OLDER CHILDREN and FERRETS

When considering adding a ferret to a home with children in it, please know:

Older children get bored easily and often lose interest in a ferret. The number one reason ferrets are surrendered to rescues is that the child lost interest and doesn't take care of the ferret anymore.  Does your child get bored with Christmas presents quickly? A ferret will be no different.

An older child is going to begin dating, getting involved in school projects, working, and possibly moving out, which means they will likely not have the time nor interest for the ferret anymore.

Ferrets will eat nearly anything small dropped on the floor and get intestinal blockages. Kids drop stuff on the floor all the time. It’s impossible to catch everything they drop. This can mean life or death to a ferret. I've known of ferrets that have eaten and got blockages from a small metal spring, an ear pod, a phone cover, pieces of cloth from a hammock (because they were bored), string, etc. Anything foam WILL be eaten and can create a blockage!

Ferrets get ulcers easily from stress. Stress can be from being handled too much, being handled the wrong way a lot, too much noise, too much activity around it, and so on. Ulcers are very hard to treat, and many ferrets end up dying from them. Noise needs to be kept to a minimum with no screaming and no loud music or TV.  The ferret should not be handled much by young children and only with adult supervision.  The ferret needs to have at least 16 hours of quiet time each day (at different times of day) when there aren't people around it. (The pic is of a ferret with anemia caused by a bleeding ulcer.)

Ferrets can catch the flu, Covid, sinus infections, strep throat, and bacterial infections from humans. This can often mean death to a ferret.

Any animal will bite if something happens that it doesn't like. So, if the ferret is pressed too hard, held too long, not allowed to go where it wants to go, etc., it may bite the person. Young people do not always recognize or care when they are doing these things.

Most ferrets do bite some when they are playing. Young people usually can't tell what's a bad bite and a play bite and sometimes the ferret bites hard when playing. None of the ferrets in the rescue bite, except for playing, but I have bite marks on my hands and arms from when they get playing too rough.

It is very easy for a person to injure a ferret and not mean to. Rescues get a lot of injured ferrets in and nearly all those injuries were caused by teens or children and usually by accident. Ferrets are so fast and wiry; they get out of their hands fast and fall to the floor or run past as a person is walking and get accidentally kicked. As an example, another rescue did a ferret education day at a school. The teacher was holding the ferret and it wiggled out of her hands and fell to the floor. It died. This is much more likely to happen to a child.

Ferrets are very fast and very, very good at escaping. Kids are bad about closing doors behind them or closing them tightly. A ferret will always investigate a door that has been opened and will escape if it can. Once out, it can be very difficult to find them, if at all.

Young people tend to respond to peer pressure. While your child may be good around the ferret, the child’s friend may not be and can hurt the ferret or pressure your child into doing something that shouldn’t be done.