



303-948-5000

## CARE OF FERRETS

(Ferret do's and don'ts)

### Ferret Do's

- Ferrets are carnivores and require animal proteins. Compared to dogs and cats, they have higher protein and fat requirements and need much lower fiber. We recommend a ferret food with a minimum of 35-40% protein, minimum fat of 18-22% and low fiber/carb less than 3% (Totally Ferret, Marshall, Evo, etc).
- Give your ferrets HARD tubing and HARD plastic toys for play.
- Kits should be vaccinated for Canine Distemper at 10, & 14 weeks of age. They also require a rabies vaccine at 3-4 months of age. BOTH VACCINES NEED TO BE GIVEN ANNUALLY. While the chances of an indoor-only ferret being exposed to distemper and rabies are small, they are also deadly diseases and are preventable with a vaccine. Distemper is carried in the air and can be transmitted through vents, on your other pets, etc. If you do not vaccinate your ferret for rabies and s/he bites a person, you can be prosecuted and your pet euthanized. It is not worth the risk.
- All pets receiving a vaccination will have the comprehensive physical examination prior to vaccination. Just as with people, a physical examination is the most important component of an office visit allowing the veterinarian the opportunity to completely examine your pet and discuss any medical problems noted. Some ferret owners choose not to vaccinate their ferret. While we may disagree--if you make this choice, please make sure to have them examined yearly at the very least.
- Prior to vaccination, we will give a steroid/Benadryl shot to help prevent a potentially serious (and sometimes fatal) vaccination reaction. The cost is included in the price of the vaccination.
- Ferret-proof your home. Remove any access to rubber items such as pipe insulation, shoe insoles, erasers, etc. Use a hard, non-chewable screen to cover things like the back of the refrigerator, stove, washer, etc. Check dishwashers, closets and dryers before closing them. Check under cushions, mattresses and easy chairs before sitting down—ferrets love to sleep under them and are easily suffocated.
- Ferrets are susceptible to ear infections. Clean ears every 1-2 weeks and after bathing. Use ear cleaners designed for animals (not human animals). You can use a Q-Tip to clean them, but do not force it into the ear canal. Use gentle scooping motions.
- Bathe them with ferret or cat shampoos *only*. Human shampoos will dry out their skin. Over-bathing can strip natural oils from a ferret's haircoat and make their skin greasy and smelly. Once to twice a month should be sufficient.



### **Ferret Do's Continued:**

- House your ferret in a stainless steel cage with bedding—preferably a snooze tube or hammock. Clean water bottles **daily**. Clean in dishwasher at least once weekly. This is important because when ferrets drink from the bottle, they get backwash from their mouths in the water, which promotes bacterial and fungal growth.
- Ferrets get hairballs—give them a laxative (Laxatone or Ferretlax) once weekly as maintenance and three times weekly or as directed on the label. Shedding season can vary for every ferret, but is generally during spring and fall.
- If you notice your ferret is losing hair, especially around the tail—s/he may be developing an adrenal tumor---all too common in older ferrets (85% occurrence), but we have seen them in ferrets as young as 2 years of age. Call us right away if you notice that your ferret has lost hair w/o any regrowth in 3-4 weeks.
- Spend time with your new friend and get them out of the cage for supervised play at least 1-2 hours daily. Ferrets that are not handled enough get grumpy and may begin to bite. They love to play and will bond with you quickly. The rewards are great!

### **Ferret Don'ts**

- Do not feed them dog or cat food. Stay away from ferret treats with fruits. We recommend Ferretone in small amounts as a treat.
- Stay away from cat litters with perfumes, wood chips, or clays. The fumes can cause respiratory problems. We recommend pelleted litters such as Yesterday's News (less mess too!)
- Don't house your ferret in an aquarium; there is no ventilation.
- Small children should never be left unsupervised with any ferret, unless they are very familiar with each other.
- Declawing or defanging ferret's are a no-no.
- Stay away from toys that are made from cloth, sponge material, soft rubber, plastics or latex. These can cause an intestinal blockage and may be fatal.
- You can give your ferret the flu virus—including the swine flu--and it is often far more serious for them. Avoid handling ferrets when you are sick, and call us right away if they are showing symptoms after being exposed.
- Never hold a ferret by its tail. You can hold them by the scruff of the neck. Ask us to show you the proper technique.



**Congratulations on your new baby! Ferrets are wonderful pets—please do not hesitate to ask if you have any health, nutrition or behavior questions.**