



allFerrets® is pleased to host:

August 19, 2022

“So You Want A Ferret”

Ferrets 101:

What Everyone Should Know About Pet Ferrets



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Agenda

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Introduction

Speaker: Connor Mulherin, Director of Marketing, allFerrets

Basic Ferret Facts

Speaker: Connor Mulherin

Keeping your Ferret Healthy and Happy

Speaker: Dr. F Hoffman, founder and CEO allFerrets



August 19, 2022

Basic Ferret Facts

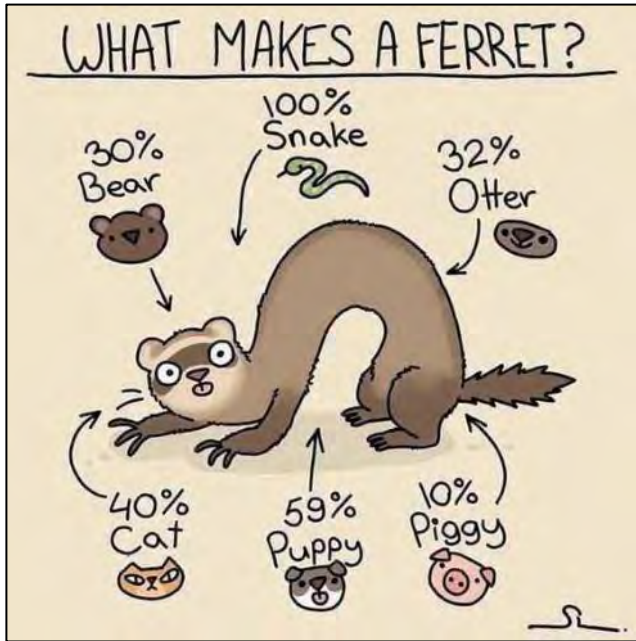
Speaker: Connor Mulherin
Director of Marketing - allFerrets.org

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What is a Ferret?



- **Pet Ferrets are NOT wild animals!**
- Latin name *Mustela putorius furo* means "**that which carries off mice and stinks**"
- Cousin to wild weasels, otters, wolverines, and the **wild black footed ferret of North America** (a very rare and endangered species)
- Domesticated over 2500 years ago
- Dogs, cats and ferrets are the only domestic carnivores
- 3rd most popular companion animal in the United States
- 5 to 7 million domestic ferrets in the US, but number is difficult to pin down



Domestic ferrets



Wild black-footed ferret

More Ferret Facts

- Life span: average 6 to 8 years, some live much longer
- Weight: 1 to 5 pounds
- Ferrets have anal scent glands – like skunks!
- Sleep: 14 to 20 hours a day.
- Poop frequently due to short GI tracts
- Legal to own in the United States, **EXCEPT**
 - **Hawaii**
 - **California**
 - **New York City.**
- Used in vaccine research for COVID, Influenza
- Single species--**no breeds**– but many colors and patterns



“Ferret Glossary” – terms used

- “Business” is a group of ferrets
- “Hob” male ferret
- “Jill” female ferret
- “Kit” baby ferret
- Ferrets are “obligate carnivores”: over 70% of their diet is meat.
- “Dimorphic” species: males and females are very different in size and shape
- **Owner jargon:** “carpet sharks”, “cat snakes”, “fluff noodles”, “noodle dogs”, “fur babies,” etc.



Ferrets are a dimorphic species:
Left: Jill (average: 1 - 2 pounds)
Right: Hob (average 2 – 5 pounds)

Ferrets Need You

- Highly intelligent: they learn their names, form strong bonds with humans and cage-mates.
- Plan on a long-term commitment: ~ 10 years; ferrets over 5 years old are “geriatric”: they do not do well “rehomed.”
- Ferrets love to play: **They need at least 2 – but preferably 4 – hours out of the cage every day!**
- Ferrets like toys, blankets, and hammocks.
- When left alone, they are like toddlers – they can get into trouble.
- Ferrets have a sense of humor – they play tricks on their owners!
- Ferrets do better in groups: recommend getting at least 2 ferrets at a time.



Safe Toys for Ferrets

- Ferrets love to chew.
- They steal and hide your things!
- **Good Ferret Toys:**
 - Tubing – 4-inch diameter or larger
 - Balls – hard plastic, such as golf or “soft” ball
 - Plush toys, but check that the stuffing is intact
 - Scratch posts and “cat” furniture under 21 inches high; (Ferrets are NOT cats: they can fall from heights)
 - Noise-makers: paper and stiff plastic bags; “crinkle” tubes, etc.

Avoid soft plastic or rubber, foam rubber, ‘stuffing’, small items that are easily swallowed (e.g., bells, buttons, doll eyes)



Safety First: Ferret-Proof Your Home

Ferrets are “escape artists.” The FIRST THING a ferret does in a new environment is to find any openings and holes to crawl into.

