

ACO presentation

1. Handling: Yes, a scared ferret may bite but most are gentle and friendly. Approach them with one hand first and avoid unexpectedly grabbing them from behind. To hold, wrap one hand beneath their ribs with the other supporting the hindquarters. An upset or angry ferret can be held for short periods by the scruff of the neck – learn this technique for nail clipping or determining age, also.

2. Catching: Most will walk right up to a human! If they seem nippy, use a squeak toy to occupy their mouth.

3. Gender: Males can be up to 2x (1-5 lbs.) the size of females (<1 to 2 lbs.). A ferret's penis is like a dog, partway up their belly. Nearly all the ferrets found locally are altered before shipment to the pet store.

4. Age: Scruff and gently push up their muzzle to see their canine teeth. Bright white means young – up to 1 year. Very yellow is elderly- 5+ years. About halfway yellow from the tip of the tooth? Probably about 3.

5. Housing: Ferrets need a cage with no more than about 1" between bars. Newspaper flat on the floor is fine for litter; some are used to litterboxes, some not. A pouch gives them a place to snuggle, and they love hammocks. Fabric should be fleece or smooth – they can get claws caught in towels.

Stainless steel food/water bowls are best. If they get kicked around, you may need to use some that secure to the cage or a heavier ceramic.

A space they can safely run around for ½ to 1 hour daily will help burn off energy. They'll appreciate a quieter place, rather than among barking dogs. Optimal temperature is 60-80 degrees – too hot and they can die of heatstroke.

6. Food: Ferrets are carnivores and need high-protein kibble. Many will arrive eating Marshall Diet, found in most pet stores. However, you can use a quality kitten food (Proplan, Iams). If you only plan to have the ferret for a couple days, it's OK to use a basic cat kibble (Purina, etc.)

Food and water should be available at all times. Restrict initial feeding only if the ferret has been starved.

7. Species Tips: Hopping madly around doesn't mean they're mad! It's their invitation to play. Ferrets love tubes 4"+ diameter and toys! Avoid anything rubbery other than a Kong as it can be ingested. Ping pong balls or plush baby toys work great.

Ferrets need their nails clipped regularly. Scruff and use small clippers, avoiding pink area similar to clipping a dog. Ears should be cleaned with ear cleaner & qtips and examined for mites.

Normally good-natured, ferrets appreciate & enjoy human interaction. Fishing-pole type toys and small balls will be cheerfully chased.

Ferrets with a white "badger" stripe on their heads are often deaf. As they age, they are also prone to cataracts.

8. Common Illnesses: Yes, they may pick up fleas, ticks, or in rural areas, cuterebra larvae under their skin. Use flea shampoo safe for kittens or cat Frontline. Revolution makes a kitten size that will also kill ear mites.

Ferrets are HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE to canine distemper! For their safety and that of adopters or a transferee shelter, ferrets should be vaccinated. Clinical signs of CD can take up to 3 weeks to exhibit; watch for crusting on nose/lips (the FACT website has further info.) Please contact a ferret-friendly vet or the Ferret Association if you need to

obtain vaccines. There is no longer an FDA-approved CD vaccine being made for ferrets; most shelters use Nobivac Puppy DPV.

It is not CT law for ferrets to be vaccinated for rabies, although of course it is prudent. Imrab 3 is carried by many vets.

Ferrets are prone to 2 cancers: adrenal gland and pancreatic. Adrenal disease may cause hair loss, starting where hind end meets tail and continuing from there. In females you may see a swollen vulva; males may have more dangerous prostate enlargement, causing urinary blockages.

Pancreatic causes potentially deadly drops in blood sugar. The ferret will appear listless or faint; they may have seizures if severe. A quick aid is honey or sugar water on the gums, but they will need a protein meal as soon as awake to stabilize. Both cancers are treatable but need veterinary supervision.

Skin tumors are common. Most are easy to surgically remove when small; when they become large and ooze, this is a serious situation requiring immediate medical treatment. SEE HANDOUT 2

Ferret are susceptible to stress and can pass minor viruses between themselves. They also catch & transmit human flu.

9. Indications of Abuse: Loss of hair on tail can be due to adrenal disease, old age (elderly may lose fur on tail) or blackheads. Hair loss on paws could be age or illness or ammonia burns. Fur loss on tail & back feet PLUS a sour smell says filthy cage.

Naturally slinky, seeing a ferret's ribs could be a sign of illness OR of starvation. See how animal eats when presented with food. Dehydration can be checked by pinching skin over shoulders.

Rear end paralysis can be seen in more severe stages of low blood sugar seizure, starvation, or spinal damage.

Very long nails or filthy ears means neglect, although not always deliberate. Owners may just not know how to clip them.

A very fearful ferret may have been abused or simply been outdoors and is frightened.

10. What to look for in an Adopter: Adult, stable households are best. Those with children under 6, or planning pregnancy should be encouraged to look at a pet that won't need as much care and be safe (for both child & animal) around toddlers.

Those between 16-21 need careful evaluation. It's an age where people love new experiences and pets, but they may be facing high school, college, or entering the workforce. We insist anyone living at home, no matter WHAT age, get parental approval.

We discourage "collecting" animals. Anyone with 9+ ferrets might easily become overwhelmed. Ferrets need more care than a cat but less than a dog; too many is always a red flag. Vet care for ferrets is expensive and if several become ill at once, the result could be deteriorating conditions or a mass surrender.

Shelters for Ferrets: CT Humane accepts and adopts out ferrets at all three branches. Dakin Humane (Springfield) also accepts/places ferrets.

The Ferret Association also runs a shelter. We have limited space but will always try to fit in special cases such as sick, elderly or biters. Sending us very young ferrets is kind! They are, of course, desirable to adopters and their adoption fees help the oldies. Please call us in hoarding cases; we have contacts throughout the Northeast and can help move animals to other areas.

OUR FERRETS ARE MICROCHIPPED.

Ferret Resources:

General Information, Shelter & Adoption:

Ferret Association: www.ferretassn.org 860-247-1275

L., Vanessa Gruden, Executive Director

Please feel free to contact us for testimony in abuse charges.

Shelter/Adoption:

CT Humane Society – all branches

Dakin Humane Society (Springfield): 413 781-4000

Veterinarians that treat ferrets:

Bolton Veterinary Hospital: 860-643-6134 HAS EMERGENCY SERVICES

East Hartford Animal Clinic: 860-282-8989

CT Veterinary Center (West Hartford): 860-233.8564 HAS EMERGENCY SERVICES

Advanced Veterinary Care (Farmington): 860-677-0309

Kensington Bird & Animal Hospital: 860-828-7736

Four Paws Vet Services(Mystic):860-536-4204

South Wilton Veterinary Hospital: 203-762-2002

Engelberg-Kristy Animal Hospital (Fairfield): 203-367-4475

Angel Animal Hospital (West Haven):203-934-3536

West Haven Animal Clinic:203-934-3528