



**American Ferret Association, Inc.**

# **Exhibitor Guidebook**

**American Ferret Association, Inc.**

PMB 255 626-C Admiral Dr.

Annapolis, MD 21401

Phone: 1-888-FERRET-1

[afa@ferret.org](mailto:afa@ferret.org)

<http://www.ferret.org>

Revised in 2005 by Sally Heber

In conjunction with

Vickie McKimmey, AFA Shows and Special Events Committee Director

**Copyright 2005** by the American Ferret Association, Inc. Posted May 2005. All rights reserved.  
No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

## Contents

Welcome	3
Why show?	3
Can I show my ferret?	3
How to locate a show	3
Registering for a show	4
Restrictions	5
Advance preparation	6
Pre-show grooming	6
Packing	8
Traveling	9
Check-in and veterinarian check	9
Pre-show setup	10
Show hall etiquette	10
Specialty classes	11
Championship classes	12
Championship titles	15
AFA judge's training program	15
Health issues	16
Complaints	17
Appendix A: Color and pattern chart	18
Appendix B: Specialty class rings and point structure	21
Appendix C: Championship class point structure	22
Appendix D: Show title system	23

## **Welcome!**

Welcome to the Exhibitor Guidebook of the American Ferret Association (AFA). We hope you find this booklet to be a useful introduction to the American Ferret Association's show system. If after reading the Guidebook you still have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the AFA Show Committee Chairperson, care of the AFA, at 1-888-FERRET-1 or at [afa@ferret.org](mailto:afa@ferret.org).

## **Why show?**

Attending a ferret show can be both a fun and an educational experience. The judging process and your ring results will help you learn about optimal ferret health and maintenance. Meeting with ferret owners from around the world, you'll have a chance to "compare notes" and learn the latest news, tips, and tricks. Shows provide an opportunity to discover local and regional shelters, breeders, clubs, and other organizations. You'll have a chance to buy products you can't find elsewhere and support ferret organizations in the process.

## **Can I show my ferret?**

Yes! Everyone is welcome to attend AFA shows, and we encourage you to show your ferret. Ferrets do not need to have any particular background or pedigree to show (and win!). Whether your ferret came from a pet shop, private breeder, or shelter, your ferret can "be all he can be," regardless of background. The only restrictions on showing are related to age and health (see below).

## **How to locate a show**

To learn about upcoming AFA shows, contact the AFA office at 1-888-FERRET-1 or [afa@ferret.org](mailto:afa@ferret.org). AFA show listings appear in the *American Ferret Report*, the official publication of the AFA, which you can receive by joining the organization. *Ferrets* and *Modern Ferret* magazines list some AFA events. Finally, show listings are provided at the official AFA Web site: <http://www.ferret.org>

## Registering for a show

When you find a show that interests you, write or telephone the host organization to request a registration packet. When the packet arrives, read it carefully. Be sure that you can meet all of the requirements, particularly concerning vaccinations. Complete the necessary forms; if you have questions, don't hesitate to call the registrar.

You will need the following information to fill out your registration form:

- The ferret's name. Once you have entered your ferret in a show, please use the same name for future shows. The AFA tracks your ferret's championship points by the ferret's name, so consistency is important.

When entering a ferret's full name, use the following format: The name of the ferret's breeder + The ferret's name + The name of your ferretry. For example, Fancy Ferret's Bandit of Happy Ferret Farm. You may omit the breeder and/or your ferretry name if either is unknown or not applicable. Breeder prefixes (and suffixes where applicable) are required for all Adolescent, Breeder and Later Alter entries.