Ferret Danger Zones:

Entrances (screen doors, windows); **household appliances** (refrigerators, ovens, dishwashers, washer-dryers, HVAC ducts); **sofa-beds and reclining chairs (result in more ferret deaths than any other cause!)**; **cabinets** (corners where cabinets meet often have openings under the “kick panel”; some ferrets learn how to open cabinet doors); **open windows, open stairwells, porch railings, open toilets, etc.**; **Area rugs (don’t step on the sleeping lump!)**; **curtains and bookshelves:** ferrets climb up---but can’t get down!

Dangerous Ferret Objects:

Soft-rubber (rubber-bands; pencil erasers; door-stops); **foam plastic/rubber** (packing peanuts, bedding; pillows, toys); **small objects** (bells, “eyes”, buttons on pet toys; pills and capsules); **household chemicals and poisons, poisonous house plants; Marijuana!**

REMINDER: Ferrets need a safe space. They need to be monitored.



Necessary Equipment

The following are essential items:

- Cages – for home and travel
- “Bedding” – blankets, beds, hammocks, etc.
- Litter pans (multiple)
- Litter
- Bowls (heavy!) for food AND water
- Water bottles (for travel)
- Ferret Food
- Liquid fish-oil supplement (e.g., “Skin and Coat” “Ferretone®”; “Linatone®”)
- Nail clippers (baby or pet)
- “Tear-less” shampoo (baby or pet)
- Cotton “Q-tips”

Also consider:

- Toys and other forms of entertainment
- Scale (1 oz to 8 lb) with large weighing bowl
- Harness and leash for trips outside



Weighing your Ferret

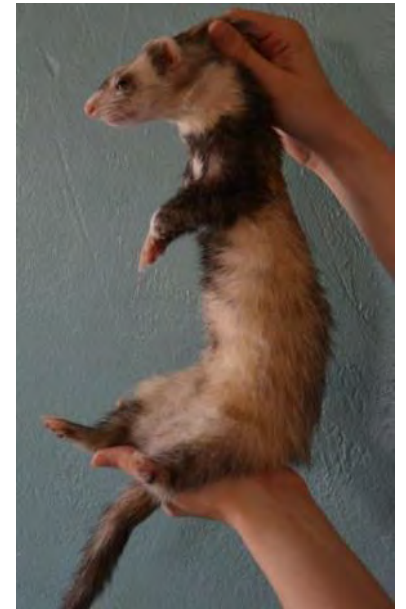
Ferret Housing

- Plan for an “at home” cage and a travel carrier.
- A ferret requires sufficient space to stand up, walk around, and use a litter box:
- **For 2 ferrets, a minimum cage size (in inches): 36 W X 24 L X 24 High**
- Do cover the bottom of cage (no exposed wire): use hard plastic or stiff reinforced rubber mat
- Recommend housing indoors, out of direct sunlight, at comfortable room temperatures.
- **Ferrets do not tolerate heat: maintain under 78 degrees F.**
- Provide the following at all times:
 - Food
 - Water
 - Litter box
 - Bedding – blankets, sleeping pad or hammock



Good Manners: Train Your Ferret

- Unlike their solitary wild cousins, domestic Ferrets are quite social.
- Because they are very intelligent, ferrets can be trained.
- Ferret kits, like puppies and kittens, must be taught proper manners when interacting with people.
- Ferrets have very thick skin and like to play hard with their ferret companions; train them not to nip or bite humans.
- Control your ferret by “scruffing”: a mother ferret grabs her kits by the loose skin at the back of the neck (“scruff”). You can do the same.
- Be gentle and consistent with your ferret: never hit your ferret.



How to “scruff your Ferret



Litter and Litter-Box Training

- Ferret training requires time and some effort!
- Ferrets naturally choose a “spot,” such as corners, avoiding places where they sleep or eat.
- Always provide a litter box; for multiple ferrets use more than one litter box.
- Keep litter boxes clean: empty at least once a day.
- Recommend: compressed “paper” litter. **Do not use clay or pine chippings: these can cause breathing problems for ferrets.**
- Training tips:
 - Place the ferret in the cage litter box before taking them out.
 - Introduce them to a small area out of the cage and show them the litter box or “pee” pads. Expand their range when they get the hang of it!
 - Key: Be gentle--but be consistent.



