

Ferret

Mustela putorius furo

🇫🇷 Furet · 🇩🇪 Frettchen



REGULATIONS

Companion animal

OPAn: social housing recommended (pairs/groups), daily exercise time. Some communes require registration; rabies vaccine for travel. Release prohibited.



LIFESPAN

7–10 years



ADULT WEIGHT

0.6–1.5 kg



LIFESTYLE

Diurnal (sleeps 15–16 hrs/day)



BODY TEMPERATURE

37.8–40 °C



SEXUAL MATURITY

8–12 months



GESTATION

39–42 days



LITTER / CLUTCH SIZE

1–18



Habitat & environment



Type — Secured (ferret-proof) space of at least 4 m² for two animals



Substrate — Compressed paper (Yesterday's News®), plant-based bedding or cat litter (in a tray)



Equipment

- Hammocks
- Tunnels or plastic pipes
- Cosy beds
- Sturdy toys
- Food bowl
- Water bottle or heavy water bowl



Technical parameters



Ambient

16–25 °C



Lighting



Photoperiod — Limit to 12 h/day

Prevents adrenal disease.



Behaviour

Very social, curious, playful and destructive. Needs training to prevent biting.



Social life — Thrives in groups (3–4 ideally). Tolerates dogs and cats. Avoid prey species.



Activity cycle — Sleeps 15–16 hrs/day. Intense exploration when awake.



Enrichment

- Daily out-of-cage time
- Interactive play
- Ferret-proofed environment
- Food-hunting games



Nutrition

Strict carnivore and very much a creature of habit (dislikes food changes). Its diet must be rich in animal protein and fat but low in sugars, carbohydrates and fibre — free-choice day and night (short gut transit of 3–4 h).

Lean raw meat, the base of a balanced home-made ration (recipes below): prevents many digestive and pancreatic problems. BARF (frozen ground meat and carcasses) is an alternative, as a base or supplement — a complete recipe is essential to avoid deficiencies, risk of bacterial contamination if poorly stored.

Daily base

 **Chicken**
Lean meat

 **Turkey**
Lean meat

 **Beef**
Ground beef, 15% fat

Pellets & supplements

Ferret-specific kibble (>35% animal protein, 20-30% fat). Avoid kitten kibble (too high in carbohydrates, long-term health problems). Brands: Totally Ferret®, Supreme Science®, Marshall®.

 **Pellets**
Ferret-specific

Treats (occasional)

Whole prey (chicks, frozen rat or mouse) 1-3/day or as a treat; risk of bacterial contamination if poorly stored. Occasional treats (egg yolk, salmon, insect, ham...), without overdoing it.

 **Chick**

 **Rat Pup**

 **Adult Mouse**
Mouse

 **Egg**
Egg yolk

 **Salmon**

 **Ham**

 **Chicken Neck**
Helps prevent dental plaque

TO AVOID

 **Sweets**

 **Chocolate**

Home-made ration: raw recipes for ferrets

After Dr G. Blanchart, Dr A. Linsart, Dr F. Modesto

A ferret needs about 200 calories per day per kilogram, with individual variation. Home-made rations allow precise control of the ingredients but require rigorous formulation and hygiene to avoid imbalances (notably Ca:P, taurine, iodine, vitamin E).

Chicken recipe (for 200 calories) : 100 g lean chicken or turkey meat ; 7.5 ml rapeseed oil ; 0.5 ml fish oil (1 capsule opened onto one meal) ; 3 g (3/4 scoop) Vit'i5 Little Ca (powder, 10% Ca, vitamins and trace elements, no P), kneaded into the daily portion of meat

Chicken + fatty beef recipe (for 200 calories) : 60 g chicken or turkey meat ; 50 g minced beef, 15% fat ; 5 ml rapeseed oil ; 0.5 ml fish oil (1 capsule opened onto one meal) ; 3 g (3/4 scoop) Vit'i5 Little Ca (powder, 10% Ca, vitamins and trace elements, no P), kneaded into the daily portion of meat

Supplement alternatives

Calcium + vitamins: carbohydrate-free carnivore premix (e.g. Felini Complete), high in Ca and low in P. Check iodine and taurine.

Calcium alone: calcium carbonate/citrate or eggshell; aim for Ca:P ≈ 1.2:1.

Taurine: powder or capsules; 250-500 mg/kg of ration.

Omega-3: fish oil (EPA + DHA) with vitamin E.

Preparation: all ingredients can be given raw, but the meat must be of good sanitary quality. Thoroughly mix the oil and Vit'i5 into the daily portion of meat or fish; half a pinch of salt (250 mg) can be added. A home-made ration is one and indivisible: prepare the mix for the day and keep it refrigerated, then serve small meals several times a day. You can also prepare the recipe for a week and freeze each daily portion (thaw gently in the fridge).

Health & prevention

Preventive medicine

Deworming: it depends on the ferret's lifestyle. A tailored deworming schedule is recommended, especially if it eats raw prey, with outdoor access, cohabitation with dogs or cats, or a raw-meat diet; the

WARNING SIGNS

- Hair loss (tail, flanks)
- Hindleg weakness

frequency should be set with your vet.

Vaccination

Canine distemper (very strongly recommended). Rabies (useful if the animal leaves the country).

Surgery & neutering

Neutering by implant from 7 months. Surgical neutering is irreversible, whereas the implant must be renewed periodically (4.7 mg: about 1.5 years on average; 9.4 mg: about 2.5 years). Recent studies show adrenal disease (adrenal gland tumour) appearing several years after surgery: the implant is therefore now strongly recommended and surgery should be avoided. If your ferret was surgically sterilised, we advise an ultrasound check of the adrenal glands.

Common conditions

Hyperoestrogenism

SYMPTOMS Hair loss, persistently swollen vulva, excessive itching and, eventually, bone-marrow destruction: the female becomes anaemic and can die quickly without appropriate treatment.

CAUSE An unmated female stays in continuous heat (oestrogen excess).

PREVENTION Neutering of the non-breeding female (implant recommended).

- Swollen vulva (female)
- Cough

If any of these symptoms appear, prompt veterinary care is essential.
Contact an exotic-pet vet as soon as possible.

Adrenal disease

SYMPTOMS Hair loss (tail, flanks), swollen vulva, hind-leg weakness.

CAUSE Adrenal gland tumour, favoured by surgical neutering (on average 3.5 years after the operation).

PREVENTION Prefer the implant to surgery; ultrasound check of the adrenal glands 3 years after surgical neutering.

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