- The ferret's gender. Male ferrets are "hobs," and female ferrets are "jills." If your ferret is neutered/spayed, then you have an altered hob or an altered jill.
- The ferret's date of birth. Provide the month/day/year, if possible. If not, the month and year alone are acceptable. If you don't know for sure, give it your best guess and use that same date for all future show entries.
- The color and pattern of your ferret. See Appendix B for color and pattern descriptions. Photographs of some colors and patterns are available at <http://www.ferret.org/colorchart.htm>. If you are still uncertain, you may submit a color picture with your registration.
- Vaccination information. Your ferret must be vaccinated for rabies and canine distemper. Be sure to complete all the vaccination information as requested on the entry form. You do not need to send copies of your vaccination records with your entry; however, you will need to bring your records with you to the show in order to enter the show hall. See "Restrictions" for more information.
- The ferret's sire and dam. The name of the ferret's father and mother, respectively. This is required for all Adolescent, Breeder and Late Alter entries. If you have a Companion entry, just leave these fields blank.
- The breeder's name or ferretry. Provide the name of your ferret's breeder and his/her ferretry. This is required for all Adolescent, Breeder and Late Alter entries. If you have a Companion entry, just leave these fields blank.

For championship ferret shows and most specialty shows, you must register in advance. Usually there are two registration dates: an early bird date (for which the entry fee is less) and the cutoff date (the very last date your registration will be accepted). The first date is usually four weeks prior to the show and the cutoff date is typically two weeks prior to the show.

If you have questions when filling out your registration form, contact the show registrar. He or she will be happy to assist you in preventing errors or problems that might complicate matters when you arrive at the show hall.

Please note that disciplinary action will be taken against any person who falsifies a ferret's information or documentation.

One to two weeks before the show date, you will receive a confirmation packet. The packet contains all of the show rules and regulations, so please read it carefully. The enclosed letter will list all of your entries. Check the information to be sure that it is correct, and contact the registrar immediately if you notice any errors. If you do not receive your confirmation packet at least one week before the show, contact the registrar to be sure that your entries arrived.

### **Restrictions**

The AFA prohibits ferrets from entering shows for age- and health-related reasons as follows:

- All ferrets entering the show hall for any reason must be between sixteen (16) weeks and and the day of their sixth and a half (6 ½ )birthday.
- All ferrets entering the show hall for any reason must be vaccinated with USDA approved rabies and canine distemper vaccines, licensed for use in ferrets. You must have written copies of your actual veterinarian records as proof of these vaccinations, and the vaccine names and administration date(s) must appear on the records along with the vaccine's lot/serial numbers. Rabies certificates must be the original, not a copy.
- All ferrets entering the show hall for any reason must be in good health and be free of parasites.
- Dirty cages, carriers, and accessories are not permitted in the show hall. See below for more information about appropriate show housing.
- Ferrets with stitches or any other medical or surgical conditions may not be entered in any classes.
- Pregnant jills (including pseudo-pregnancies), nursing jills, and jills in heat may not enter the show hall. The vulva should not exceed 0.4 cm at its widest point.
- Current tests for the Aleutians Disease Virus (ADV) are mandatory. Please refer to AFA's web site for the most recent requirements for this testing.
- Championship and companion entries may not exhibit any visible, physical deficiency, including but not limited to: cataracts, glaucoma, missing features or limbs, extra appendages, and monorchidism or cryptorchidism (undescended testicle[s]) . Likewise, declawed or defanged ferrets or ferrets with tails less than two (2) inches in length are not permitted to enter

championship classes. Finally, hybrids, angoras, miniatures, ferrets who are noticeably larger or smaller than the norm and with other deviations from the norm are strongly discouraged and will not score well in the championship or companion classes. Ferrets with any of these conditions are permitted to enter specialty classes.

- Ferrets that bite may be disqualified at the judge's discretion.

