



## Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

### FERRET CARE

Ferrets are loyal, playful, intelligent, affectionate, and full of hilarious antics. I have never met a person who didn't laugh after seeing a happy ferret leap and bounce around a room during play (the "dance of joy")! Ferrets can easily chase the blues away after a hard day. However, ferrets are a big responsibility and can require expensive medical treatments and surgeries. Please do your research (and make sure you have funds available for medical care) before purchasing or adopting a ferret.

Ferrets are pretty easy to please, but they can be considered "high maintenance." All they ask is that you let them out of their cage to play for at least three hours a day, give them lots of affection and keep them clean, healthy and safe. The rest of their time is spent napping--ferrets sleep fifteen to eighteen hours a day. Ferrets are easily litterbox trained (although accidents can happen) and will adjust to your schedule quite well.

**The risk of getting bitten by a ferret is actually less than the risk of getting bitten by a cat or dog.** Ferrets can nip when they are young, however this is done out of play and they can easily be trained not to do so. Ferrets who are afraid, sick, or have been abused do have the potential to bite (no different from any other domestic pet). *If you have a problem with your ferret biting, contact our animal behavior specialists at 713-869-7722 X 187 or email [animals@hspca.org](mailto:animals@hspca.org).*

**Ferrets are not wild animals or rodents.** They are weasels (*mustela putorius furo*), who have been domesticated for thousands of years. Ferrets do have a slight musky odor, but neutering or spaying your ferret can keep the musk from being too strong. Ferrets who are not being used for breeding **must be spayed or neutered** for health reasons. Female ferrets will go into prolonged heat and eventually die from aplastic anemia if they are kept intact and not bred. Male ferrets will become aggressive towards other male ferrets and release a strong, unpleasant musky odor (although some humans actually enjoy the smell).

If a ferret with intact anal scent glands is very frightened, it can release a foul odor. However, unlike a skunk, the odor does not linger as long and it does not smell as bad. Most pet shop ferrets have been descented (anal scent glands removed), however this practice is considered to be mutilation by some people. Ferrets who feel safe and are treated well by their owners will generally not express their anal scent glands unless they are extremely frightened. Ferrets have scent glands located all over their body, however the anal glands are the only ones they can release as a form of protection.

#### **THINGS TO CONSIDER**

The decision to adopt or purchase a ferret (or any other pet) should be a careful one. Ferrets do bond with their owners and become stressed when separated from them. So, if you are considering a ferret as an addition to your family, think of it as an eight to ten year commitment. **Don't act impulsively. Ferrets do require a big commitment on the part of their owners to ensure optimum health and safety.**

**1. Cost** - Can you afford to own a ferret? Ferrets themselves are fairly expensive, around \$100.00 from a pet store, and they require proper food, cages, accessories and medical care. One should always consider adopting a ferret from a ferret shelter as well. Older ferrets are a good choice for first time ferret owners, as they are less hyperactive and may already be trained. Baby ferrets (kits) require a lot of training, patience and time from their owners.

Ferrets require high quality ferret food, which can be found at most major pet stores. Be sure you have at least \$25.00 dollars or so a month per ferret to spend on ferret food. You may not need quite that much, however it's better to

overshoot than come up short.

Ferrets require quality cages and accessories. Cages designed for ferrets can run anywhere from \$60.00 to \$500.00 or more per cage. If your ferret is going to spend a lot of time in the cage, a larger cage with ramps and tunnels should be purchased. Accessories such as litter pans, paper litter, shampoo, water bottles, feeding dishes, hammocks and toys can run you an additional \$50.00 or more.

Ferrets can also suffer from a variety of health conditions (cancer, ECE, adrenal disease, respiratory infections, injuries, gastrointestinal blockages, etc. Your ferret may require surgery or an extended hospital stay. Be prepared to have at least \$1,000.00 set aside for such emergencies. Also, unless you are an experienced breeder, your ferrets have to be spayed or neutered by six months of age. Most pet store and shelter ferrets have already had this procedure performed. Sexually intact female ferrets (jills) will go into prolonged heat if not mated and will eventually become seriously ill and die. Sexually intact males (hobs) will become aggressive towards other male ferrets while in rut and will develop a strong odor and anxiety if not mated.

