and be out at least three different times a day. Time out should not just be in one room.  They must be able to run and interact in other areas of the house. Human interaction with a single ferret needs to be an absolute minimum of three hours a day. While that sounds doable, in my experience it works for a while, but then people have other things to do and don't want to spend several hours a day with the ferret and don't want to hassle with letting a ferret out for that long each day, especially when it involves cleaning up after the ferret in other areas besides the cage.

If the ferret doesn't get enough playtime, it will become very frustrated. Frustration can cause the ferret to dig or chew at the cage bars or on the things in the cage. This can result in a blockage from chewing on things in the cage, which often requires surgery. It can also result in a toenail being pulled out or a broken toe, foot, or even tooth. Frustration leads to stress, which can lead to inflammatory bowel disorders, an ulcer, or bacterial infections. These things can affect the ferret its whole life.

A baby ferret generally needs to stay on the food the pet store was feeding it for about a month (usually Marshall's ferret food). The ferret has already been through a lot of stress that affects the digestive tract.  Switching the food too soon can cause some problems with the digestive system, including upset stomach, diarrhea, painful stomach, and constipation. It should have wet food available with the dry food.  The ferret really should still be nursing from its mother and weaning off.  Its digestive system isn’t ready to take on hard food right away.  For wetting the food, put some of the dry kibbles in a bowl and fill the bowl with water. Let it sit for about 30 seconds, then pour off as much water as you possibly can. Any water left in the bowl will create a mush at the bottom that the ferret usually won't eat. Wet kibble spoils quickly, so it needs to be changed out twice a day. During that several weeks, you can slowly start adding other foods in or switching to raw.

Baby ferrets are usually better off in a home with another ferret. There are a few that will be okay being in a home as the only ferret. Ferrets are usually very social with other ferrets. They play and sleep together. Most of the time, if you separate them from another ferret and they want to be with other ferrets, they will go into a depression. It is hard for a human to provide a ferret with the amount of stimulation and playtime that is needed.