

# Domesticated ferret

*(Mustela putorius furo)*



<b>Adult Size</b>	Males range from 14 to 17 inches long & weigh 3-5 pounds. Females range from 12 to 14 inches and weigh 1-3 pounds.
<b>Lifespan</b>	Anywhere from 7 to 10 years.
<b>Male/Female Difference</b>	One can usually tell whether a ferret is a male/female by their size and weight. Males are easily distinguished since they have their urethra in the center of their belly.
<b>Compatibility</b>	Ferrets are incredibly social animals. Interaction and socialization are important in the development of a young ferret to eliminate behavioral problems later. If possible consider getting a pair so that you are not the only source of interaction the ferret receives.
<b>Origin</b>	The pet ferret is a hybrid of different animals, like the European polecat and steppe polecats from Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
<b>Climate</b>	Woodlands, prairies, wetlands
<b>Day Cycle</b>	Crepuscular
<b>Temperature</b>	A large well-ventilated cage. An average household temperature of 70 degrees F is proper.
<b>Lighting</b>	Room lighting should not be too bright as it could hurt their eyes. Their cage should not be in direct sunlight.
<b>Humidity</b>	Dry/low.
<b>Habitat/Territory</b>	Ferrets live in burrows in diverse habitats; some live in marshlands and feed off of frogs, others in farmlands and feed off of mice.
<b>Substrate/Bedding</b>	Comfortable towels/blankets make great beds for ferrets. Wash the towels at least once a week and spray with conditioning spray or deodorizer every other day. For litter shredded, pelleted aspen or recycled paper litters will suffice.
<b>Hiding Place/Den</b>	Chew safe toys and non-toxic hiding places will increase their level of interaction when they are left alone. Hammocks and tunnels are also fun toys for your ferret.

<b>Cage Type</b>	<p>Wire cages are the only option since aquarium style enclosures do not provide sufficient ventilation and are not meant for house ferrets. Multi-level cages are the best for keeping the ferret well exercised and interested. Make sure the cage is escape-proof. The bigger the cage the better.</p> <p>Ferrets are highly energetic and should not be cooped up in even the largest of cages. Give them a play gym, or a ferret-proof room to roam and play in. Harnesses are a great way to give them exercise and keep them under control.</p>
<b>Diet</b>	<p>Ferrets are actually fastidious animals and can be trained to use a litter box. Start the process in the cage, in the corner. Use a large enough litter box to fit their whole body, and use large, ferret safe litter. Place feces and urine in the box to encourage them to return there. Praise and reward them when they use it properly (they're smart enough to learn), do not punish accidents, just clean them up completely and place it in the box. Keep the box clean - ferrets won't use a dirt box. Ferrets like to dig and move things around, so attach the box to the cage. If they're using multiple corners, place litter boxes in each one, removing them as they decide on one to use.</p>
<b>Supplements</b>	<p>A ferret should be fed frequently, as they have very short digestive tracts; they should be fed at least twice a day, and food and water should always be available. Their diet should be high in protein and relatively high (20%) in fat to fuel their energetic lifestyle. There are many high quality dry foods specially made for ferrets. Also consider frozen and raw foods because it closely duplicates their natural diet and because frozen/raw still retain the nutrients and enzymes unlike processed kibble. Some people chose to give their ferret a frozen pinky mouse, the ones people feed to snakes, as it is one of the most natural foods for these little carnivores. Sweets such as raisins and treats should be given <i>very</i> rarely because of their high sugar content. Kitten food can be used in limited amounts, as it's too high in minerals such as calcium.</p>
<b>Diet Precautions</b>	<p>High quality fish oils, probiotics, and enzymes can aid in their digestion, a healthier looking coat, and less of a musky odor.</p>
<b>Feeding</b>	<p>Some veterinarians discourage feeding raisins or treats with high sugar since they have a tendency to hide their food, and could stockpile the treats and consume them in a short amount of time. Hard treats like bones or peanuts should never be given because they can become lodged in their intestinal tract.</p>
<b>Water Source</b>	<p>A ferret's stomach is about half the size of their head so try not to overfeed, but because of their short digestive tract they need to be fed frequently. Some ferrets tend to tip their food bowl, to remedy this you can get a ceramic or a heavy bowl.</p>
<b>Grooming</b>	<p>Most ferrets are used to water bottles, but they will happily drink from a bowl. Rinse and wash both and supply fresh water each day.</p>
<b>Oral and Foot Care</b>	<p>You can bathe your ferret with ferret or cat/dog shampoo. Ferrets should be bathed at least once a month. Another alternative is getting pet safe wipes and wiping them down. Spraying their towels with scent neutralizers will help reduce odors as your ferret</p>

crawls through them.

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<b>Proper Handling</b>	Ferrets need their nails clipped at least once a month. Use cat safe nail clippers, or bring them in for us to trim! No appointment needed.
<b>Habitat Maintenance</b>	Unless your ferret is young they usually do not bite with any pressure involved. Pick them up with both hands and make sure to support their body. Most ferrets are very friendly and will welcome any interaction with you.
<b>Health Concerns</b>	Ferrets tend to go to the bathroom in the same spot. Depending on the size of the cage one or two litter pans are appropriate. Spot clean their cage twice a day.

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