



FERRETS

Mustela [putorius] furo

Their relations include



have been Domesticated for over 2000 years

Mink, Weasel, Badger, Otter, & Skunk

Ghenghis Khan used them for hunting

Ferret Fallacies:

They are **NOT** a "cheap pet". Although pocket-sized, they are not pocket-priced to maintain properly.

They **DO** smell, but not offensively . . . and the musky male smell is much reduced by desexing.

They are **NOT** vicious. Most are very gentle. If fierce, they have probably been badly handled in the past.

Smell & sight are **NOT** their most important senses: they are most responsive to Touch.

They **DO** use litter boxes, although some are hard to train [& don't use 'clumping litter', it clumps INSIDE THEM]

They **DO** sleep a lot: about 18 hours each day

They are **NOT** clever. But they are curious, & fearless, with have a very short attention span. This makes them easily bored, hard to 'keep in', & prone to eating oddments that can get caught in their bowel.

They are **NOT** territorial. In fact, they don't even find their way home if they do escape

Ferrets & Food

Ferrets & SEX

Strict carnivores, their natural food is any animal smaller than themselves! ... mice, lizards, bugs, small birds.

They digest food quickly & need to eat often; they can 'graze' suitable foods 'ad lib'

Premium kitten dry food is best [Hills, Royal Canin, Iams]. Commercial "ferret foods" are often of questionable quality.

Read the label: look for 30% high quality protein, 10-20% fat, under 3% fibre, & the first 3 ingredients must be meat.

Daily supplements should include Omega 3, plus Vitamins A[20mg] & E[25 IU].

Treats" should be based on the ferrets' need to chew, since dental disease is common.

Puberty is at 5-8 months, during Spring, as the days lengthen. Jills can breed through Spring & Autumn, but caution: once they begin to cycle they will only ovulate if mated. Unmated, they stay on heat until Winter. This can cause oestrogen-overload with loss of hair, loss of vigor, loss of life.

. . . [We can provide hormone therapy to take her off heat, & to keep her off heat.]

If you do not plan to breed, your female ferret should either to be spayed or given a depot - hormone implant.

Pregnancy spans about 6 weeks [39 - 44 days] & kits are born with little fur & their eyes shut [they open at 3-4wks]

Weaning is at 5-8wks.

Kits can go to new homes at 8-10 weeks

Other Ferret Facts:

Lifespan: 5 – 8 years

Weight: Male 1- 1.5kg Female 500-800g

Preferred environment: 15 – 25°C & avoid high humidity

Ferret Fitness:

[90% of ferret problems can be prevented by correct homecare].

1. Correct Diet [see above]
2. Desexing [see above]
3. Vaccination: for Distemper [which is fatal] at 8 & 12 weeks, & again at 15 months [this then lasts 3-5 years, maybe for life]. Although not yet reported in Tasmania, ferrets with distemper have been seen in NSW & Victoria. Early signs include moist dermatitis of the chin, lips & vulva, with sneezing, cough, fever & loss of appetite. Up to 5 ferrets can share a vial of vaccine, so we like to organise ferret vaccinations on the 1st Monday of each month, allowing you to "share" too!
4. Worming [piperazine syrups] monthly till 6 months old, then each 3-4 months.
5. Heartworm prevention [if you take the ferret interstate]
6. Keep them safe, secure & occupied by safe toys. With a secure harness, they can come to the park!
7. Training.

Also: Aging ferrets are prone to cancer &/or hormone problems

Baldness due to Adrenal Gland Disease is now more common, but treatable/preventable by hormone implants

Ferrets can catch human 'flu.

Ferrets can get scabies, especially on their feet [this is sometimes wrongly called "foot-rot".