

PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE

Common health problems in ferrets include:

- **Intestinal foreign bodies.** Ferrets often ingest or chew foreign objects, which can lead to gastrointestinal blockage. See a vet; treatment may require surgery. Keep all foam, plastic and rubber objects out of reach of ferrets to prevent this.
- **Influenza.** This virus can be transmitted from humans to ferrets and vice versa. Symptoms include coughing, eye and nostril discharge, lethargy and sneezing. See a vet immediately. This virus can be fatal.
- **Adrenal gland disease.** Symptoms include hair loss, swollen vulva or prostate, itchiness and aggression. See a vet. Treatment may require injections or surgical removal of the affected glands.
- **Epizootic catarrhal enteritis (“Green slime disease”).** Symptoms include diarrhea, reduced appetite and lethargy. See a vet. Treatment may require antibiotics, fluids and anti-diarrheal medications.

Veterinary examinations every 6–12 months are recommended, as well as a routine check-up after adopting your ferret.

Visit a vet immediately if your ferret has any of the following symptoms: reduced appetite, diarrhea, no feces, drooling, bloating, lethargy, difficulty urinating, itchiness or hair loss.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more comprehensive information on ferret care, visit:

- ferretcare.org
- petmd.com
- thesprucepets.com
- rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/ferrets
- seavs.com

Area Vets

[Stahl Exotic Animal Veterinary Services](#)
4015 Rust Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 491-1111

[Pender Veterinary Clinic](#)
4001 Legato Rd.
Fairfax, VA 22033
(703) 654-3100

[Paws, Purrs & Exotics](#)
5838-A North Kings Highway
Alexandria, VA 22033
(703) 549-7297

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Animal Welfare League of Arlington

2650 Arlington Mill Dr.
Arlington, VA 22206

Phone: (703) 931-9241
www.awla.org
E-mail: mail@awla.org

CARING FOR FERRETS

A BASIC GUIDE TO HUSBANDRY AND PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE





DIET

Food

- A commercial ferret diet, such as **Evo, Wysong, Marshalls, Totally Ferret** or **8-in-1**, should comprise the majority of the diet.
- Meat-based treats, such as plain chicken and eggs, can be given occasionally.
- Rodent laxatives such as **Laxotone** or **Ferretone** can be given 2-3 times a week to prevent hairballs, particularly during shedding season.

Ferrets are primarily carnivores and require a protein-based diet that is low in carbohydrates and fiber. Avoid feeding them fruits, vegetables, sugary treats or “people food.”

Water

- Water should be available at all times, preferably in a bowl or dish rather than a water bottle. Change water daily.

HOUSING AND GENERAL CARE

Caging

- Cages should provide a minimum of 2 by 4 feet per ferret. A wire bar style cage with multiple levels for your ferret to climb on is optimal.
- Cage platforms should be plastic or steel, not wire.
- Ferrets should ideally be kept in same-sex pairs, or with a spayed or neutered ferret of the opposite gender. Monitor ferrets for fighting and separate if necessary. Solitary ferrets should be handled daily.

Environment

Ferret cages should contain:

- Multiple levels, accessible by ramps.
- A litter box. Use a paper-based litter such as Carefresh, not wood shavings or cat litter. Change litter regularly.
- A sleeping area, such as an old t-shirt or commercially available ferret hammock or “sleep sack.”
- Toys, such as commercially available tunnels and hard plastic balls, to encourage exercise and prevent boredom.
- Unlimited access to water in a water bowl and food in a bowl. Refill daily.

Bedding should be washed regularly. The optimal temperature for ferret housing is 50 – 75°F.

Grooming

- Nails should be trimmed regularly, either at home or by a veterinary technician.
- Ferrets should be bathed approximately once a month using pet-safe shampoo.
- Brushing your ferret’s teeth regularly with a pet-safe toothpaste is recommended to prevent tartar buildup.

BEHAVIOR

- Ferrets require a minimum of four hours a day outside of the cage. Make sure to supervise your ferret and “ferret-proof” your house before letting a ferret explore it.
- Ferrets spend up to twenty hours a day asleep, preferring to sleep in dark, enclosed areas. They are most active at dusk.
- Ferrets communicate through a variety of vocalizations: barking, screaming or hissing to express fear or agitation, and “chuckling” or squealing when playing.
- Ferrets spend most of their waking hours exploring and require extensive mental stimulation.

Handling

- Pick up your ferret by placing one hand under its chest and supporting its hind legs with your other hand. Hold your ferret close to your body for security.
- Do not allow small children to handle ferrets without adult supervision.