**2. Time** - Do you have the time to properly care for a ferret? If you are someone who is out of town a lot or is gone from morning until late at night, a ferret may not be the right pet for you. Ferrets are social animals and need at least three hours of "out of cage" play time each day (this means **you** have to play with them and **supervise** their activities). If a ferret is left alone for long periods of time, or is never let out of the cage (this is abusive) it will become depressed, stressed or ill. If you do work long hours and you are bent on getting a ferret (not recommended), purchase two ferrets and an extra large cage or set up an enclosed "ferret proofed" room with lots of safe toys. Make sure you let them out to play when you get home or in the morning before you leave for work (or both).

Young (and some older) ferrets need to be trained. Litter pan training, teaching them not to nip, and ferret proofing your house all take time. Ferrets can also learn to come when you call them, respond to "squeaky" toys and perform simple tricks (rolling over, standing up for a treat etc.). Owning a ferret is somewhat like owning a dog (and I stress "somewhat"). They are social animals who need human interaction and limits set to them by their owners. An unsupervised ferret can get into a lot of trouble around the house.

Finally, you need to set aside time for grooming. Although grooming your ferret is not extremely time consuming, it must be done on a consistent basis or health issues may result.

**3. Patience**- Patience is an important virtue where ferret ownership is concerned. Owning a ferret can be like having a two year old child who never grows up! Ferrets are very persistent, intelligent and curious animals who will try to get into everything--especially things they are not supposed to! For instance, if a ferret takes a liking to scratching a certain spot of the carpet, it will take more than just one "no" to get it to stop the behavior. The ferret may stop for a few seconds or even several minutes and then return to scratching the spot when you are not paying attention. Usually you will need to make adaptations to your house and furnishings to protect them (and the ferrets) from harm.

Ferrets like to hide things. If you leave the remote, a wallet, socks, keys etc. where ferrets can reach them, the items will usually end up in their favorite hiding place! Be prepared for litter box accidents, drinks getting knocked over, potted plants being dug into and toys and other objects showing up under the couch or bed (or just missing completely). It takes time and creativity to stop a ferret from exhibiting unwanted behaviors, however some behaviors are just part of a ferret's nature and will persist. In other words, if you are someone with a short fuse and little patience, ferret ownership is probably not for you.

**4. Young Children**- Do you have children under the age of five at home? Children, especially very young ones, have difficulty understanding how to properly treat animals. Small children have a tendency to pull, grab, squeeze and drop small animals without realizing they can hurt them. This can lead to injuries to the ferret, or the ferret may possibly nip the child out of fear.

Children under the age of five or infants should never be left unsupervised with an adult or baby ferret. If your child is under the age of five, I would especially advise not purchasing your child a baby ferret (kit). Kits are **very** active, are hard to hold on to, and can nip before they are trained not to do so. They are also very small and could be easily harmed by a young, inexperienced handler. An adult will be needed to care for grooming, cage cleanings, supervision, and playtime.

**Ferrets are not like hamsters or mice and cannot be kept in a cage for prolonged periods of time.** Parents should be

prepared to supervise interaction between young children and ferrets.

**5. Other Pets-** Do you have other pets in your household? Ferrets can get along with some other domesticated pets, mainly cats and some dogs. Ferrets and cats generally get along the best (especially if they were raised together). Dogs are a little trickier. If you own a hunting dog, a terrier, or a dog that likes to chase small animals, it may spell trouble for your ferret. Always use **EXTREME** caution and intense supervision when introducing a ferret to a dog or cat. Ferrets have been killed by dogs and seriously scratched by cats. Ferrets are so domesticated that they have lost most of their natural fear of other animals. They may just boldly walk up to a dog or cat out of curiosity and get harmed.

Never leave your ferret alone with birds, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, mice, rats, rabbits, chinchillas or reptiles. Ferrets will usually consider them food, or kill them by accident during rough play. I had a ferret who caught and killed two lizards that had gotten into our apartment. My ferrets also attempted to attack a dove that had gotten out of its enclosure. If you allow your birds, rodents, or reptiles time outside of their cage, be sure to lock your ferrets in their cage to avoid a tragedy. There have been a few isolated cases of ferrets not bothering these animals, however I would proceed with extreme caution.

## **DIET**

Feeding your ferret a proper diet is extremely important. Ferrets are strict carnivores and should be fed a high protein (at least 34%), high fat (at least 20%) high quality chicken or lamb based dry ferret diet. Totally Ferret, Zupreem for Ferrets, and Ultimate 8 and 1 are the best choices. Chicken or lamb should be listed in some form (poultry, lamb or poultry meal) as the number one ingredient in the list of ingredients on the back of the bag. You should also look for food that is naturally preserved with vitamin E and has no artificial colors.

