FERRET CARE GUIDE

A Quick Reference for Families

Ferrets & Families

- Ferrets are playful, curious, and may nip as part of play.
- Ask a veterinarian before bringing a ferret into a home with small children.
- Supervise time outside the cage and interactions with children or other pets.

Diet Essentials

- Feed a high-quality commercial food made **specifically for ferrets**.
- VCA guidance: 32–40% protein, 10–15% fat, and no more than 4% fiber.
- Keep food and fresh, clean water available at all times.
- Use a heavy bowl or secured dish; clean food and water containers daily.

Housing & Exercise

- Use a **secure**, well-ventilated cage with a sturdy solid or padded floor.
- MSD suggests at least 3 ft wide × 3 ft deep × 2 ft high while confined.
- Provide a dark sleeping area with a hammock, towel, or small blanket.
- Provide at least 2–4 hours of supervised time outside the cage daily.
- Keep the environment cool; 65–75°F (18–23°C) is usually comfortable.

✕ Foods to Avoid

- Sweets, dairy products, raisins, fruits, vegetables, and high-carbohydrate foods.

✕ **Never feed chocolate**; it can be fatal.

- Do not add vitamin supplements to a complete ferret diet unless your veterinarian recommends them.
- Ask your veterinarian before offering people food or changing the diet.

Ferret-Proofing

- Block holes and gaps; if the head fits, the body may fit.
- Keep foam, rubber, plastic, small toy parts, and other chewable objects **out of reach**.
- Secure cabinets, appliances, doors, windows, wires, and reclining furniture.
- Swallowed objects can cause a life-threatening intestinal blockage.

Grooming & Routine Care

- Have the teeth and gums examined by a veterinarian every year.
- Brush with pet toothpaste; do not use human fluoride toothpaste.
- Trim claws every 1–2 weeks; ferrets should not be declawed.
- Brush loose fur during seasonal shedding.
- Clean ears only under veterinary direction; never insert a cotton swab into the ear canal.

Litter & Cleaning

- Place litter boxes in corners, away from food and sleeping areas.
- Use recycled-paper pelleted litter.

✕ **Avoid** clumping cat litter, newspaper, and wood chips.

- Remove waste and uneaten food daily; wash the cage with soap and water at least weekly.

Health & Veterinary Care

- Establish care with a veterinarian **experienced with ferrets** before an illness occurs.
- Yearly examinations and vaccinations are recommended.
- Discuss rabies and canine distemper vaccination schedules with your veterinarian.
- Know which nearby emergency clinic treats ferrets.

Seek Veterinary Care

- Seek immediate care for difficulty breathing, seizures, extreme lethargy, choking, heavy bleeding, straining without urinating or defecating, or bloody/dark tarry stool.
- Seek veterinary evaluation for vomiting or diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours, or failure to eat or drink for 24 hours.
- Sudden behavior changes, weakness, or trouble walking also need veterinary attention.

FINAL REMINDER

Ferrets need a secure home, species-appropriate nutrition, daily supervised activity, and prompt veterinary care.

Veterinary sources: MSD Veterinary Manual: Providing a Home for a Ferret • MSD Veterinary Manual: Routine Health Care • MSD Veterinary Manual: Emergencies • VCA Animal Hospitals: Feeding Ferrets • VCA Animal Hospitals: Ferrets – Housing •

This guide is educational and does not replace advice or examination by a veterinarian.