

# Ferret



## *Mustela putorius furo*

The origin of ferret domestication is uncertain, but it is believed that these inquisitive little weasels have been a human companion, and possibly hunting partner, for at least 2,500 years. Ferrets have an average lifespan between 7 and 10 years and can weigh between 1.5 and 4.5 lbs.

### Housing

#### Size

As with all little mammals, you'll want to get the largest cage you can for your ferret, preferably with multiple levels, but the minimum size we recommend is 36in x 24in x 24in. Wire mesh floors should be avoided as it can be uncomfortable for your pet and a possible source of injury. A cage that latches securely is recommended as ferrets are notorious escape artists. Ferrets do well adjusting to a large range of temperatures, but you should avoid placing the cage anywhere that exceeds 80° F, is in direct sunlight, or is drafty. Ferrets are social animals, so a central location for its cage, where it can have frequent interactions with family is a great idea.

#### Bedding

To line the floor of your ferret's cage, we recommend an appropriately sized piece of carpet or rug. Other options include a towel, blanket, or an old sweater. Using other types of bedding material may make training your ferret to use a litter box more difficult, but if you must we recommend pine, aspen, or recycled paper.

#### Decor

Ferrets are inquisitive explorers, when they're awake, so they'll appreciate objects in their cage to interact with. Tubes, tents, and playhouses designed for small pet mammals are a great option, as are ping pong balls and solid rubber toys. Latex and foam toys should be avoided. A litterbox is an essential component of your ferret's cage. Ferrets naturally seek out corners to relieve themselves, making it very easy to train them to use a litterbox. The litterbox should contain a recycled paper litter. We recommend a hammock or other type of enclosed sleeping area for your ferret as this is their preferred sleeping arrangement and they may spend up to 18 hours a day sleeping. A hide box makes a great addition to your ferret's home as well.



## Some products to look for

- Kaytee Sleep-E-Tent
- Midwest Ferret Nation Cage
- Kaytee Hi-Corner Litter Pan
- Marshall Pop-N-Play Ball Pit
- Sunseed Vita Prima Ferret Food
- Kaytee Critter Litter
- Nature's Miracle Deodorizing Cage Wipes
- Marshall Bandits Treats
- Living World Lock & Crock Dish



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## **Water**

Water should be offered to your ferret in a water bottle that is securely attached to the outside of your ferret's cage. Ferrets like to play with bowls (and everything else, really) and will make a mess if you're offering water in a bowl. The water bottle should be placed in a location close to the food dish as ferrets like to drink when they eat.

## **Diet**

### **Dry Food**

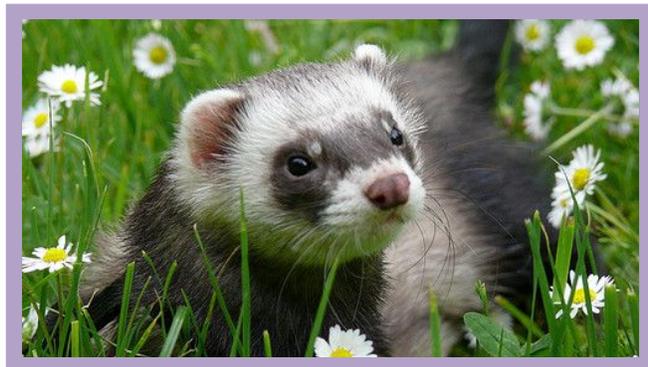
Ferrets are obligate carnivores and in the wild feed exclusively on small mammals, so they require a diet high in protein. There are several appropriate commercially manufactured ferret diets available and offering your pet a variety can sometimes prevent your ferret from becoming a picky eater. Ferrets have a short digestive tract and will eat several small meals throughout the day. For this reason, your ferret should have a bowl of dry ferret food available at all times. Dry food should be the bulk of your ferret's diet as it is good for your ferret's teeth and gums. All food should be placed in a heavy ceramic dish, or a dish attached to the side of the cage, to prevent tipping.

### **Wet Food**

Wet food makes an excellent occasional meal for your ferret, but should not be the bulk of its diet. Wet food can also aid in the removal of hairballs.

### **Treats**

While ferrets will do fine eating just dry kibble and the occasional wet food, some people feel the need to offer their ferret treats. If you're the type to spoil your ferret with treats, be sure to choose wisely. Again, ferrets are obligate carnivores, so treats heaving in grains and other fillers are not the best option. There are several commercially available pet treats that will suit your ferret's dietary requirements and its palate. In addition to packaged treats, you can offer your ferret cooked, boneless meats like chicken.



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