### **Advance preparation**

Long before the day of the event, good ferret husbandry ensures that your ferret will be in top form. The following three factors will contribute heavily to your ferret's health and appearance and therefore his show ring score:

- Diet: Feed your ferrets a premium dry ferret food, and supplement it with cooked meat when possible. A ferret's diet should contain a minimum of 32% protein and a minimum of 18% fat. Poultry and other meat products should comprise the first few ingredients listed on the bag. Corn and other grains should only appear further down in the list.
- Exercise: Be sure that your ferrets have at least three to four hours to play and exercise outside of their cage every day. Exercise helps to build strong bones and muscles and is very important for your ferret's social interaction needs.
- Grooming: Regular grooming will ensure that your ferret remains healthy and well-cared for. Every seven to ten days, you should trim your ferret's nails, clean his ears, brush his fur, and brush his teeth. You should scale your ferret's teeth every few months as needed or brush their teeth regularly to prevent tartar build-up, or you should have your veterinarian perform this service. Negligence in regular grooming will be evident to the judges.

### **Pre-show grooming**

In the days before the show, you'll want to take a few extra steps to ensure that your ferret is looking his very best.

- Nails: Two to three days before the show, trim your ferret's nails. By trimming them this far in advance, you give the freshly clipped nail edges a chance to smooth and round over. If the nails are still sharp on the day of the show, use a nail file to soften the edges.
- Try one of the following techniques to trim your ferret's nails.
  1. Have a friend grasp the ferret gently but firmly by the scruff (the loose skin on the back of the ferret's neck) while you trim the ferret's nails.
  2. Place a few drops of Ferretone on your ferret's belly, and show him where it is. While your ferret is licking the Ferretone, you can trim his nails.

Trim the nails on all four feet, not just the front paws. Clip them leaving approximately 1/16<sup>th</sup> to 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch of white past the quick, the pink part of the

nail. Be very careful not to hit the quick as it will hurt your ferret. If you do cut the quick, dab a little corn starch on it to stop the bleeding.

- Teeth: Prevent tartar build-up on your ferret's teeth by scaling them every few months as needed. Tartar most commonly appears on the top, rear molars. It appears as a yellowish, greenish, or brownish stain. If you are not comfortable scaling your ferret's teeth, ask your veterinarian to teach you to perform the procedure. You can use a dental tool to pull the tartar off your ferret's teeth. Have a friend scruff your ferret and hold him still. Lift your ferret's cheek with one hand while pressing firmly down and pulling away from the gum with the scraper. Be careful not to cut or scrape the ferret's gums. You should scale your ferret's teeth several days before the show to be sure that the gums are clean and healthy on the day of the event.

A day or two before the show, brush your ferret's teeth. Use a puppy or kitten toothbrush or a toddler-size human toothbrush. Be sure to purchase cat or dog toothpaste at a pet store. Do not use human toothpaste as it could make your ferret ill. Scruff your ferret with one hand while brushing with the other, or have a friend scruff your ferret while you brush. Do your best to brush the inside, outside, and chewing surface of all teeth.

- Bathing: One or two days before the show, bathe your ferret with a ferret or kitten shampoo. After shampooing, apply a ferret or kitten coat conditioner. Be sure that your ferret's cage contains clean bedding after you bathe him. Deodorizers and/or perfumes are not recommended. When your ferret is dry, brush his coat to remove any remaining loose hair. Shortly before entering the ring, you may wish to brush him again, and you can apply a *light* spritz of conditioning spray.
- Ears: On the morning of the show and again before you enter the ring, clean your ferret's ears. Have a friend scruff your ferret or scruff your ferret with one hand while cleaning with the other. Put a few drops of ear cleaning solution (available at any pet store) on a Q-tip. Remove any excess liquid from the Q-tip. Gently swab the ear to remove the reddish brown wax from all of the little nooks, crannies, and folds of the external ear. Clean carefully down into the ear canal, but be sure that you do not push wax into the canal. You do not want to impact wax against the ear drum. Use a cotton ball moistened with clean water or ear cleaner to wipe the area around the ear to remove any excess dirt or wax. Hint: Although you should clean your ferret's ears shortly before he enters the show ring, be sure to allow enough time for the ears and surrounding hair to dry before your ferret is judged.

