

Canine Distemper

Ferrets are very susceptible to Canine Distemper, which often leads to fatality. Signs of the virus include discharge around the eyes, nose and chin (eyes may be closed). Other symptoms are loss of appetite, a rash and lethargy. It is highly infectious and can be picked up from dog urine on the soles of your shoes. To prevent infection, ask your vet to vaccinate at 9 - 10 weeks.

Oestrogen induced anaemia

Jill's are induced ovulators and may often have prolonged seasons if not mated. High-prolonged levels of oestrogen in the body can cause aplastic anaemia. To prevent this happening, if you are not breeding from your jill you should have her neutered, or when in season present to a vasectomised hob. He will mate her and finish the season without production of a litter.

External parasites

Ear mites are common and will be apparent if your ferret shakes his head and scratches his ears often. It can lead to inflammation of the area and generally be uncomfortable to the animal. Regularly check your ferret for fleas and flea dirt. If fleas are found you will need to treat with a product recommended for use on ferrets. Don't forget to treat their cage environment too.

Always seek veterinary advice for treatment.



Ferret Profile

Latin Name:	Mustela putorius furo
Female:	Jill
Male:	Hob
Young:	Kits
Life Span:	5 - 11 years (domesticated)
Litter size:	5 - 13 Kits
Birth weight:	8 - 10 gms
Eyes open:	From four weeks
Gestation Period:	38 - 44 days
Average Weight:	male 700 - 2000 gms, female 600 - 900 gms
Sexual Maturity:	male 5 - 9 months, female - spring after birth
Weaning age:	6 - 8 weeks
Diet:	Carnivorous
Vaccinations:	Canine Distemper (optional)



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Supreme Petfoods is dedicated to the feeding and well-being of small animals. Supreme specialises in small animal nutrition; and provides a range of premium complete foods which fulfil the individual nutritional requirements of each species.

All Supreme foods are a unique blend of selected high quality ingredients, formulated to give a complete and balanced diet.

Over 1 million small animals worldwide are fed with Supreme products every day, so you can be confident you have chosen the right food for your pet.

If you would like any more information on Frankie Ferret or any other products in the Supreme range, please contact us:

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Frankie's Guide to Ferrets



Supreme

Introduction

This leaflet includes information on how to care for your ferret including: feeding, housing, common illnesses, history and species details.

Ferrets are very sociable and inquisitive animals and deserve consideration and commitment when being looked after as a pet.

History of Ferrets

Ferrets are related to mink and weasels, and are from the family called "Mustelids". Domesticated ferrets have the Latin name "Mustela putorius furo" (bad smelling weasel).

In 3000BC ferrets were first domesticated by the Ancient Egyptians. It wasn't until the 1980's that ferrets became popular as pets. They were introduced in the 10th century to Europe as working ferrets. There are now no wild ferrets left in the world.

Nowadays ferrets have become popular pets; it is estimated that there is a population of over 1.5 million worldwide.



Colours/Patterns/Markings

Originally there were two ferret coat colours (albino & sable), but nowadays there are a wide variety of colours, patterns and markings.

The eight most common colours are:

1. Albino (White coat with red eyes)
2. Sable (Dark brown body, black feet, masked face)
3. Dark Eyed White (All white, with dark eyes)
4. Black (Black coat, no pattern)
5. Topaz (Light taupe colour)
6. Champagne (Golden in colour)
7. Siamese/Chocolate (Lighter colour of sable, with brown feet)
8. Red (Mahogany coloured)

Patterns

The different combinations of colours, patterns and markings produce an infinite number of variations. Some examples of patterns may be Roan, which is a mixture of coloured and white hair, or Dalmatian where spots and blotches are present on a white coat.

Markings

Markings can be a mask of colour found across the face, mitts and feet; or a blaze (white on forehead and chest)

Nutritional Requirements

Ferrets are obligate carnivores and require regular and high levels of dietary protein and fat to develop strong muscles, healthy bones and to prevent illness. They have a negligible need for carbohydrate and fibre as they synthesise most of their glucose requirements - reducing the need for a dietary source. Ferrets feed throughout the day eating small frequent meals, this is due to the fact that they have an

extremely short digestive tract and food passes through within 3-4 hours. In order to fulfil their nutritional needs and energy levels they must feed at regular intervals.

How much to feed your ferret.

The average ferret will eat 5-7% of its body weight on a daily basis: this is about 50-75 grams of food for a ferret weighing 1 kg. These are approximate levels and will differ from animal to animal and according to lifestage. Ferrets will require larger amounts during growth, gestation and reproduction. Reproducing females require a minimum of 30% protein from their diet, and kittens require high levels of protein and fat throughout their growth phase. Feed levels may drop during later life and should be adjusted based on intake, demand and physiological changes, such as weight gain.

Feeding a complete dried food provides all the nutritional requirements your ferret needs. Feeding fresh food requires supplementation of vitamins and minerals and may result in deficiency or more commonly toxicity, resulting in a range of avoidable illnesses and conditions.