Ferrets have very short digestive tracts, so they need a food that contains easily digestible meat protein. Foods that list grain or corn as the first ingredient should not be used. The advice that you should feed ferrets kitten or cat food is outdated, considering that high quality ferret-specific foods are now widely available to pet stores and the Web. It is especially inadvisable to feed your ferret grocery store cat foods, which contain too much fiber and not enough quality animal protein. This food can also contribute to stones in the kidneys and bladder, malnutrition, dull coats and other health problems for your ferret. It's never too late to make the switch (especially if your ferret has been diagnosed with insulinomas).

## **FERRET BEHAVIORS**

**Alligator roll-** Ferrets generally exhibit this behavior when they are playing with other ferrets. One ferret usually grabs the other ferret by the scruff and "flips" the other ferret over. Sometimes a single ferret will roll around by his or her self while excited during play. Young ferrets and ferrets who have not been nip trained will sometimes try to "scruff" and roll a human by grabbing loose skin on the back of a hand, socks, or feet. This is all done in good fun, however if it is painful the behavior should be discouraged. Ferrets have much tougher skin than humans, so what may feel like a "pinch" to another ferret can feel like a bite to a human.

**Backing into a corner-** Ferrets do this for different reasons. If your ferret backs up into a corner or wall while hissing and getting all "puffed" up, your ferret is telling you that he or she is frightened. It is important to not try to grab or pick up a frightened ferret. If your ferret is frightened, just speak soft kind words and leave him or her alone. Your ferret will soon recover once he or she feels that the threat or danger is gone. Another reason ferrets back into corners is a more common one. Ferrets will often back up into a corner to use the bathroom! If you see your ferret backing into a corner, and he or she is not frightened, look out. Your ferret is about to use the potty on the floor! It is helpful to quickly place your ferret into the nearest litter box as soon as possible (before the deed is done).

**Bottle brush tail-** Ferrets will often get a "puffy" tail when they are frightened or excited. If a ferret has a bottle brush tail and is backing away from you and hissing, he or she is frightened and needs to be left alone until calm. However, if your ferret gets a "puffy" tail while exploring a new environment (like going outside for the first time), or during vigorous play, he or she is just very stimulated and excited. Puffy tail can also be a precursor to having a "wired weasel" on your hands! Our ferret Ed often gets a puffy tail when we let him out to play in the morning in our new house. A short time later he is taking off around the house like a rocket!

**Chasing-** Ferrets LOVE to play chasing games. They will chase one another and they will chase you (and want you to chase them). Ed and Ginger love to chase me when I run around the house dragging a blanket. Many new ferret owners

get frightened when their ferret jumps around and "lunges" at them and then starts to run around like a crazed animal. Don't worry. Your ferret is just trying to entice you into a game of chase. If you decide to turn the tables and chase your ferret back, just make sure you have several feet between you and your ferret. Ferrets can stop suddenly and get stepped on!

**Dance of Joy-** This is one of my favorite aspects of ferret behavior. The "dance of joy" consists of a ferret jumping around from side to side, flipping on the floor, bouncing off of furniture and generally losing all control! Your ferret may slightly open his or her mouth during the display and make "chirping" or "dooking" sounds. Basically, your ferret is telling you that he or she is full of energy, incredibly happy and ready for some serious playtime! Many first time ferret owners can be frightened by this display (I have had people write to me thinking that their ferret was attacking them). Don't worry. Your ferret is simply bursting with joy and energy.

**Dooking-** This term refers to the sound a ferret makes when excited and happy. My husband prefers to call it "chirping." The next time you play with your ferret, listen closely. Sometimes it is hard to hear the soft vocalizations ferrets make when excited. My ferrets "dook" quite loudly when playing with one another and when I take them outside.

**Food digging-** This is often an "unwanted" ferret behavior, however many ferrets do it. Ferrets are born to dig, and to them a bowl of chow is as good as a pile of dirt when it comes to digging. I have learned to live with this behavior and have not attempted to get my ferrets to stop. Most ferrets will just eat the food that they dig out of the bowl. It is nearly impossible to stop ferrets from exhibiting behaviors that are a part of their nature.

