

RABBITS



A block of rock salt and a rabbit lick should be provided in your rabbit's Hutch, without a salt intake in the rabbits diet they soon lose condition. Greens and fruits that rabbits can enjoy are: Brussels sprouts, beetroot, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, parsnip, peas and pea pods, spinach, swede, turnip, apples and pears. **Lettuce should only be given in strict moderation** as it contains traces of poison to rabbits (Lactucarium)

FERRETS



The ferret is a much maligned animal, consistently believed to be a nasty, spiteful, untrustworthy killer. This is as nature intended and for many years the ferret has been used for hunting, racing and showing. The only place a ferret would have been seen is at a country show, the attraction being that they were a 'different' pet or working animal. However, the ferret has shrugged off its old image and is emerging as a popular pet, with ferret food and accessories widely available in local pet shops. The ferret is now seen as a clean, intelligent, friendly and fun animal, more playful than a canine, loving like a feline and more interesting than any caged bird or fish.

As the owner of 8 ferrets (or mustelids) I can testify to their loving nature. My ferrets live in a community known collectively as a 'business'. The group consists of 5 jills (a female ferret), 2 hoblles (castrated males) and 1 hobllet (a vasectomized male). The ferrets live happily like this although a strict 'pecking' order has been established.



The castration of a ferret renders him unable to serve a jill. Castration can help reduce the aggression and smell of the male. A jill needs to be served annually to prevent medical complications within her reproductive system, therefore by vasectomizing one male it enables the females to be served without any population explosion. Jills may be kept with or without a male (as a male can be kept with or without a female) but if they are kept alone, or with another jill, they should receive an annual injection (known as a 'jill pill') which stimulates the hormones stimulated by being served.



Today it is not unusual to hear of a ferret being kept indoors like a dog or a cat. However, even the most enthusiastic ferret owner must admit the ferret has a 'distinct' odour! Ferrets kept outdoors need to be kept in a hutch or a cage large enough to accommodate their energetic outbursts. Ferrets

sleep for the majority of the day but when they are awake they enjoy human contact and are energetic and enjoyable. I am fortunate enough to house my ferrets in a stable which I have adapted to make escape proof. The ferret is a good climber, can jump surprising distances and can squeeze through the smallest gaps meaning they can escape from the most surprising holes. Housing the ferrets in a stable enables the ferrets to have free play with empty boxes, branches and old paper feed bags. Within the stable there are 2 very large hutches divided into compartments for living and sleeping. The floor of the hutches has a covering of sawdust or shavings and the bed area is full of old fleeces or woolly jumpers that the ferrets use as bedding. The whole area must be checked daily and any droppings or wet material removed. The whole area is emptied, cleaned and disinfected once a week.

Ferrets need a high protein diet. Complete ferret foods are readily available and these can be supplemented with 1 -2 fresh raw eggs a week and a small amount of raw fresh meat, usually offal. A fresh supply of drinking water should be constantly available.

Daily handling of your ferret is very important. The more the ferret is handled the tamer and more trusting it becomes. A tame, well fed, well handled ferret will not bite.



The ferret has been with us for thousands of years and love it or hate it this remarkable animal is here to stay.

(Sent in by Mr G Smith of Sedgfield)

HAMSTERS HEALTH TIP



If you notice your hamster's faeces lightening in colour and appearing slightly more soft in consistency, withdraw all greens, fruit and other foods high in moisture and feed some arrowroot biscuit along with dried hamster food. If there is no improvement take your hamster to the vets. For "wet tail" the animals tail and anal area and often parts of the belly are damp or soiled with soft excrements, immediate veterinary treatment is vital.