

should be careful to make sure your ferret's living area is cool and comfortable. If temperatures are to exceed 80 degrees, it is important to take extra measures or find your ferret an air-conditioned living space. NEVER leave your ferret in a closed-up car. It's illegal in many states, and could kill your ferret in minutes. Obvious signs of heatstroke are panting and lethargy, but could also include discharge from the nose or mouth, limpness or loss of consciousness. The most important thing to remember when dealing with heatstroke is not to lower the ferret's body temperature too quickly or the ferret will go into shock. And get him to a vet IMMEDIATELY.

If you do not have access to air conditioning in the hot summer months, there are still steps you can take to help avoid heatstroke. Most importantly, make sure that your ferret's cage is not in direct sunlight. Be sure to keep cool water available for your ferret to drink. Ferrets do not sweat like humans, so fans are not very useful as we usually think of them. One use for a fan would be to place a bowl of cool water or ice in front of it to circulate cooler air. Another common remedy is to fill some small soda bottles with water and freeze them. Then you can slip them inside a tube sock and place them in your ferret's cage to help lower the surrounding air temperature and for the ferret to lie near. You can also move your ferrets to the coolest room in the house or your basement. However you deal with the heat, it's important to always remain aware of the danger of heatstroke in warmer temperatures and monitor your ferret accordingly.

ABOUT MD FERRET PAWS

MD Ferret PAWS strives to protect and improve the lives of ferrets in Maryland. We seek to improve the relationships between ferrets and humans through education and outreach. We promote legislation and research that makes life safer and healthier for all ferrets. Through our efforts the status and life of the ferret as a companion animal will be enhanced, legitimized, and more enjoyable for everyone. We need your help to accomplish these goals! Visit our website to see how you can become a member!



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BASIC FERRET CARE

FINDING A VET

The most important thing you can do for your ferret is find a ferret-knowledgeable veterinarian, get to know him/her and allow him/her to get to know your ferret through routine check-ups and regular vaccinations. Your vet will be your greatest asset if your ferret becomes ill.

Finding a ferret-knowledgeable vet is not always easy. The best resource in determining which vets in your area are good ferrets vets is other ferret owners. There are also listings on several websites that will give you an idea of ferret vets in your area. No matter what you decide, be sure to make a 'healthy' visit to the vet so that you are sure you are comfortable with him/her and ask lots of questions. This will help immensely if you ever have an emergency to make you more at ease and to be sure you have an experienced vet that you trust.

HAIRBALLS

Most ferrets shed their coats twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. Grooming themselves and each other can cause a hairball to develop in their stomach or intestines. Ferrets cannot cough up hairballs the way that

cats do. They also have a tendency to eat things that they shouldn't, like small parts of rubber toys, remote control buttons, t-shirts, etc. Hair and other things can cause blockages. These blockages can easily kill a ferret if not handled aggressively. An easy way to stay on top of potential blockages is to give a dose of laxative once a week or so (more during shedding season). You can use most laxatives that are safe for cats and the ferrets usually think that it's a treat.

EAR CLEANING

Ferret ears get a waxy buildup that can have an unpleasant odor and be uncomfortable to the ferret if their ears aren't properly and regularly cleaned. You should clean your ferret's ears once a week with ear cleaning solution and cotton balls or swabs. It's important to be careful not to push a cotton swab into the ear canal because you could damage the ferret's eardrum. Keep those ears clean and the ferret will thank you.

TOENAILS

Your ferret's toenails should be trimmed regularly. You should trim their toenails at least once every two weeks, but depending on the ferret you might have to trim them more often. It is generally advised to use small animal nail trimmers, but some people use human nail trimmers. This is OK as long as you make sure they are sharp. Human nail trimmers have a tendency to make the ferret nail splinter if the clippers aren't sharp enough. If the ferret's nails get too long or splinter it will make it difficult or painful for them to walk and the nails

could get caught in bedding or rugs and cause serious injury to your ferret while he is trying to free himself. Not to mention that those long nails can scratch you!

An easy way to trim toenails is to sit in a chair with the ferret in your lap. Lay him on his back and put some yummy treat like Ferretone on his belly. While he is licking away, he probably won't even notice you giving him a manicure! Some ferrets eat quickly, so you might have to reapply the treat before you are finished with all 20 toes. Be careful not to cut into the 'quick' (the pink area of the toenail). This is painful for the ferret and will cause bleeding. It is important to have styptic powder/gel or cornstarch on hand in case this happens to help stop the bleeding.

ANNUAL EXAMS

All ferrets should have an annual exam for general health maintenance and to allow your vet to familiarize himself with your ferret. During this exam the vet will be able to palpate the ferret for lumps or abnormalities, check ears, eyes and teeth to make sure they are healthy, and update you on things you should be aware of or be on the lookout for.

As your ferret gets older, this annual exam might also include running some bloodwork to screen for other health problems that might not be visible and to serve as a baseline in case health issues come up during the year.

ANNUAL VACCINATIONS - RABIES, DISTEMPER

Your ferret also needs vaccinations for rabies and distemper every year. Staying up-to-date on vaccinations is not only important for the health of your ferret, but also to protect them in case of an unfortunate incident where the ferret bites someone.

It is uncommon for ferrets to contract rabies, but it is still very important and required by law in many states to vaccinate. Imrab-3 is the only rabies vaccine approved for ferrets and should be given at three months of age and then annually thereafter.

Distemper is unfortunately much more common in ferrets and is an airborne virus that is very deadly to any ferret that is unvaccinated. Distemper can even be carried in on your shoes and clothes. Fervac-D and Purevax are the only distemper vaccinations approved for ferrets. The protocol is to give the vaccine at 8, 11, and 14 weeks and then once a year thereafter.

ADV TESTING

Your ferrets should be tested annually for Aleutians Disease Virus. This virus is 100% deadly in ferrets. This can be done through your vet's office or you can do it at home yourself to save money.

HEAT

Ferrets do not fare well in high temperatures. Heatstroke can come on rapidly and can kill your ferret. You