Grooming and Odor Control

- Healthy ferrets are naturally clean. They need very little grooming except for:
 - Nail clipping – every 3 to 4 weeks
 - Ear mite checks
 - Keeping the cage clean!!
- Ferrets have a musky odor that frequent bathing does not eliminate (---just dries out their fur).
- Reserve the bath for when your ferret gets very dirty (like – in the mud!)
 - Use “tear-less” pet or baby shampoo
 - **DO NOT use “anti-flea” shampoos for dogs or cats without first checking with your veterinarian, as some may be too toxic for ferrets.**
- Control odor by keeping the cage, bedding, and litter box clean, and by providing fresh food and water daily.
- Other odor reducing measures:
 - **Descenting:** surgical removal of the anal glands
 - **Neutering or spaying:** most ferrets are altered prior to sale
- *If you still do not like the smell, then perhaps a ferret is not right for you!*



Seasonal Changes

Ferrets undergo seasonal changes to a much greater degree than dogs or cats.

When the Days grow short and the Weather gets chilly, your Ferret will develop a very thick, fluffy coat.

Ferrets also gain weight during the colder months – up to 30% of their Summer weight.

As the Weather warms up, they lose the fur and the weight!

New owners often worry when their ferret loses or gains a significant amount of weight.

Shedding of fur becomes a problem, as the ferret may ingest a significant amount when grooming. Check with your veterinarian for an appropriate “hair ball” treatment.



Photo: Seasonal weight and coat changes in a “silver mitt” Ferret

Ferrets & Children & other household companions

- Children are fascinated by ferrets, but young children (less than 10 years old) require adult supervision around these tiny pets.
- Ferrets are much smaller than the smallest dog breed and weigh less than the average kitten.
- When properly introduced, a ferret can get along well with most dogs, but also some cats.
- **Ferrets are not recommended around rabbits, birds or rodents (rats, mice, guinea pigs), as these animals are natural “prey.”**
- Care should be taken when introducing any new addition to the household.
- Owners should monitor the interactions of ferrets with family members of all kinds!!



Photo: Size comparisons adult cat, Chihuahua dog, and domestic ferret



Photo: Young children need adult supervision around pet ferrets

Where to get a Ferret

Aside from friends or family members, here are the options for locating your Ferret:

Adopt/Purchase from a Ferret Rescue/Shelter or Club

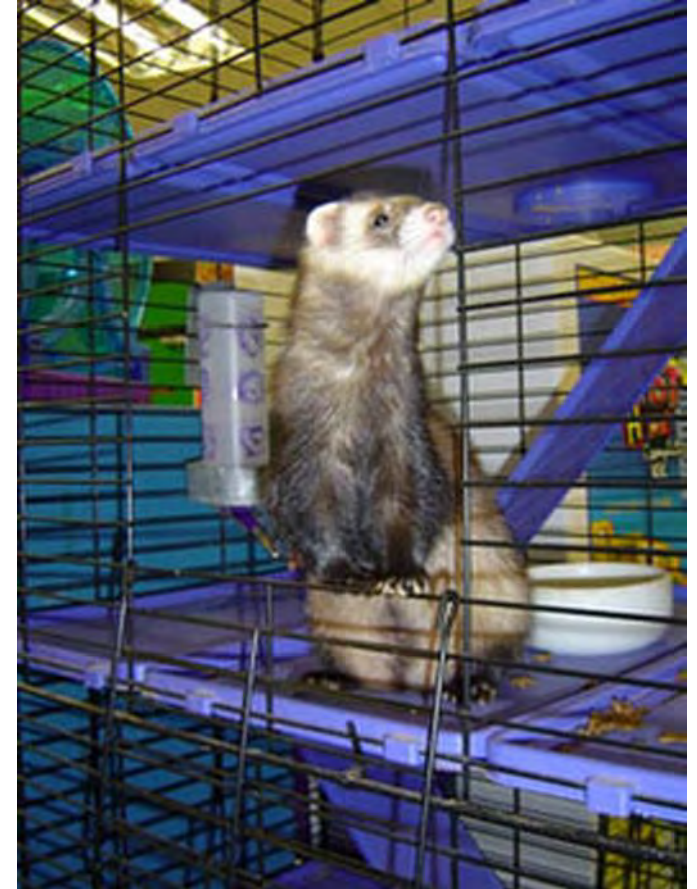
- In need of a “forever” home
- Usually “altered” and descented, and many are well-trained.
- Many “online” sites (e.g., petfinder.com)

Purchase from a pet store

- Ferrets less than 1 year old
- May cost a bit more than adoption
- Usually “altered” and descented
- Will need training

Purchase from a licensed ferret breeder

- Very few US ferret breeders
- Sold at “top dollar”
- May not be altered: neutering/spaying and descenting at your additional cost (\$200-500 USD)
- Choose a licensed breeder: **not all breeders are reputable.**
- May need training



Cost of Ferret Ownership (in US dollars)

The cost of the initial purchase and equipment for a ferret in 2022 is estimated at **\$400 to \$900**. **Annual** costs, thereafter: **\$250 to \$400**.

