

**Subject:** Paw Print #9

**From:** FACT

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## Paw Print - Issue #9 – November 2010

### EEK!

Where does the time go? It's been a little while since we sent out our e-newsletter. Sometimes we're so busy with the ferrets in the shelter it's hard to keep up with our other work. This issue contains an article about ferret foods we hope will be useful both to new owners and to those experienced caretakers that are regularly asked about the "right" diet.

We have quite a few delightful little guys seeking homes. Some are shown in the column at right or can be viewed on Petfinder. If you live in Connecticut or within travel distance, PLEASE consider adopting a new furry friend! Just [e-mail](#) for an application. If you live farther away, check your local ferret shelter, humane society, Petfinder.com, or even Craigslist for animals in need. There are sure to be lonely ferrets that could use a great, PERMANENT new home for the holidays.

Our semi-annual Ferret Treasures sale is happening! If you're local, the Events section has details about the two sale days at the shelter. For those far away or who can't make it, attached is this year's Holiday Sale Flyer in pdf form. FACT creates great goodies for ferrets and their owners – most are exclusive to us and many manufactured on-site. Your purchase also helps support the shelter and the homeless ferrets.



14 Sherbrooke Avenue, Hartford,  
CT 06106-3838

[www.ferret-fact.org](http://www.ferret-fact.org)

### Ferret Treasures Store Sale

Saturday & Sunday, December 11 & 12

Hours: noon to 3 pm

14 Sherbrooke Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

The Ferret Treasures "store" isn't a big retail facility. It's one room of our office/shelter space. But it's jam-packed with neat ferret stuff! While we feature certain items in our flyers, the "store" holds all the sleepy spots Vanessa sews. There are pouches made of polar fleece and pouches made of thick, luxury faux fur. There are snooze tubes, blankets, and huge hammocks with one side in soft suedecloth and the other in faux fur. You can

Thank you for your support!

L. Vanessa Gruden, Shelter Director

Paw Print is the [Ferret Association of Connecticut's](#) online newsletter. You are receiving this message because you contacted us for information. If you do NOT want to be on our e-mail list, please click [here](#) to unsubscribe! FACT never sells or rents our e-mail lists.

## Feeding Frenzy

So often, ferret owners ask – whether they are new or experienced – “What food should I use?”

Food choices often provoke controversy. Lots of owners have a favorite that they endorse – and for some, woe to anyone who does not feed the “right” food!

I’ve spoken to people who thought they should give up their ferret because they couldn’t afford to feed the expensive diet they were told was the ONLY option. Recently I spoke with a shelter operator who was embarrassed to admit that, due to a layoff and financial difficulties, she’d temporarily been feeding her ferrets a less expensive cat food based on – horrors! - vegetable protein.

I’m no expert on nutrition, but I’d like to bring some perspective to the subject.

### Basics

It’s important to remember the nutritional studies on what domestic ferrets SHOULD eat have not been done. So no one knows, *with certainty*, what percent protein or fat they require. We know they are true carnivores, meaning that their diet should be meat-based. Vegetable protein (like corn meal) takes longer to process, so isn’t in their short digestive system long enough to extract the protein.

Holistic nutritionists often refer back to what an animal would eat in the wild. Since ferrets are domestic, the closest is to look at the diet of their nearest wild relative, the European polecat. Polecats eat small rodents such as moles, mice & rats; birds, chickens & eggs; rabbits; and occasionally small reptiles & amphibians (frogs and toads). Farther apart genetically, the Marbled Polecat eats rodents like gerbils & hamsters, and the Black Footed Ferret has a diet primarily restricted to prairie dogs. All these mustelids eat almost the whole body, so they also eat whatever vegetable matter is in their prey’s stomach, partially digested.

choose your own favorite handmade bracelet, necklace, or pin. There are some basic supplies like harnesses, but we try to keep items you won’t find in every pet store. And for those on a budget, we have used items at bargain-basement prices. FACT accepts cash, check or MasterCard/Visa.

There are two special events for the Sale this year. On **Saturday**, Tamara Von Ouhl will do a **dental scaling**. This is a way to chip off tartar on your pets’ teeth. The cost is \$25 per ferret. Tamara will also do a thorough ear cleaning/nail clip for \$10 per ferret.

On **Sunday**, Sally Gosselin of Kindred Spirit Animal Massage, a certified pet massage therapist, will provide a **10 minute full body massage** for your ferret. The cost is \$10. The ferrets LOVE it!

To make sure each knows how many people want their services, we ask you e-mail in advance to reserve a spot. Click [here](#) to make your reservation.

While you’re here, be sure to visit the shelter!

### Directions

#### From Interstate 84 headed WEST:

- [Take exit 45, Flatbush Avenue](#)
- [Left at the end of the exit onto Flatbush Avenue](#)
- [Right onto Hillside Avenue at 2nd full traffic light](#)

Given a ferret's high metabolism, most nutritionists agree their diet should have higher meat-based protein and fat than the average cat food. And since fish is a pretty minor part of any of these animals' diet (compared to mink, who eat a lot of fish), fish should be a small part of the meat source.

