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SUPPLY LIST



HOUSING

CAGE

Specs

Cages must be a minimum of 15 cubic feet per ferret. Taller cages with levels are preferred. Bar spacing should be no more than 1" for adult ferrets.

Temperature

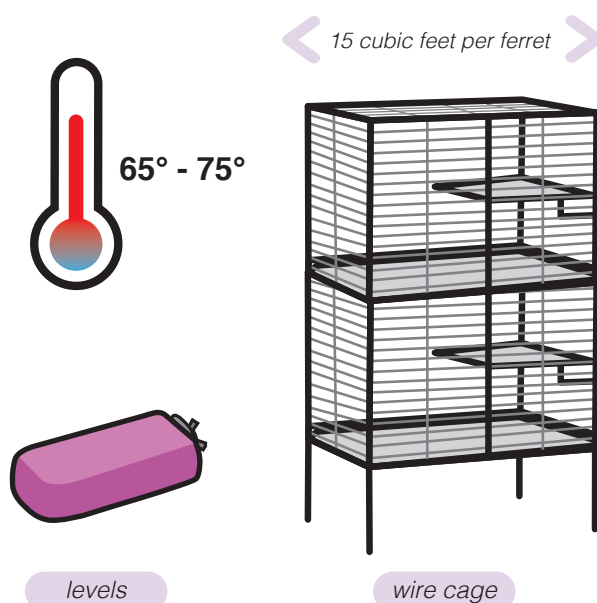
The temperature inside the cage should always be between 65° and 75° F with the humidity between 30% and 70%.

Material

Wire-sided cages are preferable because they provide plenty of ventilation and options for climbing. All cage floors, ramps, and levels should be solid or covered with fleece since standing on wire can cause injuries and bumblefoot.

Examples

Critter Nation cages are easy to clean, customize, and move around. Plus, they come in both single and double sizes depending on how much room you have and how many ferrets you want to keep. Feisty Ferret Homes and My First Home Deluxe style cages also work well if you have less space for a larger cage.



BEDDING

Sometimes bedding that works for one ferret will not work for another as some ferrets have allergies to certain beddings. MNPPR strongly recommends avoiding all wood-based beddings due to the general sensitivity of pocket pets. We like to use fleece to line the cage and cover any exposed wire floors, then use *unscented* paper bedding as litter placed in a litter box. Ferrets are very smart and can be trained to use a litter box, which makes cleaning even easier.



fleece



pelleted
paper



soft recycled
paper



shredded
paper



HOUSING

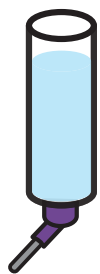
FURNISHINGS

Essentials

Set your ferret's cage up with the primary essentials including a water bottle, food bowl, at least one shelter/hide, at least one hammock, tube or sack, and a bed. If you choose to litter train your ferrets, be sure to incorporate at least one litter box that is large enough for your pet sit in comfortably.

Variety

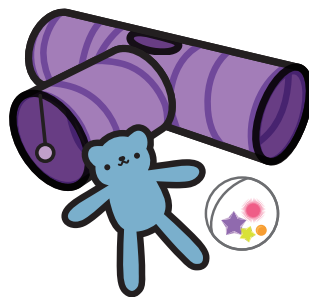
It is important to provide a variety of toys, beds, and fun stuff you can rotate to keep your ferret interested. Good examples include tunnels, balls, cardboard boxes, stuffed animals, and cat toys. Visit the homemade toys tab on our website for more ideas.



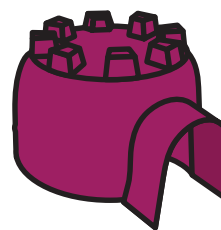
water bottle



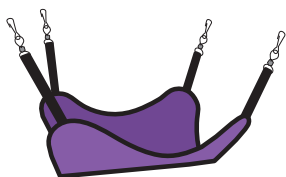
food dish



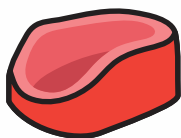
toys



hides



hammocks



beds



litter box



FEEDING

DIET

Staple Diet

Always keep your ferret's food bowl full of high-quality ferret kibble so they can eat several meals throughout the day. Ferrets are obligate carnivores meaning they require a meat-based diet and cannot properly digest food that uses vegetable protein or has a high level of grains. MN Pocket Pet Rescue recommends mixing ½ Marshall's Premium Ferret Diet with ½ Wysong ferret food to make the most balanced diet. If your ferret is overweight, they may need fewer treats or more exercise.