Itemized costs are shown, below:

Item	Approx Cost (USD)	Comments
Ferret		One time
Adoption/Shelter	\$0 – 150	“
Pet Store	\$75 - 350	”
Private breeder	\$200 – 500+	“
License/Permit	\$0-100	Check local jurisdiction
Cage and equipment	\$100- 300	One time
Food	\$10-40 per bag	Recurring
Litter	\$10-40 per bag	Recurring
Boarding	\$0 – 200	Per day
Health Care		
Immunizations	~\$100-250	Per vaccine; Annual
Routine physical examinations	\$100-250	Annual, and as needed
Dental cleaning	TBD	As needed
Medical and Emergency care	TBD	As needed
Surgical procedure (neuter, spay, descent)	\$200-500	If needed



Ferret Resources: Shelters, Rescues, Clubs

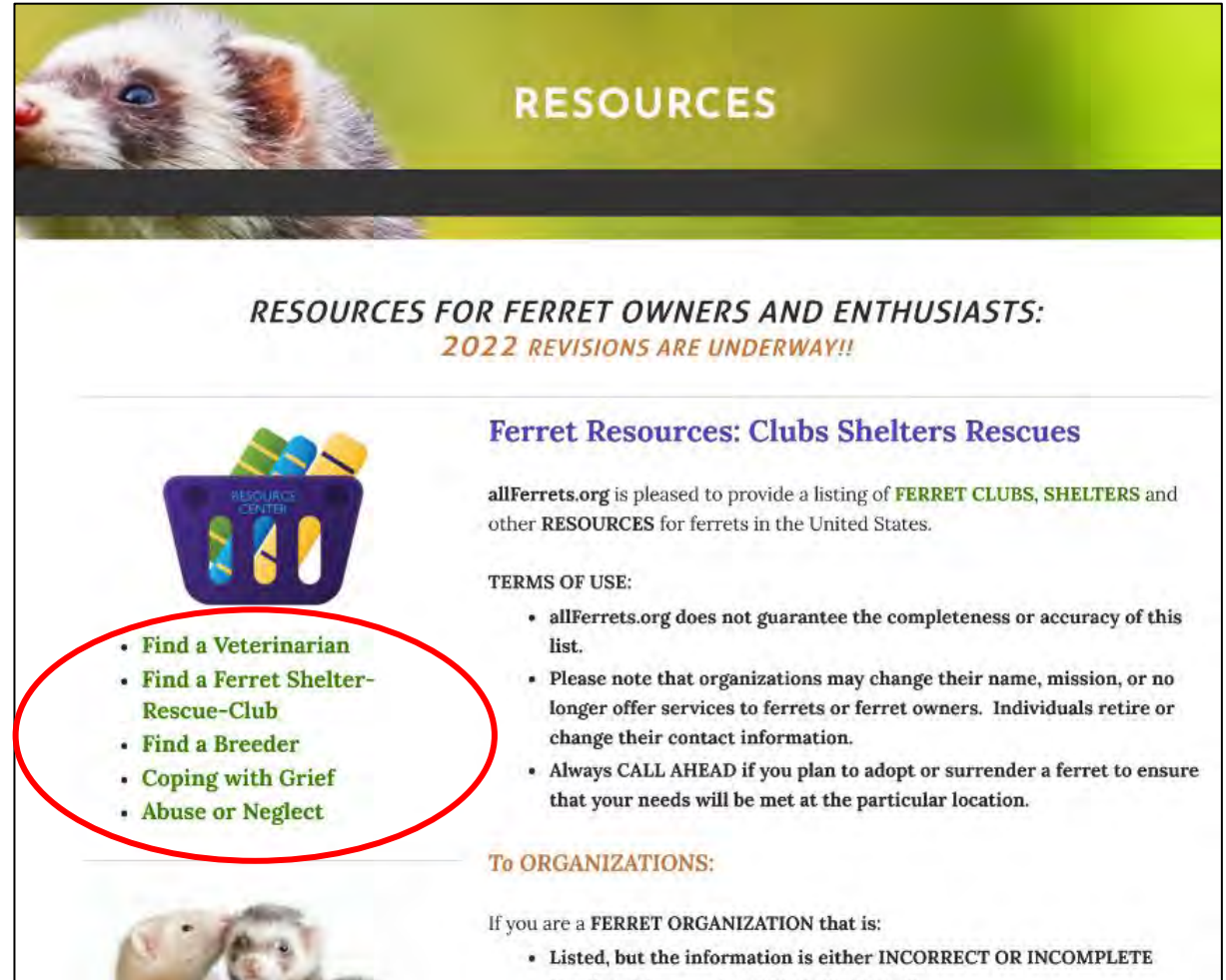
<https://www.allferrets.org/resources.html>

Visit our website for more information about ferrets, ferret ownership, and where to purchase a ferret:

www.allFerrets.org

“Like us” on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/allFerret



RESOURCES

*RESOURCES FOR FERRET OWNERS AND ENTHUSIASTS:
2022 REVISIONS ARE UNDERWAY!!*

Ferret Resources: Clubs Shelters Rescues

allFerrets.org is pleased to provide a listing of **FERRET CLUBS, SHELTERS** and other **RESOURCES** for ferrets in the United States.