Always ensure that fresh water is available at all times, as eating dried food will often lead to higher demands of water on a daily basis.

Feeding Your Ferret

Frankie Ferret is a high quality, nutritionally complete diet, which satisfies the specific nutritional and energy requirements of all ferret lifestages - through growth, adulthood, pregnancy and lactation.

Frankie Ferret contains all the vital ingredients to keep ferrets in optimum health and condition. Typical ferret foods contain 30% protein and 20% fat, on a dry matter basis. Frankie Ferret contains higher levels of essential protein to provide the highest quality food available. It comes with two delicious flavours (chicken and turkey) and two distinct shaped crunchy biscuits, to prevent build up of tartar. Ferrets also require additional taurine in their diet to prevent degeneration of the retina and blindness, this is incorporated within the vitamin & mineral supplement.



Trialed & supported by top ferret breeders!

Ingredients
Poultry meal (37%), Wheat, Soyabean Oil, Fish Meal, Turkey Meal (5%), Turkey Derivatives (4%), Poultry Fat, Sugar Beet Pulp, Potato Protein, Linseed (2%), Vitamins & Minerals

Analysis
Protein 36%, Oil 19%, Fibre 2%, Ash 8%, Moisture 10%, Vitamin A 20,000iu/kg, Vitamin D₃ 1,500iu/kg, Vitamin E 200mg/kg (alpha-tocopherol acetate), Copper 15mg/kg (cupric sulphate).

Looking After Your Ferret

Equipment

In addition to choosing the right food for your ferrets, they also need to be kept in the correct living environment. You need to place a good quality water bottle and food bowl in an easily accessible place. Also a litter tray to keep the cage hygienic; this should be emptied on a daily basis to prevent odour build up and attraction of pests. Place **Supreme Choice Woodshavings**, or **Supreme Science - Carefresh** in the litter tray for high levels of absorption. In the hutch or enclosure use dust extracted bedding material such as **Russel Bedding**, or **Supreme Science - Carefresh** to prevent respiratory or skin problems.

Ferrets enjoy sleeping above ground level, so an ideal accessory is a hammock such as **Frankie Ferret's Hammock** - adding environmental stimulation and comfort to their enclosure.

Accessories

Ferrets are extremely active and very playful. Always find time to socialise with your ferret on a daily basis, this will add variety and stimulation to your pet's day. Ferrets will play with small balls and enjoy a variety of tunnels to play in.

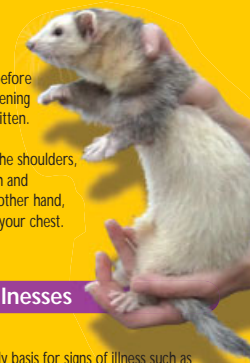
Supreme Petfoods has designed a feeding ball so ferrets have to work for their food. This increases their exercise period, leading to a fitter pet and reducing 'dietary related' health problems. Check out the **'Furry Fun'** accessories range from Supreme Petfoods.



Handling

Allow your ferret to come to you before picking him up. This prevents frightening him and reduces the risk of being bitten.

Ferrets should be grasped around the shoulders, with your thumb under their mouth and supporting the hind legs with your other hand, then gently bring the ferret against your chest. (see picture on the right)



Common Illnesses

General care

Ferrets should be checked on a daily basis for signs of illness such as unusual discharges, inappetence or abnormal behaviour. Ferrets should be vaccinated for distemper. Regular visits to your local veterinary practice will ensure that your pet stays fit and healthier.

Respiratory infections

Stress such as weaning, separation, overcrowding and poor husbandry can encourage illness. Symptoms will include sneezing, coughing, fever, nasal discharge and lethargy. Seek veterinary treatment as your ferret may require a course of antibiotics. Ferrets are also able to contract kennel cough, often leading to pneumonia. Avoid boarding ferrets in kennels near dogs or consider vaccination prior to boarding.

Some human cold and flu viruses can be infectious to ferrets, so take care if you are unwell.

Nutritional diarrhoea

This can be due to a sudden change in diet. Avoid any sudden change in diet, new diets should be introduced gradually over a minimum of two weeks. Diarrhoea should correct itself within a couple of days, if not, seek veterinary advice.

Infectious diarrhoea

This can be associated with parasites, bacteria or viruses and can affect ferrets at any age, although kits are most susceptible. In all cases it is important to find the cause, as ferrets can fall ill quite quickly, resulting in dehydration, poor condition and in the worst scenario, fatality. In all cases seek veterinary advice.

Vomiting

This may often be associated with foreign bodies present in the alimentary canal, such as hairballs and partially eaten toys. Groom your ferret regularly (especially during a moult), to reduce the loose hair which can heighten the risk of hairballs. If your ferret is vomiting it is always sensible to seek veterinary advice in case there is a more severe underlying problem.