Treats

Ferrets have very specific dietary requirements, so treats should be fed with caution. Fruits, vegetables, and too much fiber can all make them sick.

SAFE TREATS

cat treats
cooked, unseasoned eggs
cooked, unseasoned chicken
cooked, unseasoned turkey
cooked, unseasoned lamb
freeze-dried meats
pumpkin

UNSAFE TREATS

<i>bread</i>	<i>nuts</i>
<i>cheese</i>	<i>onions</i>
<i>fizzy drinks</i>	<i>processed meat</i>
<i>fruits</i>	<i>raw beans</i>
<i>garlic</i>	<i>sugar</i>
<i>milk</i>	<i>vegetables</i>

Raw Meat

Some ferret keepers choose to feed their pets a raw meat diet. If you are interested in exploring this option, you must first do extensive research and speak with a ferret knowledgeable veterinarian about if this type of diet is ideal for your pets and how to safely prepare and feed it.



EXERCISE

Activity

Ferrets sleep up to 18 hours a day! Though they are naturally crepuscular, meaning most active at dawn and dusk, they can easily adapt to their humans' schedule if you set a routine and stick to it every day. Young ferrets are more active and playful than older animals. As they age, most are content to explore for a little then spend time cuddling in your lap. Female ferrets are generally more energetic and independent, while males tend to be calmer and more snuggly.

Floortime

Floortime and exercise are very important for a ferret. Time outside the cage should be spent running around, exploring, and playing with you and/or other ferrets. Some fun things to try with your ferret are making a maze, playing chase with a toy, creating an obstacle course, wrestling with a toy, and hiding food for them to find. Ferrets should get a minimum of two hours per day of playtime with you outside their cage, even if they have a large habitat.

Wheels and Exercise Balls

Never use a wheel or exercise ball for your ferret. These items can cause injury to your pet's back, feet, or toes.

Pet-Proofing

Make sure to pet-proof before play by covering outlets and cords, putting away anything you don't want chewed on, moving houseplants, blocking any small space you cannot reach into such as under the fridge, and securing other pets in a different area or room. Exercise pens or multiple pens linked together can be extremely useful in keeping your pet secure while providing lots of room to run.



SOCIAL NEEDS

COMPANIONSHIP

Mental Stimulation

Ferrets are very social, smart creatures who can be prone to boredom and weight gain if they are not offered a variety of toys, regular exercise, and additional mental stimulation. They love spending time with their humans, playing games, and investigating.

Bonded Buddies

Ferrets are communal animals and will be happiest when living with other ferrets. It is strongly recommended to keep a minimum of two ferrets at a time. Unaltered ferrets should be kept only with other ferrets of the same sex. MNPPR strongly advises spaying or neutering your ferrets.

BONDING WITH YOUR FERRET

Key Components of Training

**TRUST • POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT
CONSISTENCY • REPETITION • PATIENCE**

Tips

Every time you approach your ferret's habitat, bring a small treat for your pet so they learn to associate you with pleasant things and look forward to your visits. Offer treats with an open palm when possible.

Speak softly to your ferret and call them by their name so they get used to your voice and learn their name.

Keep your ferret's cage somewhere you spend a lot of time so they get used to your voice, scent, and movement.

Never grab your ferret, instead place an open palm on the floor in front of them and allow them to come to you.

The more time you spend with your ferret, the sooner they will become comfortable with you.



HANDLING & GROOMING

SAFE HANDLING

Picking Up Your Ferret

Waiting for your ferret to come to you before picking them up is a great way to develop trust. Talk to your ferret and let them sniff your hand before attempting to pick them up so that they know it's you. Ferrets can be very squirmy, so it's important to always have a good handle on them. Always use two hands when picking up your ferret. One hand should support the rump while the other supports the chest. Hold them close to your body and talk softly to comfort them.

GROOMING

Nails

Ferrets have 5 toes on both their front and back feet that must be trimmed every 4-5 weeks. To trim their nails, hold your ferret still, cover the toe with your finger so only the nail is exposed, and use a small pet or human nail clipper to clip the clear part of the nail. If you accidentally clip the pink vein (or quick) dip your pet's foot in styptic powder to stop the bleeding. It can be helpful to have a second person holding the ferret, to give them lots of treats, and to keep sessions short. Alternatively, view our events page on our website for our nail trim clinic dates and we can do it for you!

Dental Care

Just like cats and dogs, ferrets' teeth and gums must be regularly checked and cleaned to ensure they don't get abscesses, loose teeth, or have tumors. About twice a month, use a pet-specific toothbrush and toothpaste to gently remove plaque and another buildup. If you find any issues or your pet is having difficulty eating, it should be seen by your vet immediately.