**Food and water bowl tipping-** This is another unwanted ferret behavior, however many ferrets do it often. Ferrets are playful animals and will play with their food and water if given the chance. Sometimes ferrets will tip over their food and water if they are bored, upset and lonely from being caged too long. Other times, a ferret will knock over the food or water bowl to play in the spilt food or water. Many ferrets love to play in shallow water and to dig in food. A bowl of water is just plain irresistible to a ferret and it can eventually get knocked over during play. Purchasing heavy ceramic food bowls or food bowls that attach to the side of the cage can help in solving this problem. Ferrets do also tend to like to mix a little water in with their food. I discovered my ferrets "scooting" the food and water bowl (they are attached) across the kitchen floor until some of the water splashed into the food side of the bowl. They then drank the water out of the food side of the bowl and ate the food. If your ferret does this, try moving some of the ferret food aside and splashing a little water into the food bowl. This may help in keeping the food and water bowl from getting tipped over accidentally. Just be aware that moist food spoils quickly, so you should remove any uneaten portions and replace it with fresh food.

**Hissing-** A hissing ferret can be an unhappy or angry ferret. Always use caution in trying to pick up a ferret who is backing away and hissing. You could get bitten. Ferrets usually hiss to show fear or anger. However, ferrets can sometimes hiss when engaging in play with one another. If your ferret hisses while displaying an arched back and "bristled" fur, just speak softly to your ferret and leave your ferret alone. He or she is not a happy ferret and could bite. Only pick up your ferret after he or she has calmed down.

**Litter box digging-** Ferrets LOVE to dig, and litter is no exception. To avoid litter box digging, try keeping a small piece of stool in the litter box at all times. A squeaky clean litter box can be a wonderful digging toy to a playful ferret. If your ferret can smell excrement in the box, he or she may see it as a place to do business and not a place to play. You can also purchase some "play sand" or potting soil from a hardware store and make a "sand box" for your ferret to play in. If you give your ferret appropriate places to dig, he or she may leave the litter boxes alone.

**Obsession with a particular object-** Ferrets can and do become obsessed with particular objects or toys. Your ferret will probably pick his or her favorite toy and hide it in a secret hiding place. If you find the toy and remove it, your ferret could become very anxious, angry or stressed. For example, our ferret Ed is obsessed with his Winnie the Pooh stuffed animal with a built in teething ring/rattle (see picture below). He doesn't chew on it, he just moves it to different places around the house. At any given time of the day, my husband and I can hear the jingling of the rattle as Ed moves it to a new hiding place. If I find his toy and jingle it, he will come running out of any hiding place to get it back. He will then look for a new hiding place to store it. Ferrets can also fight with one another if one tries to take the other's favorite object. Your job is to make sure your ferret becomes attached to a safe item. Ferrets are notorious for stashing things that they like all over the house (even car keys and wallets!).

**Object "scooting"-** This is another one of my favorite ferret behaviors. Ferrets will sometimes try to move large or

awkward objects by grabbing them with their paws, holding them close to their chest and "scooting" backwards. The funny aspect of this behavior (besides the fact that they look funny) is that they often just move around in a circle, not really getting anywhere at all! Ed and Ginger often try to move plastic Easter eggs (and panty hose) in this fashion. It always gives me a good laugh!

**Running into things** - Believe it or not, ferrets actually have very poor eyesight. They can only see about two feet in front of them. Their peripheral vision (side to side) is better than their frontal vision. This is why a playing ferret may run head on into a wall or piece of furniture while running. Ferrets also have very poor depth perception and may suffer from "high rise syndrome." For this reason, it is not advisable to let your ferret run around on a balcony or high patio. Ferrets have also been known to scratch through window screens and fall to their deaths. Be sure to watch your ferret closely if you have a two story home with an open balcony on the second floor. Many people put Plexiglas barriers around open banisters on the second floor.

**Screaming**- If your ferret lets out a scream, you can be sure your ferret is not a happy camper. Ferrets can let out a scream when very frightened, injured or unhappy. It is not a sound you want to hear. If your ferret screams due to an injury, you want to get he or she checked out by a vet as soon as possible. Sometimes, ferrets may scream during rough play or wrestling. This is especially true when a new ferret is being introduced into the family. Ferrets do have a pecking order and the submissive ferret may be getting bullied by the bossier ferrets of the group. If you hear your ferret scream while playing with another ferret, always check out the situation. You want to make sure there are no bites or serious scratches that need medical attention. If no injuries are taking place, continue to let the ferrets "duke it out" for short supervised periods of time. Ferrets will usually sort out their differences on their own. However, if one ferret is injuring another ferret, they should be separated.

**Scratching**- Ferrets tend to be itchy animals. If your ferret suddenly stops during play and scratches like crazy, don't worry too much about it. Ferrets tend to scratch often. However, always check your ferret over for fleas, skin redness or skin lesions. If you find any lumps or bumps on your ferret's skin, go see a veterinarian. If fleas are present, talk to your vet about topical flea products, or use a ferret specific flea shampoo. Be sure to treat your house for fleas as well. If your ferret's skin looks fine, your ferret is just displaying typical "itchy" behavior.