### Some Realities

Does this mean you should spend your time in the woods catching mice and baby birds and toss 'em into the cage? I don't know about you, but I'm not about to listen to murder and pick up leftover body parts! Wild-caught animals might have worms – and will almost certainly have fleas. What do you do in the winter when they hibernate?

Are those who purchase raw diets of frozen mice or other small mammals feeding the ideal diet? I'm not sure. Do the baby mice contain enough vegetable matter inside to satisfy that nutritional need? There's also a pretty big "ick" quotient here, too...a friend feeding mice to her ferrets reported finding dead ones stashed around the house - once in her pillowcase!

### What the Ferrets Want

There's also the Ferret Factor – many domestic ferrets have lost most hunting instinct. My sister, who lives near a wooded area, suffered through mice sneaking up from the garage into where her ferrets slept, stealing ferret food without any of the "predators" even noticing!

Another Ferret Factor? Their notorious love of dairy and sweets. One of the earliest recorded texts that mentions a ferret-like animal talks about "putting out milk to catch the weasels." Given the choice of a wonderful, expensive ferret kibble and a piece of cookie, guess which your ferret will grab first?

So your ferrets may actually prefer "junk" food to the high-priced diets. This does NOT mean that's the most optimal base diet, but if that's all you can afford, that's certainly better than letting your pet go hungry.

I always recommend people feed more than one brand of food. I don't eat the same thing every day and neither do you; why should they? A couple different foods, either mixed together or in separate bowls, is fine – and if for some reason you run out of one food, your ferret's more willing to eat another.

While I use specific ferret diets, my opinion is premium-quality kitten foods are acceptable, also. There are several that have high protein counts and are based on meat. They are readily available and usually less expensive - running a shelter, money

- [Left onto Sherbrooke Avenue at stop sign](#)

From Interstate 84 headed EAST:

- [Exit 44, Prospect Avenue; Go straight at end of ramp](#)
- [Right onto Prospect Avenue; Merge onto New Park Avenue](#)
- [Left at light onto Flatbush Avenue](#)
- [Right onto Hillside Avenue at 4th full traffic light](#)
- [Left at stop sign onto Sherbrooke Avenue](#)

## Ferrets for Adoption

Trouble – male, platinum silver, about 3 years old. Abandoned at Branford Animal control. Trouble is a nice fellow who may beat up other ferrets at first, but once he's been declared "Boss" is fine with them. Very sweet and loves to kiss!



Mack (above) & Mable - Chocolate & platinum silver, male and female. About 1-2 years old. Found abandoned near a dumpster in Danbury apartment complex. Cute! Can go together or split with others.

always matters. FACT feeds a mix of foods; this way, our ferrets are accustomed to different diets and adoptors can easily switch to their preferred brand.

I don't find many ferrets suffering digestive problems from eating different foods. If yours does, of course, you may need an exclusive diet. For animals that have issues with diarrhea, those foods containing fish protein sometimes work well, offering more "bulking" fiber. Elderly animals may have trouble processing protein, so lower-protein diets (like adult cat food) can help. Mostly, I find my ferrets will pick their own food if given options...some eat one brand, some another, and some will chow down on whatever is in the closest bowl.

In a shelter, it's unwise to argue with an elderly ferret that arrives and only wants cat food. Whatever they want to eat, as long as they eat well and are happy and thriving, is fine with me. I just try to make sure they're eating the best meat-based cat food possible.

### Don't Be a Food Fanatic

Sometimes I think experienced owners just get too overwrought about ferret food. Subconsciously, perhaps some imagine they can ward off cancer or other illnesses by feeding "the best." But even humans with terrific diets get sick. How many people who feed their ferrets the "best" food also brush their ferret's teeth every week? Or take their ferrets on daily walks? Turn off all lights at sundown so their animals live strictly in natural light? All are wonderful things you can also do to improve your pet's longevity. Food is only one variable; many other things influence overall health.

If you meet someone using an inappropriate food, freaking out about it isn't helpful. If they could use guidance, gently explain what a ferret's food should contain and encourage them to upgrade, but don't insist your recommended choice is the only option. Everyone was a new owner once, and learns over time. And not everyone has the economic resources to feed more expensive foods. That doesn't mean they don't care about their ferrets; they may just be going through hard times. What's preferable, feeding a poorer quality food (within reason, of course!) or abandoning their ferret? In the end, love and a permanent home are the VERY best things an owner can give their pets.



Chaplin (above) & Keaton - Sable mitt and silver badger males, 1-2 years. Abandoned outside apartment complex in Naugatuck.

### More Funny-Looking Ferrets



Just after we found places for the 2 "ferrets" we helped save last issue, along come another pair! Both the little boy (top) and girl will be altered this week and get their 1<sup>st</sup> set of vaccinations. What you can't see is the little white lady has a black tail; too cute! They are about 10 weeks old and can be adopted singly or as a pair. We are asking a contribution toward medical bills, but in return you get "kitten therapy" – a sure-fire stress reliever! [E-mail](#) if you'd like to meet them.



Paw Print is published by the [Ferret Association of Connecticut](http://www.ferret-fact.org), Inc., a nonprofit humane organization dedicated to helping ferret owners, caretakers, and most importantly, the ferrets themselves. Website: [www.ferret-fact.org](http://www.ferret-fact.org).

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