## Packing

Use the following check list to help you pack for the show.

- Grooming kit (see individual items listed in box 1-1)
- Travel cage: one- or two-story (no larger than 2' x 2')
  - Bedding (hammocks and blankets)
  - Litter box
  - Food bowl (clip-on style)
  - Water bowl (clip-on style)
  - Safe toys
- Cage cover
- Judging carrier: airline-style (see sizes in box 1-2)
  - Bedding (please, no hammocks in judging carriers)
  - Litter box
  - Water bowl or bottle (clip-on style)
- Extra bedding
- Food
- Litter
- Litter scoop
- Paper towels
- Parvocide solution (available at pet stores or through pet supply catalogs)
- Leash/harness
- Veterinary records - original copy only! AFA will only accept vaccines that are USDA licensed for use in ferrets.
  - Written proof of rabies vaccination with date and serial/lot number
  - Written proof of canine distemper with date and serial/lot number
- ADV test results on original letterhead
- Show packet (confirmation letter, hotel/hall directions)
- Camera
- \$\$\$

### Grooming Kit Essentials

Nail Clippers  
Corn Starch  
Dental Tool  
Small Toothbrush  
Pet Toothpaste  
Pet Shampoo  
Pet Conditioner  
Brush  
Conditioning Spray  
Ear Cleaning Solution  
Q-tips  
Cotton Balls

### Travel Carrier Sizes

**Kennel Cab – (Medium) 23" L x 14 1/2" W x 11 1/2" H**  
**Pet Escort - (Medium) 23" L x 14 1/2" W x 11 1/2" H**  
**Vari-Kennel – (Small) 21" L x 16" W x 15" H**

Please do not vary from these sizes because 9 to 15 carriers will be stacked in the judging area during one judging group. A small plastic shoe box will fit in all of these carriers for use as a litter box.

## **Traveling**

In the car: Ferrets do not tolerate heat well. If at all possible, travel in an air-conditioned car if the weather is warm. In any season, be sure that the ferret's cage is not in direct sunlight. Don't put a water bottle in the cage; it will leak. Instead, fill a clip-on bowl half full of water and check it periodically.

In the hotel: Hotel rooms can be very dangerous for ferrets. Do not let your ferret run loose in the room. Instead, place your ferret on his harness and leash, and attach the leash to something in the room, for example, one of the hangers on the coat rack. Provide safe toys, food, water, and a litter pan in your ferret's play area. Be sure to supervise your ferret at all times to keep him from harm. Always be sure to clean up any accidents and messes so that your host organization will be welcome to return to the host hotel.

## **Check-in and veterinarian check**

When you arrive, vaccination and ADV test documentation are reviewed. Ferrets who have fleas or who are obviously sick will not be allowed in the show hall. If you are refused entry for any reason, entry fees will not be refunded.

Vaccination records: All ferrets entering the show hall, including those offered for sale, must have current rabies and canine distemper immunization records. You must have written copies of your actual veterinarian records as proof of these vaccinations, and the vaccine names and administration date(s) must appear on the records along with the vaccine's lot/serial numbers. Oral verification of vaccination will not be accepted. If your vaccination records are not current or if you forgot to bring them, you will not be allowed to enter the show hall with your ferrets.

ADV test records: ADV test records are required for each ferret entering the show hall. Please see AFA's web site for the most current requirements or contact the AFA office (1-888-FERRET-1).