**Sneezing**- Ferrets do tend to sneeze a lot. This is usually due to their close proximity to the ground and their habit of smelling everything in sight. If they sniff something that is dusty, they will sneeze. However, if the sneezing is accompanied by a runny nose or lethargy, you may have a sick ferret on your hands. Ferrets can catch some human viruses. If your ferret does not improve in a few days, or if he or she starts coughing or has a thick mucus discharge, take your ferret to a veterinarian for a check up.

**Tail wagging**- This is another adorable ferret behavior. If you are lucky, you may see your ferret wag his or her tail very rapidly when excited. This behavior usually takes place when two ferrets are playing in a tunnel or tube. It just means that your ferret is very excited and is anticipating something fun. For example, Ed will wag his tail while waiting for Ginger to join him inside their play tunnel (Ferret Freeway). Ginger has no idea that Ed is in the tunnel when she enters it. Ed wags his tail until he sees her and then lunges forward to surprise her! It really is fun to watch.

**Toe Nipping**- Ferrets will often nip toes and feet when they are young. They are basically treating your foot like another ferret. Ferrets will often nip one another to entice play. They also scruff one another using their mouths during play. Because ferret skin is tougher than human skin, a playful nip can feel like a bite. You should discourage this behavior in young and old ferrets. Wearing socks is usually the best deterrent for foot and toe nipping. Ferrets seem to LOVE stinky feet. So, if your feet stink (or even if they don't), try wearing socks around your ferrets at all times. If this does not stop the behavior, purchase some Bitter Apple and apply it to your feet. It tastes terrible and should deter your ferret from nipping.

**War dance**- This ferret behavior looks a lot like the "dance of joy," however it has a very different meaning. If your ferret is arching his or her back with bristled fur, jumping from side to side, backing away and hissing- look out. Your ferret may be pretty upset. While the general movements of the war dance are similar to the dance of joy, the body language is different. Ferrets can do the war dance when frightened, injured or angry. If your ferret has not been descented, he or she may release a very stinky smell during this display. Your ferret is trying to look big and scary and stinky. He or she is telling you to stay away- and you should listen to your ferret until he or she feels comfortable again.

**Wrestling**- Ferrets often play with one another in the form of wrestling. One ferret will usually use his or her mouth to

“scruff” the other ferret behind the neck. He or she will then try to “alligator roll” the opponent and pin him or her to the floor. This can be done with much dooking and hissing (and sometimes screaming). Ferrets wrestle to “mock fight” during play. Ferrets are very elaborate and talented wrestlers. Their antics may look dangerous, however more often than not they are just playing rough. However, if you hear a lot of screaming coming from one ferret, be sure to look the ferret over for injuries. Not all ferrets like one another and they really could be fighting!

## FERRET-PROOFING YOUR HOUSE

Your ferret should always have a large, clean, comfortable, ferret specific cage or “kitty condo” type cage available to keep him or her safe when you are not at home or in the event of an illness or emergency. Ferrets should be caged or kept in a ferret-proofed area of your home when you are not home to supervise them and at night when you are asleep. They should be kept indoors in a temperature controlled environment if outdoor temperatures are hotter than 80 degrees F and colder than 45 degrees F. **Ferrets should never be housed in a fish aquarium**, due to lack of air circulation and moisture buildup on the glass bottom. This excess moisture can lead to bacterial and fungal infections on the skin and in the lungs (can lead to death).

