



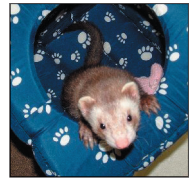
Disaster care tip sheet

For more information or assistance, please visit our website or call:
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• *Veterinary references and a summary of common ailments and life-threatening conditions are on the back of this sheet.*

FOR RESCUERS – SIGNS A FERRET MAY BE IN THE HOME

- Ferrets are very small (1-4 lbs.), like dark places to burrow, sleep up to 20 hours a day, and seldom vocalize – even when trapped or stressed.
- Look for small (1-3 inch, or pretzel-shaped) feces, particularly in corners. A ferret lives here!
- Most ferrets are allowed to free-roam indoors during at least some portion of the day. Look in dark, covered hidey holes: under rugs, bedding and clothes; in laundry hampers and closets; under dressers and other low furniture, under chair and sofa cushions. Ferrets like to climb into bathtubs, too, but may not be able to climb out.



DIET

- A healthy ferret will consume 1/4 - 3/4 cup of kibble per day.
- Good quality brands include Totally Ferret, 8-in-1 Ultimate, Marshall Farms Premium, Sheppard & Greene, and Mazuri.
- If these are not available, an acceptable substitute is Purina's Pro V chicken and rice formula for kittens/cats.
- Young kits (under 12 weeks), elderly and sick or traumatized ferrets may not eat kibble. Try Science Diet A/D or make a soupy mixture from finely-mashed kibble mixed with water.
- *Never* feed anything that contains fruit, nuts or vegetables, or dried versions thereof (such as raisins). Ferrets are obligate carnivores and these foods may cause a fatal intestinal blockage or, in the case of raisins, renal failure. Some poor quality commercial products contain foods generally recognized as unsafe; some have been pulled from the market.

Important! Ferrets need food and water in their cage at all times. A ferret's digestive cycle can be as little as four hours. They easily become hypoglycemic and/or dehydrated. Force-feeding and hydration may be required; use a medicine dropper or small plastic plunger-type syringe.

HOUSING

- Use a wire cage with less than 1.5 inches' spacing between the bars and a plastic floor. If floor is not plastic, cover with carpet protector, a welcome mat, carpet or some other soft material to protect paws. Do not use a fish tank, rabbit or cat cage.
- Provide a soft blanket or towel, "hammock," fleece tube or even an old shirt for sleeping and emotional comfort.
- Avoid kitty litter, especially the clumping kind. Ordinary newspaper is best.
- Do not use cedar or pine shavings - these cause respiratory problems in ferrets.
- Place a blanket over the cage and cover for darkness at least 8 hours a day.
- In a multi-level cage, sleep and play areas go on top, food and "poop" areas on bottom.
- If possible, use a drip-type water bottle mounted on the cage, as well as a bowl.
- Keep "ferret families" and bonded pairs together to prevent emotional distress.
- Prevent transmission of communicable diseases and unnecessary stress by housing unbonded and non-family units separately.



www.ferretemergency.org

TEMPERATURE

- Ferrets are highly stressed by and may not survive temperatures over 85 degrees Fahrenheit, especially those animals that are used to an air-conditioned environment.
- Ferrets do not sweat, so a fan will not cool them. Place a frozen bottle of water or small ice bag in the cage, wrapped in a sock or cloth.

BEHAVIOR

- Ferrets are not cage pets. They need daily exercise and play time in a safe room or play area, or a collapsible pen of the type pictured at right. Do not use a mesh playpen.
- Walk ferrets on a harness-type leash. They will easily slip out of a normal leash.
- Play behavior includes dancing/jumping, mock fighting, and backing away with fangs bared. This is NOT aggression – this is a ferret inviting you to play.
- Deafness is fairly common in ferrets but can be difficult to diagnose. Deaf ferrets are often mishandled and learn to bite as a result. A ferret with a mostly white face like the one pictured at right (not an albino), a white stripe on its forehead and a white blaze on the chest are signs of possible deafness. Avoid sudden movements or startling the ferret from behind.
- Avoid toys made of soft rubber, with feathers, tinsel or foam stuffing, or ingestible parts.
- Scruff ferrets at the back of the neck for easy handling or vetting; they'll go limp and may yawn.
- Some ferrets do not get along with other ferrets. Just like people, personalities may clash. Never confine unrelated ferrets in the same cage, or the same play area without supervision.



DISEASE AND ILLNESS

- ADV is a contagious parvovirus that causes renal failure and death. There is no vaccine or cure. Quarantine incoming ferrets until tested for ADV. Clean skin and clothing with bleach after handling ADV-positive or unknown animals. Avecon Diagnostics' "QuickChek" saliva ELISA test (\$15) gives results in 10 minutes.
- ECE ("green diarrhea") is another potentially fatal virus, and much too common. The ferret is obviously ill, with watery eyes, lethargy, and refusal to eat or drink. There is no medicinal treatment, only supportive care. Force-feeding and forced hydration, supplemented with Pedialyte or Rebound, are usually necessary.
- Drooling, lethargy, "staring into space" or seizures are indicative of insulinoma, another common (but deadly) illness. A ferret in seizure may die. Rub Karo or corn syrup on the gums and seek emergency veterinary care.
- Coughing, lethargy and attempts to vomit with an inability to defecate (or pencil-thin poops) are signs of intestinal obstruction. Emergency veterinary care is needed.
- Canine distemper is virtually 100 percent fatal in ferrets. It is easily transmissible through contact with clothing, shoes or even by inhaling the virus carried on clothing or skin. Euthanasia is recommended.
- Ferrets are just as susceptible to heartworm as are dogs, but usually die if infected. Clinical signs are the same but progress much more rapidly. Prevention is the key – veterinarians recommend a cat-size (5-15lb.) dose of Revolution; apply one tube per month. Liquid Ivermectin and Heartgard also work.
- Helicobacter & stomach ulcers are very common, especially in older ferrets. Stress may cause a flare-up and can be fatal. Loose stools, inappetance and vomiting are signs. Treat with 35mg of amoxicillin 1x/day and Clarithromycin (Biaxin) at 50mg 1x/day for two weeks.
- A balding ferret likely has adenoma. It is not an emergency unless the tumor grows large enough to block urination.
- "Birdseed" poops are a sign of stress; black, tarry poops are caused by gastric bleeding and ulcers.
- Never use a flea collar or flea dip. Place two drops of Frontline on the base of the neck 1x/mo. for 3 months.