

# FERRET PLAY

*By Cathy Mallette, Staff Journalist, American Ferret Report, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2013*

Ferrets are one of the most playful small pets a person can own. Ferrets are an active and social animal, so it is important to help them stay active by playing and spending time with them. Ferrets are curious, often very mischievous, and naturally inquisitive with a taste for adventure. They each have distinctively individual personalities. They have a short attention span and are constantly seeking new and more exciting things to explore and experience. Also, ferrets must have a secure play and living area.

Like children, ferrets love to play with small toys. Balls, squeakers, and little stuffed animals can keep ferrets amused for hours. Make sure toys are of good, strong plastic and have no small pieces (such as eyes) that can be chewed off and swallowed.

In an ideal situation, a ferret should:

- Have at least 3-4 hours of mentally stimulating play per day.
- Have a cage with safe toys so they can be entertained when you're not around.
- Have their cage surroundings and playthings rearranged once a week so that they can explore their "new" living environment.
- Have a change of scenery at least twice a week; for example, going to a park, attending a ferret play date, being allowed into another room of the house, or playing a new game.

Keeping a ferret caged too long will lead to an unhappy and stressed pet. Prolonged caging may result in negative activities once the ferret is finally free, such as hiding on you; poor socialization with other pets, and nipping. A ferret without proper stimulation can also get depressed, which usually leads to apathy, bad habits, decreased appetite, poor coat, and other health issues.

Just be forewarned: All games do not work for all ferrets. They have their own personalities and what one likes another may not. Sometimes it's just trial and error. Respect their choices.

## A BRIEF WORD ABOUT FERRET-PROOFING YOUR HOME

Before letting your ferrets out to roam around and explore the home, be sure it is ferret-proofed. Ferrets are curious little creatures, and fearless. If there's a hole, they'll find it; an opening, they'll squeeze through it; a new place to explore, they will explore it. Ferret-proofing is an ongoing task.

Unfortunately, ferrets can get injured or even killed by getting into things they are not supposed to. Many ferrets have met an untimely end because an unsuspecting human has stepped on, sat on, or trapped a ferret in a place it shouldn't have been to begin with. No matter how thoroughly you ferret-proof, you should still carefully supervise your ferrets, as you never know what they might try to get into next! Remember: You have to get down to their level if you want to see from their perspective.

## PLAYING INDOORS

<p>1. <b>Make the bed</b> – Ferrets love playing under the covers; plus, it's fun to watch. They love the sheets being fluffed over their heads.</p>	<p>6. <b>Pipes and tubes</b> (clean ones) – They will run through them over and over again.</p>	
<p>2. <b>Ferret tease</b> – Dangle a cloth above their heads and make them chase it and try to catch it. (Be sure to let them catch it sometimes.)</p>	<p>7. <b>Flying carpet ride</b> – Lay a towel or a blanket on the floor and drag the ferrets around on it. They will get very excited and start pouncing on it and each other, dooking with delight.</p>	
<p>8. <b>Tunneling</b> – Lay some sheets or a blanket on the floor and let them tunnel through it.</p>	<p>8. <b>Plastic bags</b> – You hardly need to do anything with this homemade ferret toy... just rattle it! Be sure they</p>	
<p>9. <b>Pillow shake</b> – Put them in a pillow case and shake it lightly. Watch them try to scramble out—then they run right back in when you stop.</p>		
<p>10. <b>Crinkle pillowcase</b> – Get an old pillowcase, fill it with crinkled up paper (the louder the better), and let them play in it.</p>		