Ear Cleaning

Ferrets require their ears to be cleaned out every 1-3 weeks. Prepare a ferret-safe ear cleaning solution by placing the bottle in a lukewarm water bath. Dip the cotton swab into the warmed solution and carefully clean the crevices of your ferret's ears. This helps prevent ear wax build-up that can cause hearing loss, infections, pain, and ear mites.

Bathing

While most ferrets in the US are descented when they are spayed or neutered, they still have a slight musky odor. It may be tempting to try and bathe that scent away, but overbathing can make the smell worse as well as drying out their skin. Ferrets should only be bathed about once a month with a gentle ferret or small pet shampoo to keep their skin and coat clean.



HEALTH

GENERAL INFORMATION

Lifespan

Ferrets live an average of 8 to 10 years.

Reproduction

Ferrets can begin to reproduce between the ages of 4 and 8 months old and are usually spayed or neutered at around 6 weeks old.

Routine At Home Health Checks

At least once a week, spend some time examining your ferret's fur, skin, and teeth for any physical changes such as lumps, wounds, overgrown teeth or nails, poor coat quality, etc. If any abnormalities are found, it is a good idea to make an appointment with your veterinarian for assessment, as any health concerns can progress very quickly.

Annual Exam

All ferrets should have a yearly veterinary exam to ensure they stay in good health. Ferrets need both distemper and rabies vaccinations. Distemper is a viral infection most commonly found in dogs that can affect ferrets as well. It is important that ferrets be vaccinated against distemper since it is easily spread through both direct contact and airborne particles.

SIGNS OF ILLNESS

Like all pocket pets, ferrets are very good at hiding when they get sick, so if you see any of the following signs, get in contact with your veterinarian immediately:

ANY BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

LETHARGY

DEFENSIVE AGGRESSION

DISINTEREST IN INTERACTION

WEIGHT LOSS

CHANGES IN EATING

CHANGES IN DRINKING

CHANGES IN STOOLS

DISINTEREST IN TREATS

POOR COAT QUALITY



HEALTH

COMMON ILLNESSES

Adrenal Disease

The adrenal gland is a crucial part of the body that releases cortisol during stressful situations and regulates blood sugar, the immune system, and sex hormones. If a ferret's adrenal gland gets too large due to excessive growth, a benign tumor, or cancer, it can induce too many sex hormones to be produced. **Please see our guide on adrenal disease in ferrets for more information.**

Symptoms include hair loss starting at the base of the tail, hair loss on the toes or back of the neck, itchy skin, anemia, pale gums, a swollen or itchy vulva in females, an enlarged prostate in males, increased aggression, aggressive humping, cage rage, and urinary problems.

Insulinoma

Insulinoma is a common illness that begins at middle age in both male and female ferrets. It is a tumor in the pancreas that causes an increase in the production of insulin resulting in severe hypoglycemia (low blood sugar.) **Please see our guide on insulinoma in ferrets for more information.** *Symptoms include weight loss, staring off into space, pawing at the mouth, lethargy, collapse, seizures, tremors, or drooling.*

Parasites

Ferrets can catch a range of parasites that can be uncomfortable and cause serious health issues. The most common of these are ear mites that can be transmitted not only from other animals but bedding as well. A veterinarian can prescribe medication to rid any parasites and a short period of regular cleaning to remove any debris left behind in their ears. *Symptoms include scratching, dry skin, and specks of black "dirt" in their ears.*

Heatstroke

Since ferrets are unable to sweat, they are sensitive to heat and humidity. Do not keep ferrets anywhere where the temperature reaches 80° F because this can cause heatstroke and potentially death. If they seem to be getting too warm, a cloth soaked in cool water can be used to gently bring their temperature down until they can see a vet. *Symptoms include panting, elevated rectal temp, glassy eyes, limpness, wobbliness, weakness, vomiting, diarrhea, and lethargy.*

Flu

Ferrets are one of the few animals that can not only spread the flu to humans but also catch it from us. Similar to how it affects humans, an infection can last anywhere from 5 to 14 days and requires lots of rest and fluid. Your vet may prescribe decongestants or antibiotics to help keep your ferret comfortable and prevent secondary infections. *Symptoms include sneezing, nasal discharge, coughing, watery eyes, lethargy, refusal to eat, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever.*



BEHAVIOR

All ferrets sound and act a little differently. Only by spending time with them will you fully be able to understand them. Below is a general guide of their communication to get you started.

