



### **Your Fabulous Ferret:**

Ferrets are very social animals that make wonderfully affectionate pets if you interact and play with them. They are smart and acrobatic. Ferrets can sleep from 15 to 20 hours a day—but when they're awake they are busy. Often ferret owners will house them in pairs—to keep them mentally stimulated. Either way, entertaining a ferret will keep it happy—and provide hours of fun for you too!

### **Housing:**

Ferrets ancestral homes were dens, so any home you create should be den like.

- Use a wire cage that is at least 18 inches long, 18 inches deep and 30 inches wide.
- Many ferrets prefer bi-level cages that feature stairs or ramps for climbing.
- Hammocks and shelves add places to hide and comfortably rest.
- Small blankets or towels to burrow into provide optimum sleeping quarters.
- Ferrets are escape artists so your cage should feature a secure latch and openings no larger than one inch by two inches.
- Wire floors are uncomfortable for ferret feet—so line your cage with linoleum tiles or a soft surface like washable carpet. (Watch out for wood flooring which is difficult to disinfect. Newspaper will blacken your ferret's feet, and cedar chips can cause respiratory problems.)
- Ferrets back up (often into a corner) to use the litter pan, so the corner litter pans work very well for these furry friends. Secure your litter box to the side of the cage to prevent dumping. Clumping litter can irritate a ferret's eyes so fill the litter tray with one inch or more of pelleted litter products made from paper or plant fibers.
- Make sure you place your cage away from direct sunlight, in a cool shaded area where temperatures range from 55 to 70 degrees.

### **Nutrition:**

Ferrets have a high metabolism and digest their food in about four hours—so they may eat as many a seven to ten small meals a day. Ferrets are carnivores so their diet should contain at least 32 percent protein and 18 percent fat. High quality dry ferret food or cat food will provide proper nutrition. For treats provide melon, low sugar grain cereals (like cheerios) chopped broccoli, green bell peppers or chopped eggs. Avoid dog food, or sweet and salty foods.

### **Toys and activities:**

Ferrets love to crawl through almost anything, from PVC piping to cardboard boxes to the legs of your favorite jeans. They love to bat around small sponge balls and cat toys. Left alone they will knock over purses trash cans and paper bags and climb inside. Ferrets have a great sense of smell and acute hearing but poor vision. So avoid sudden movements and speak gently.

Ferrets love to be out of their cages but you'll want to ferret proof a room before letting them out for supervised play. These critters can squeeze into tiny areas, so block off small openings behind shelves and close vents. Watch out for reclining furniture—ferrets love to get up under these but can be crushed by the mechanisms. They are also easily stepped on, so when walking in a room with a loose ferret, take off your shoes and shuffle your feet. Finally don't leave anything in the room that you don't want stolen. Ferrets love small objects they can move to a new location. If you're missing socks or keys, check the ferret cage.

**Health:**

Ferrets don't always smell like a rose. Your ferret's sebaceous glands which are used to mark territory secrete oil with a natural musky odor. Additionally his anal glands can spray like a skunk's. Changing bedding frequently can cut down on the smell. Your ferret also may benefit from being spayed or neutered. To avoid flea and mite problems and for any health related concerns, consult your veterinarian for proper treatments.