Caging requirements: You may house your ferrets in either wire cages, plastic-bottomed cages, or plastic carriers. Cages/carriers should be well ventilated and have escape-proof doors. All cages and carriers must be in good condition with no rust or bent wire and must have solid bottoms. No matted hair, urine, fecal matter, or dirt of any kind should be in or on the cage/carrier, and all bedding, litter pans, food, and water receptacles should be clean. Due to space restrictions, cages/carriers should not exceed 2' x 2' in size; cages or carriers with doors that open on the side or front, not the top, allow for cage stacking. Cage covers to shield three sides and the top of your ferret's housing are strongly recommended. To keep unwanted fingers out of cages, hang or affix "Don't place fingers in the cage" signs. Fresh food and water must be available at all times to all ferrets in cages or carriers. Likewise, all ferrets should be provided a litter pan filled with safe litter. Newspaper and wood shavings are prohibited, and clumping and clay litters are strongly discouraged. Pelleted wood and pelleted paper litters are recommended. All bedding should have been laundered and all litter pans should have been sanitized no earlier than 24 hours prior to the show. Bring spare bedding in case of "accidents."

### **Pre-show setup**

After your ferrets vaccination and testing documentation has been check by the check-in staff, show your confirmation to the entry clerk, and he or she will provide you with your entry number(s) and show book. Note that at some shows you must purchase a show book when you send in your registration or you will not receive one. Check that you have an entry number for each of your entries. You may write your ferret's name on the back of each card to help you remember which number corresponds to which ferret. Examine the show schedule to determine when you will need to be ready to enter the show ring. Once in the show hall, please set up your cage(s) as quickly as possible and stack as many as you can to conserve table space. Please be considerate of the other exhibitors in the show hall. Do not handle other people's ferrets and do not allow anyone other than the judges to handle yours. If you do come into contact with other ferrets, be sure to disinfect your hands and arms with a parvocidal solution.

Please listen carefully to the announcer throughout the show. Be particularly alert for "ring warning" calls and calls to proceed to the show ring. Make sure that you are ready when your ferret is called; a delay in responding to ring calls may result in your ferret losing points or even being disqualified from a ring. Show hall acoustics are not always the best and schedules do not always run on time or in the order listed, so if you are in doubt ask the announcer for clarification. A note about show schedules: Please be prepared to stay at the show hall until late in the evening if you wish to see the show in its entirety. While specialty ring ribbons are awarded at the end of each ring, championship ribbons are not awarded until all of the judging is complete, sometimes as late as 8:00 – 9:00 pm.

### **Show hall etiquette**

1. Please keep all children under control. There will be no running in the show hall.
2. Keep ferrets under control at all times.
3. No ferrets should be on the floor unless they are involved in a fun match
4. activity in a designated area.
5. Shows are in close quarters, so please be courteous and patient with others.
6. Smoking is prohibited in the show hall.
7. No other animals are permitted in the show hall except service dogs.

## Specialty classes

*Note: The AFA does not sanction specialty classes. The guidelines below serve as suggestions and examples for the conduct of specialty rings, and they reflect current practices for AFA hosted shows.*

Specialty rings provide a forum in which ferrets are judged primarily for the quality of their color, pattern, and coat condition. Common specialty classes include albino, black roan mitt, black sable, blaze, champagne, chocolate, dark-eyed white, mitt, mutt, panda, point and sable. See Appendix A for descriptions of colors and patterns. Some shows may feature specialty rings in which the ferrets are also judged for confirmation, maintenance, and temperament. Common specialty classes of this nature include the passport required, physically challenged, shelter/rescue, and senior rings. See Appendix B for a complete list of specialty class rings and scoring categories and point breakouts.

Each specialty class consists of one ring evaluated by one judge. At the beginning of the class, the announcer will call all entrants to the ring. While moving to and from the ring, please keep your ferret under your direct control at all times to avoid any mishaps. Proceed to the ring and take a seat in one of the chairs provided. For specialty classes, you may either hold your ferret on your lap until he is needed by the judge or place his carrier on the table near/behind the judging area with the entry number affixed to the front of the carrier. While using a carrier is optional in specialty classes, it can be easier for both you and the judge. To avoid illness, please do not let your ferret intermingle with the other entrants.