- 1) Are all cleaning supplies and medications stored in cabinets or cabinets with strong childproof latches?
- 2) Are the spaces under cabinets, stoves, refrigerators and dishwashers blocked off in the kitchen and bathroom? Are all small openings that could lead to the outside or inside the walls blocked off?
- 3) Are the toilet lids down when the ferrets are about (ferrets can climb into toilets while trying to drink the water)?
- 4) Is the bar soap in an area that is out of the reach of your ferret (ferrets can climb onto some bathroom counters and can reach the bathtub soap dish)?
- 5) Are foam rubber or soft rubber items such as hand exercise weights, shoe inserts, toys, buckets with foam rubber handles, coasters, rubber bands or drink holders out of the reach of your ferret?
- 6) Are all sponges and Styrofoam products in an area where your ferret can't reach them?
- 7) Are your house plants out of ferret reach?
- 8) Do you have a "ferret safe" room in your home where your ferrets can play without constant supervision? Are your ferrets caged when you are asleep or not home?
- 9) Are unsafe rooms blocked off with ferret-proof barriers?
- 10) Is your laundry room always blocked off and off-limits to your ferret?
- 11) Do you make sure your ferret is not inside a chair or couch before you sit down? Are there openings in the couch or chair where your ferret can hide and come into contact with couch stuffing?
- 12) Do you check your laundry before you put it in the washing machine to make sure there isn't a sleeping ferret in the clothing?
- 13) Do you check the clothes dryer before you run it?
- 14) Do you check the inside of the dishwasher before you start it?
- 15) Do you have a chair that reclines? Do make sure all of your ferrets are accounted for before you recline in it (ferrets can get crushed in chair and couch springs)?
- 16) Are there pieces of furniture or shelving that your ferret can climb and get hurt if they fall? Do you supervise them around these items?
- 17) Do you cut cardboard toilet paper and paper towel rolls in half before throwing them in a wastebasket (ferrets can get their head stuck in them and suffocate)? Do you make sure that you keep wastebaskets with harmful material out of your ferret's reach?
- 18) Are your ferret's toys made out of hard rubber, tightly braided rope, and plastic? Do they play with sturdy stuffed animals that **don't** have small pieces that can be chewed off?

## HIDDEN DANGERS

Unfortunately, one of the most prevalent causes of premature ferret death is gastrointestinal blockage. You can protect your ferrets by keeping a close eye on what they like to chew on. Basically, ferrets like any type of foam rubber, soft rubber, couch stuffing, sponge and Styrofoam. **Additionally, many ferrets also enjoy chewing on paper, plastic bags, cardboard and fabric.** These will all cause gastrointestinal blockages if ingested.

Look for signs such as furniture stuffing on the floor, under beds or under other furniture. Make sure your ferrets are not digging holes under the couch and crawling inside. Keep all shoes with foam inserts out of the reach of your ferret. If your ferret is chewing his or her bedding, try a stronger fabric that won't tear. Generally, keep an eye on your ferrets and be familiar with their favorite places to hide and which items in the house they are fixated on. This will help you come up with a ferret-proofing plan that is right for your ferrets.

Another hidden danger is house plants. Many house plants are poisonous, and ferrets are very intrigued by them. My ferrets have attempted to chew on the leaves of some of my plants in the past. I would suggest that you put all house plants out of your ferret's reach.

Ferrets actually enjoy the smell of bleach, bar soap and some other household cleaners. Be careful when you are cleaning the bathroom or kitchen. Always rinse bathtubs very well after cleaning them. Some ferrets (like mine) are able to climb into the tub by themselves. They enjoy licking the water droplets off the sides of the tub. A small amount of disinfecting cleaner or bleach could make your ferret ill. Keep toilet lids down to keep your ferret from drinking out of the toilet (yes, I have a ferret that does this) . Again, toilet cleaners are toxic to ferrets. Ferrets could also drown in the toilet water. Store all cleaning supplies, medicine and bar soap in a ferret-proof area.

Finally, to keep your ferret out of potentially unsafe rooms such as the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room you must construct a ferret barrier. Traditional pet and child-proof gates will not work. Most ferrets can easily climb over these gates and can get strangled or stuck by trying to squeeze through the openings. Ferrets will try to get under the refrigerator (they can be seriously injured by the fan), under cabinets, in drawers, under the washer and dryer (they can get in the dryer if you leave the door open) and in any other small opening at ground level. Ferrets can also climb into high places such as the top shelf of a closet. Unfortunately, ferrets can get themselves into situations they can't get out of and end up getting injured. Make sure you know where your ferret is at all times!

The best way to keep your ferret out of dangerous rooms is to make your own barrier or purchase a gate made especially for ferrets (these are constructed out of a solid sheet of plastic or Plexiglas). You can make your own barrier by measuring your doorway and purchasing a flat sheet of wood or Plexiglas that is at least three feet tall. Stiff cardboard may work as well. Just wedge the board in your doorway to keep the room blocked off. Climbing over the barriers may seem like a pain, but it's nothing compared to trying to find a ferret who has gotten trapped inside a wall, under the fridge or behind a cabinet! Keep your ferrets out of your furniture by nailing or tacking heavy material, card board, wood sheets or particle board on the bottom of the furniture. This keeps them from being able to dig through the soft fabric located under your furniture.

Keeping a close eye on your little buddies and setting limits for them will create a comfortable, safe home environment for you and your ferrets.