TERMS OF USE:

- allFerrets.org does not guarantee the completeness or accuracy of this list.
- Please note that organizations may change their name, mission, or no longer offer services to ferrets or ferret owners. Individuals retire or change their contact information.
- Always **CALL AHEAD** if you plan to adopt or surrender a ferret to ensure that your needs will be met at the particular location.

To ORGANIZATIONS:

If you are a **FERRET ORGANIZATION** that is:

- Listed, but the information is either **INCORRECT OR INCOMPLETE**



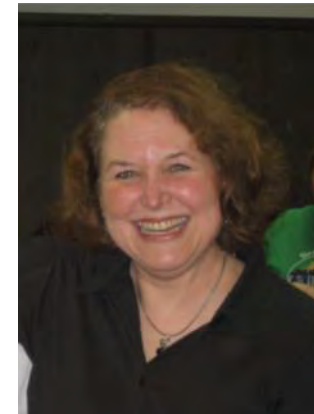
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Keeping your Ferret Healthy and Happy

Speaker: Dr. F. Hoffman
Founder and CEO – allFerrets.org

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DISCLAIMER:

Information provided is not a substitute for veterinary advice or care.

Please contact a licensed ferret-knowledgeable veterinary practitioner.



What is a “healthy” ferret?

- Alert, interactive
- Bright eyes, wet nose
- Soft fur, down to the tip of the tail
- Pink gums and tongue, white teeth
- Good muscle mass and strength
- No “lumps”, bumps, lesions
- Stool is formed or semi-formed, medium-dark brown
- Young ferrets usually are “squirmy” and playful



Ferret Health Facts

- Normal breathing rate: 33-36 breaths per minute
- Normal body temperature: 100° – 104°F (37.8°–40°C)
- Normal pulse: 200-250 beats per minute
- Check your ferret's hearing: use a squeaky toy
- Check your ferret's eyesight: follow the toy
- Ferrets with certain color patterns are often born deaf:
 - Most common: blaze, panda, white-patterned ferrets,
 - Less common: black-eyed white, ferrets with white feet ("mitts")
- Deaf and blind ferrets have very good quality of life and make excellent pets



Blaze ferret



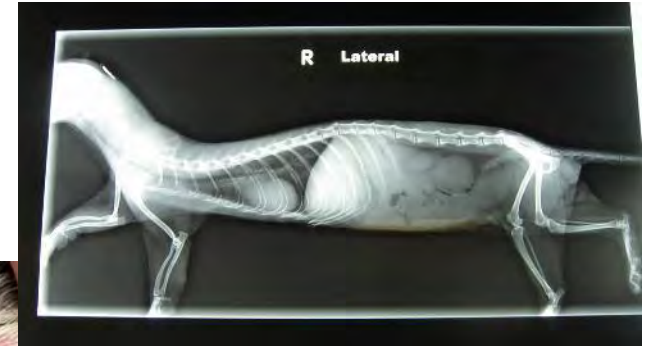
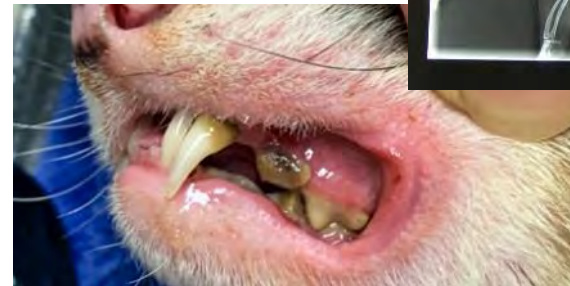
Panda ferret



Cataract causing blindness in sable ferret

Ferrets Require Routine Checkups

- Physical exam – at least yearly
- Immunizations
- Labs and xrays
- Dental exam and cleaning
- Check for ear mites and other conditions for treatment or prevention
- Nail clipping