If you are sitting with your ferret for judging, listen for the judge to call your number. When called, hand the ferret to the judge with its back toward the judge and its face towards you. Please return to your seat until the judge indicates that you may retrieve your ferret. You should not speak to the judge during the judging process unless you are asked a question.

The judge will handle and examine your ferret, and he or she will make comments and provide scores to an assistant called a steward. The steward will record the information and compute your ferret's score. In color/pattern specialty rings, the judge will evaluate your ferret on the following criteria:

- Coat condition: A healthy coat is an indication of a healthy ferret. The fur should be thick and glossy. Winter coats should be long, luxurious, and soft to the touch. The summer coat will have little undercoat, but should be soft and silky. Hair should not be coarse or dry or break off if bent. Deductions are made for dirty, lank, dull, brittle, inflexible, sparse, stained, or discolored coats. Deductions may be made if the fur is excessively coated with conditioning oils or sprays. Neither the winter coat nor the summer coat is preferred regardless of season.
- Color/pattern: Your ferret is judged according to how closely he meets the ideal color and pattern for the specialty class. See Appendix A for a description of AFA-recognized colors and patterns. Points are deducted for deviations from the ideal color/pattern.

- Judge's impression: In specialty classes, judges are free to assign impression points as they see fit. Factors considered can include but are not limited to the ferret's color and pattern, overall structure, disposition, and maintenance.

In specialty classes that are not based on color (e.g., shelter/rescue, senior, etc.), ferrets are judged for structure, confirmation, maintenance, and disposition in addition to the above-listed color/pattern, coat condition, and judge's impression categories. See the "Championship & Companion class" discussion below for more information about these additional criteria.

When the judge has evaluated all of the ferrets in the ring, the scores will be tallied and the ferrets will be ranked. You will be called back to the show ring for the award ceremony, and you should bring your ferret with you. In most specialty classes, all entrants will be awarded a rosette, and the first place ferret will receive a trophy. After ribbons are awarded, an AFA representative photographs the first place ferrets and their owners. Specialty ring scores/points are not applied toward championship or companion titles.

Note that you will not receive a score card for specialty classes. If you have any questions about how your ferret was scored, please feel free to talk to the judge after the ribbons have been awarded.

### **Championship & Companion classes**

The championship and companion classes are title bearing classes. The judges evaluate ferrets on a wide range of criteria: head, skeletal frame, muscle mass and tone, color/pattern, body proportion, health/maintenance, disposition, and judge's impression. The class goal is to reward the best overall ferrets and their owners for excellence in breeding, temperament, and health/maintenance.

The championship judging is divided into three divisions: adolescent, alter, and breeder. The adolescent class is open to late altered and intact ferrets between sixteen (16) weeks and twelve (12) months of age. (Note: Some shows split the adolescent class into altered and unaltered rings. Please read the registration packet carefully.) The alter class is open to all ferrets that have been spayed or neutered ferrets after they were 12 weeks of age. The ferrets in this class must be between one (1) year of age and the day of their sixth and a half (6 ½ ) birthday. The breeder class is open to all whole/intact (i.e., not spayed or neutered) ferrets between one (1) year of age and the day of their sixth and a half (6 ½) birthday. All ages specified refer to the ferret's age *on the day of the show*, not at registration time.

The companion judging is a separate division for the early altered ferrets. The ferrets in this class must be between sixteen (16) weeks and the day of their sixth and a half (6 ½) birthday and have been spayed or neutered prior to 12 weeks of age.

The three championship divisions (adolescent, alter, breeder) and the companion division are *not* judged against each other, but rather are self-contained. Within each division, all ferrets are evaluated and scored by three judges, and each of the three judges will award his or her own top ten scoring ferrets. The "Best of" award is given to the ferret whose average score is the highest across all three rings.