VOCALIZATION

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Doeking	Soft clucking noise.	<i>Excited and happy.</i>
Hissing	A hissing sound, sometimes accompanied by a puffed-up tail.	<i>Anger, defense, fear, possibly a warning before biting.</i>
Screaming	Screeching or screaming.	<i>Fear.</i>
Teeth Grinding	Chattering sound.	<i>Unhappiness, sickness, or pain.</i>
Wheezing	Labored breathing.	<i>Your pet is having breathing problems and needs to be seen by a vet.</i>

BODY LANGUAGE

BEHAVIOR	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
Climbing and Investigating	Maneuvering around in whatever way possible to get into everything.	<i>Ferrets are very curious animals and will try whatever they can to explore.</i>
Burrowing	Making a nest out of blankets, towels, and other soft items.	<i>Like their wild relatives, ferrets enjoy creating an enclosed nest to sleep in.</i>
Weasel War Dance	Hopping around with their back arched and tail puffed out while sometimes making clucking noises or keeping their mouth open.	<i>Having fun and playing.</i>
Alligator Roll	One ferret grabbing another by the scruff and flipping them.	<i>Playing and establishing dominance.</i>
Potty Break	Backing into a corner.	<i>Getting ready to urinate or defecate.</i>
Hoarding	Stealing objects and hiding them in a special location.	<i>Ferrets like to claim certain things and may even become obsessed with a specific item.</i>
Death Sleep	Sleeping so soundly they seem dead.	<i>If a ferret is extra active during playtime, it may sleep extra hard. This is natural and only damaging to their humans' nerves.</i>



FERRET SUPPLY CHECKLIST

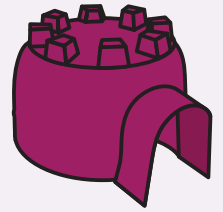
CAGE

15 cubic feet
per ferret minimum.



SHELTER

Ferrets like to hide in shelters when they are nervous or relaxing. Igloos, grass huts, cardboard boxes, etc.



WATER BOTTLE



FOOD DISH

Ceramic is best to prevent chewing.



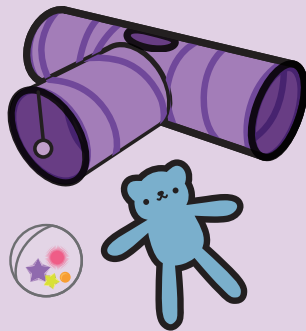
FOOD

MNPPR recommends a 1:1 mix of Marshall's Premium Ferret Diet and Wysong ferret food.



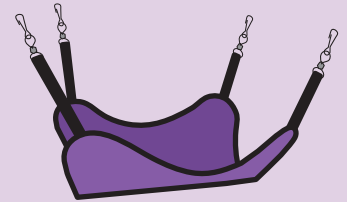
ENRICHMENT

Ferrets are busybodies! Be sure to provide them with lots of fun toys. Check out our homemade toys page for ideas.



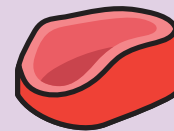
HAMMOCKS

Ferrets love hammocks! Provide at least 3.



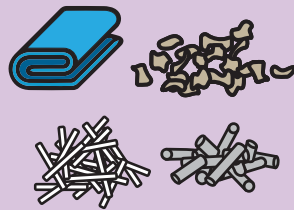
BED

Monitor for chewing.



BEDDING

Fleece, soft recycled paper (CareFresh), shredded paper, paper pellets. Only use *unscented* paper litter.



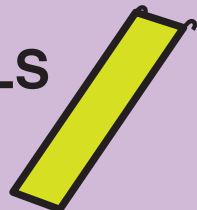
LITTER BOX

Be sure to use a different type of litter in the box than the rest of the habitat.



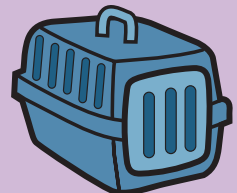
RAMPS & LEVELS

Provide more space in your pet's habitat by adding ramps and levels.



PET CARRIER

Ferrets are escape artists so be sure to purchase a carrier with a locking mechanism.



DISCLAIMER AND CREDITS

DISCLAIMER

All information shared by MN Pocket Pet Rescue is researched, up to date, and accurate to the best of our ability. We are not a licensed veterinary organization and do not intend to present ourselves as such. All educational material contains our best recommendations for care specific to each species. However, all animals are different and some may have unique needs. MN Pocket Pet Rescue does not assume any liability for the well-being of any animal not under our care. Always use your best judgment and follow veterinary recommendations whenever necessary. If you have any questions or find inaccurate information please contact us.

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