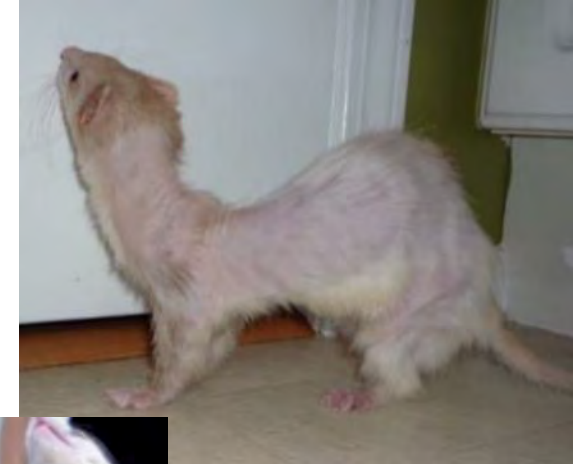
Common Health Conditions

Cancers:

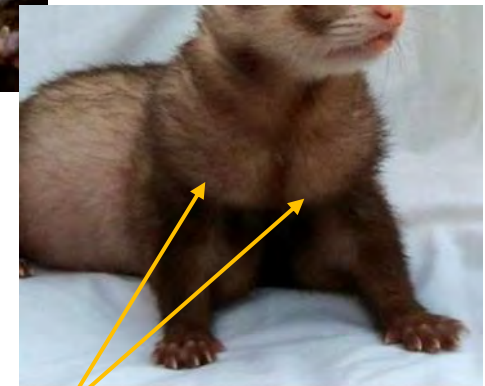
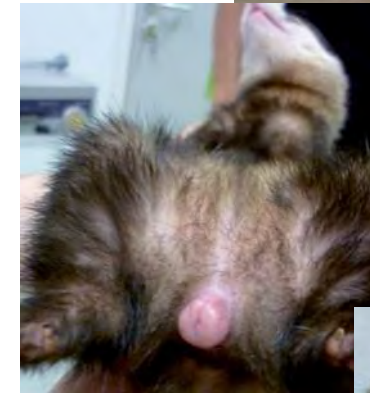
- **Insulinoma (pancreatic beta cell tumors):** ↑ insulin; ↓ blood sugar; signs: **loss of appetite, lethargy, seizures, death**
- **Adrenal hyperplasia and carcinomas:** ↑ adrenal hormones: signs: **hair loss, straining to urinate or defecate**; left untreated can be life-threatening. Exam: x-rays, abdominal ultrasound; Treatment: surgery; drugs: **leuprolide** injections (every 2-4 months); **desorelin** implants (under skin) (8-12 months).
- **Lymphoma:** **visible tumors**, around neck, etc.; GI-associated with Helicobacter infection, inflammatory diarrhea; no good treatments

Heart conditions: congenital (genetic), **heart worm**, viral infections, diet (low Taurine); **signs of heart failure: cough, rapid breathing, weight gain, lethargy**; Treatment: drugs; symptomatic.

GI conditions: **foreign objects, hairballs, infections, GI ulcers; cancer; signs of nausea** (clawing at mouth; grinding teeth); vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, dehydration, death; Exam: history; x-rays. Treatment: surgery; laxatives (for small objects); antibiotic; anti-acids



Adrenal disease:
hairloss; female sex
hormones



Lymphoma (neck tumors)

Infections

Parasites: **External:** fleas, ear mites, ticks; **Internal:** **heart worm** from mosquito bite; coccidiosis and giardia

Bacterial: cause skin, lung, GI infections. ***Helicobacter mustelae*:** **cause of stomach ulcers**

Fungal: ringworm (skin disease); coccidioidomycosis (valley fever)-soil fungus; causes lung infection.

Viral infections: includes Covid; the following cause serious and life-threatening conditions in ferrets:

- **Influenza** – can be serious; cross transmission between humans and ferrets
- **“Green” virus** (Epizootic Catarrhal Enteritis -ECE) (“green slime”) – highly contagious coronavirus; spreads through contact; serious ‘green’ diarrhea; no vaccine; treatment: supportive care (fluids, etc.)
- **Aleutian’s disease:** highly contagious parvovirus; deadly in mink; ferrets: virus is often dormant until stress or injury; systemic vasculitis: renal failure, bone marrow suppression and death. Diagnosed by blood test. no vaccine, supportive care.
- **Rabies** – death (100%) – **vaccine**
- **Canine Distemper** – death (100%)- **vaccine**

Ferret Immunizations

Ferrets should be vaccinated against:

Canine Distemper Virus

USDA licensed vaccines:

NeoVac FD [modified live virus] (NeoTech)

Purevax DV-Ferret [modified live virus] (Merial)

Rabies Virus

USDA licensed vaccine:

IMRAB®-3 (Merial)

DEFENSOR®-1 and DEFENSOR®-3 (Zoetis)

Read more at <https://www.allferrets.org/immunizations.html>



Canine distemper: signs in ferrets



Check with the Vet, if your ferret has

- Injury
- Lump or bump
- Hair loss
- Change in appetite or loose stools (can lead to dehydration)
- Increase/decrease in activity (lethargy/hyperactive)
- Coughing, sneezing, rapid breathing
- Weight loss
- Weight gain
- Excessive scratching
- Skin rash or bites, insects (fleas)
- Sore that is not healing



Ear mites



Mast-cell tumor

Ferret Emergencies: Seek Help NOW!!