Listen carefully for the announcer to call a range of numbers for your class. For example, "Adolescent Hobs 101-115, please proceed to the show ring." When your number is called, bring your ferret in his or her judging carrier to the staging area, usually a table behind or beside the judges. Be sure to attach your entry number to the front of the carrier. Please provide some sort of bedding or sleep sack for your ferret to snooze in while waiting his/her turn to be judged along with a small, secured litter box. After you have placed your ferret in the staging area, you may take a seat in the audience or go elsewhere in the show hall. Please do not speak to the judge during the judging process unless you are asked a question.

When it's your ferret's turn, the first judge will remove him from his carrier. The judge will handle and examine your ferret and he or she will make comments and provide scores to the steward. The steward will record the information and compute your ferret's score. At times you may notice the judge handing your ferret to the steward or pointing out a particular item of interest. This is done when the steward is training to become an AFA licensed judge. See below for more information regarding the AFA judges' training program. When the first judge is finished evaluating your ferret, the judge will return your ferret to his carrier along with a score/comment card. The second and third judges will then repeat this process.

In title bearing classes, the judge will evaluate your ferret on the following criteria. See Appendix C for a breakdown of the class point structure. Note that the judge will observe each ferret's age, gender, and alter status and will score the ferret according to the standard for each of these factors.

- Head: The ferret's head should form an equilateral cone, with the tip of the nose forming the point of the cone and an imaginary ring around the ears and neck forming the base of the cone. Ideally, the following three measurements should be equal: width (at outside point of ear to ear), length (from tip of nose to start of ears) and depth (from top of head to underside of jaw). All features should be even, proportionate, and symmetrical. Eyes should be equidistant between and in line with the nose and base of the ears. The nose shouldn't be bent either left or right, and the teeth and jaws should meet snugly and evenly.
- Skeletal frame: The ferret's skeletal frame should be strong and flexible with no unusual malformations. The neck should be straight and relatively short. The chest should be deep and well-formed. Shoulders blades should be angulated at approximately 45° when viewed from the front. The ribs should be barrel shaped, deep, and well sprung, wide in the center and tapering evenly at the front and rear. The spine should arch gracefully from front to rear with the high point in the center of the body. Hips should be well-spaced to support the ferret's weight. The tail should be straight and free of kinks or fusions. Bones should be thick and dense in proportion to the ferret's overall build. No knobiness or protrusions should be evident anywhere on the skeletal frame. Consideration is given to the ferret's age and alter status when evaluating the skeletal structure.
- Muscle structure and tone: Ferrets should be firm and well-muscled. Deductions are made for lack of adequate muscle coverage. The neck, shoulders, ribs, and hips should feel muscular, and the abdomen should not

be pendulous. Consideration is given to the ferret's age and alter status when evaluating the muscle condition.

- Color/pattern: Your ferret is judged according to how closely he meets the AFA's ideal standard for his color and pattern. See Appendix A for a description of AFA-recognized colors and patterns. Points are deducted for deviations from the ideal color/pattern. Please note that for the purposes of this score, your ferret's color and pattern are determined by the judge, not by the color/pattern recorded on your entry form.
- Body proportions: The ferret's body should be proportionate and well-balanced overall. Left and right sides should be symmetrical, and the ferret's weight should be evenly distributed from front to rear. The head, neck, body, legs, feet, and tail should be balanced and complimentary in size and appearance. Deductions are given for excess or unevenly distributed weight and for disproportional body parts. A noticeably underweight or overweight ferret will be penalized in his body proportion score.
- Health and maintenance: A variety of factors are considered for the important health and maintenance evaluation. Most obviously, the ferret must be well-groomed. The ears should not have wax or dirt in the crevasses outside the ear canal. The eyes and nose should be clean and clear of discharge. Teeth should be white, although consideration is given to the ferret's age. Although slight staining is not penalized, tartar build-up is, and the gums should appear healthy. Chipped canines are not penalized unless the health of the tooth or surrounding area is compromised. The nails should be evenly trimmed on all four feet, with the white extending 1/16<sup>th</sup> to 1/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch past the quick (pink). The coat should be soft, luxurious, and clean (see "Coat condition" in the "Specialty class" sections). The body should have a well-muscled feeling, indicating that the ferret receives good nutrition and adequate exercise. A noticeably underweight or overweight ferret will be penalized in his health and maintenance score.
- Disposition: A good disposition is an important attribute of any ferret. Your ferret should be reasonably comfortable when handled by the judge. He should be alert, curious, inquisitive, playful, affectionate, and calm. The ferret should not be tense, nervous, fidgety, annoyed, or aggressive. Ferrets who bite or repeatedly try to bite may be disqualified. Allowances are made for the ferret's age, as younger ferrets may be more active. Likewise, an intact ferret's behavior can be influenced by his/her hormones.
- Judge's impression: The judge's impression is the last category scored after all other aspects of the ferret have been evaluated. It is a subjective rating based on the overall impression that the ferret has made upon the judge. In the breeder class, the judge considers whether or not the ferret would be an ideal breeding candidate. In the alter class, ferrets should be exemplary pets, exhibiting outstanding temperament and health and maintenance. Although this score is subjective, it is still founded on how well the ferret conforms to the AFA standard ideal for his class, age, gender, and alter status.

