**Ferret – Care Sheet**

**Ferret:** Mustella putorius furo

Ferrets make for some of the most entertaining and cuddly exotic pets. They love to explore their surroundings, play, and bond with their owners. These little guys also have specific needs, however, and it is important to familiarize yourself with them.

**Basic info:**

Life Span: Average 6 to 8 years

Adult weight: 1.5 to 4 lbs

**Behavior**

Ferrets sleep between 18-20 hours a day, meaning you don’t have to worry about them constantly wearing you out! However, when they are awake, they are highly energetic and curious. It is important to give them plenty of exercise. If you let them out of their enclosure, it is very important that you monitor them at all times and ferret-proof your home. They have been known to squeeze into small spaces, eat foreign objects, and hide anything that they can grab onto.

While ferrets do well on their own, they are highly social animals; many people usually adopt two at a time. Watching ferrets chase each other around can provide endless entertainment!

**Diet**

Ferrets are strict carnivores that like to eat several small meals throughout the day. Some people feed their ferrets whole prey diets (mice, rats, quail, etc.). There are also several brands of kibble that are made specifically for ferrets. We can advise you on brands that are the best. They should be high in protein and fat and low in carbohydrates. When looking for ferret food and/or treats, avoid brands that contain:

* Dairy
* Fruits
* Vegetables
* Carbohydrates
* Sugar
* Fiber

Additionally, ferrets drink plenty of water, so it is important to keep their environment stocked with fresh clean water. Most drink out of bottles and bowls.

**Environment & Caging**

When they are awake, ferrets are very active, and they like to hide in small spaces, so it is important to provide them with a cage that gives them plenty of room to move around. They should be:

* Multi-level if possible
* Solid floored
* Open-wired sides for proper air circulation
* Escape-proof (ferrets are crafty!)

Additionally, it is important that your ferret’s cage contain:

* A litter box (that is cleaned daily) with proper litter made from recycled paper products or pellets. Clumping and clay litters can be hazardous.
* Toys without small parts or made from materials that can be easily ingested.
* Hammock, towels, or other type of comfortable bedding. Be sure to inspect your bedding for loose strings and tattered edges. Fleece is especially good for this.

Place your ferret’s enclosure in a quiet area of your house and keep the temperature between 65°F to 80°F.

**Veterinary Care**

Ferrets are descended from the polecat, meaning they contain scent glands. Most ferrets in the United States are descented at a very young age (between 5-6 weeks) at the same time they are either spayed or neutered, however this does not completely remove their musky odor.

Common medical disorders in ferrets include lymphoma, adrenal disease, insulinoma, fleas, ear mites, gastric ulcers, and foreign body ingestion. We recommend that you bring your ferret in for a physical every 6-12 months for:

* Vaccinations (rabies, distemper)
* Fecal exam
* Teeth cleaning and polishing
* Blood tests, especially a glucose check
* Nail trimming when necessary

We can also advise you on the use of preventative treatments for heartworms and fleas.