- Difficult or rapid breathing, panting (open mouth)
- Seizure: shaking or screaming
- Sudden change in behavior: unusually sleepy or difficult to rouse
- Sudden loss of muscle strength, unable to walk
- Repeat vomiting
- Severe diarrhea - unable or unwilling to eat or drink
- Straining, whimpering, or unable to pass urine or stool
- Bleeding
- Signs of pain, whimpering
- “Ate something” (foreign object, pills, plants, etc.)



Poisons



- **Foods:** stimulant-containing ingredients, **chocolate**, teas, coffee beans; also, **grapes/raisins/garlic:** kidney failure; **onions:** hemolytic anemia
- **Xylitol** (non-nutritive sweetener): in chewing gum, candy, vitamins, toothpaste, mouthwash, cold lozenges, etc.); causes ↓ blood sugar >> seizures and death
- **Drugs:** any drug; keep drugs out of reach
- **Marijuana: signs of toxicity in ferrets:** salivation, staggering, vomiting, urinary incontinence, ↓ body temperature, ↓ heart rate, ↑ breathing rate, tremors, seizures, coma.
- **House-hold products:** antifreeze, moth balls, bleach, cleaning products, rodent and insect poisons, pesticides, etc.
- **Certain houseplants:** bulbs/lilies (amaryllis, daffodil, tulips, etc.); begonias, oleander, poinsettia, castor bean, sago palm, and many more



WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL:

Animal Poison Control Center - 24/7 Tel: (855)-764-7661

What to Feed Your Ferret

Provide fresh food and water at all times. Read the Package Label!!

- **Protein: 34% – 42%:** first 3 ingredients listed should be meat, or meat-based
- **Fat: minimum 18% - 20%**
- **Carbohydrates (e.g., corn, grain, potato, rice, etc.):** should NOT be in the first 3 listed ingredients!
- **Fiber/Ash:** minimal (<5%)
- **Taurine:** amino acid that protects the heart: look for it on the label



Most Kitten and some cat foods can meet the above ranges, **but NOT DOG FOOD!**

- Avoid products with peas or pea protein (associated with bladder stones)
- Avoid **sugar, carbs** (bread, rice, potatoes, corn, grains, etc.) – promote Insulinoma.
- No need for products that contain fruits, vegetables, probiotics, etc.

Recommend using more than one food brand:

Ferrets tend to favor (“imprint”) on foods. Given one specific food, they may refuse to eat other foods. Most ferret owners mix 2 or more brands of food together.

“Treats” – not needed; not food substitutes. Give: meat, egg, or occasional “skin/fur” oil “supplement”

“Where can I find a ferret breeder?”

Private (small) breeders, or large commercial breeders for research labs sell “whole” (breeding) ferrets. Most pet stores sell ‘altered’ ferrets.

Reason to purchase from a breeder: whole ferrets for breeding purposes.

BUT: **“Whole” ferrets don’t make good pets**

- Hobs: very strong odor; aggressive behaviors; solitary housing
- Jills: if not bred, female sex hormones depress bone marrow and immune cells: causes “aplastic” anemia, serious infections, **often leads to death**
- **Ferret Breeding: sales rarely off-set the costs/time/effort**

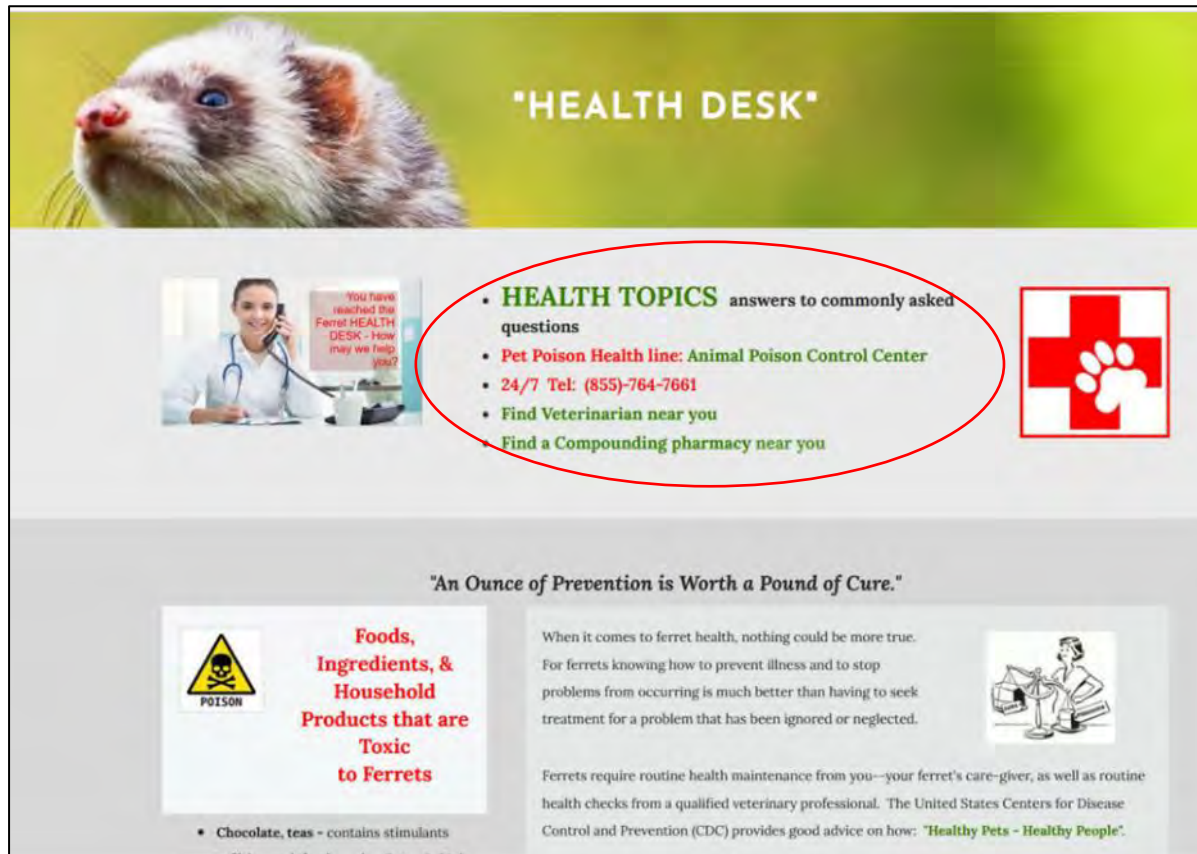


Resources: Health Topics; Ferret Veterinarians

<https://www.allferrets.org/health-desk.html>

You will need to find a “ferret” veterinarian:

Not all veterinarians or veterinary hospitals know how to treat ferrets. Many even refuse to see ferrets!



"HEALTH DESK"

- **HEALTH TOPICS** answers to commonly asked questions
- **Pet Poison Health line: Animal Poison Control Center**
- **24/7 Tel: (855)-764-7661**
- **Find Veterinarian near you**
- **Find a Compounding pharmacy near you**

"An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure."

Foods, Ingredients, & Household Products that are Toxic to Ferrets

When it comes to ferret health, nothing could be more true. For ferrets knowing how to prevent illness and to stop problems from occurring is much better than having to seek treatment for a problem that has been ignored or neglected.

Ferrets require routine health maintenance from you—your ferret's care-giver, as well as routine health checks from a qualified veterinary professional. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides good advice on how: **"Healthy Pets - Healthy People"**.



allFerrets®

Alabama

- Animal Care Center of Mobile
Mobile, Alabama 36608
- Animal Medical Center
Anniston, Alabama 36201
- Auburn University
College of Veterinary Medicine &
Small Animal Teaching Hospital
Auburn, Alabama 36849
- Bantfield The Pet Hospital
Hoover, Alabama 35244
- Care Animal Center
Dothan, Alabama
- Cornerstone Animal Hospital
Madison, Alabama 35758
- Cullman Veterinary Hospital
Cullman, Alabama 35055
- Nall Animal Hospital
Madison, Alabama 35758
- North Alabama Cat & Horse
Huntsville, Alabama 35894
- North Shelby County
Pelham, Alabama 35268
- Riverview Animal Clinic
Birmingham, Alabama 35209

Arizona

- Alta Mesa Animal Hospital
Mesa, Arizona 85205
- Animal Health Services
Cave Creek, Arizona 85331

Alaska

- Hillside Pet Clinic
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
- Homer Veterinary Clinic
Homer, Alaska 99603

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E-mail: info@allFerrets.org
Website: www.allFerrets.org



WEBINAR August 19, 2022

“So You Want a Ferret”

Ferrets 101: What everyone should know about Pet Ferrets

Our Speakers

Connor Mulherin
Dr. F Hoffman

allFerrets® - your online Ferret Community
a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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Our Partners*



Californians for ferret legalization

Paws Ferret Sanctuary

Licensed Ferret Shelter
Rescue-Foster-Adoption



Los Angeles – the friendly fun ferret people



*** To become a PARTNER, contact
info@allFerrets.org**