When your ferret has been judged by all three judges, you may retrieve him and your score/comment cards. Alternatively, listen for the announcer to call for all of the ferrets in your number range to be picked up. If you have any questions about how your ferret was

scored, please feel free to talk to the judge during a break or after the ribbons have been awarded.

After all of the ferrets have been evaluated, the judge and steward will calculate the scores. The top ten scoring ferrets in each judge's ring will be called back. Each championship division (adolescent, alter, and breeder) and the companion division will have three sets of top ten placements, one for each judge. The top ten ferrets in each ring are given a ribbon, and the first place entrant receives a trophy as well. Additionally, a best of class award is given in each class: one adolescent, one alter, one breeder and one companion. The best of class award is given to the ferret whose average score is the highest across all three rings. If you are called back to the show ring for top ten placement, you should bring your ferret and entry number card with you. After ribbons are awarded, an AFA representative photographs the first place ferrets and their owners.

### **Titles**

Only title bearing class points count towards AFA show titles. See Appendix D for information about calculating your title points. Your ferret will accumulate points throughout his show 'career.' Titles are sent out twice yearly, approximately July and January. The title will reflect the current accumulated point score. Please verify these results against your records.

### **AFA judges' training program**

Only professionally trained, experienced, and licensed judges will judge ferrets in championship and companion rings. The ring steward assists the judge by writing scores and comments on the judging sheets and score/comment cards. At times you may notice the judge handing your ferret to the steward or pointing out a particular item of interest. This is done when the steward is training to become an AFA-licensed judge. To become a licensed AFA judge, trainees must apply and undergo detailed instruction under the tutelage of several experienced AFA judges as well as pass a comprehensive written and practical examination. AFA judges must also continue training each year to retain their license.

If you are interested in entering the AFA judges' training program, please contact the Judges' Administrator, care of the AFA, at 1-888-FERRET-1 or [afa@ferret.org](mailto:afa@ferret.org). You may also consider volunteering to serve as a steward at an AFA sanctioned event.

## Health issues

Any time your ferret comes into contact with other people or ferrets, you must be concerned for his health and well-being. At shows, you must work in conjunction with the host organization to minimize health hazards.

### Common risks

1. Ferrets can contract colds or the flu from humans or other ferrets.
2. ECE (epizootic catarrhal enteritis): ECE is a highly contagious coronavirus that can be transmitted from ferret to ferret. ECE is characterized by severe green, mucousy diarrhea that may last for an extended period of time. ECE may be accompanied by vomiting, lethargy, and dehydration. Supportive care is necessary to ensure recovery. Currently there is no vaccine.
3. Aleutian disease: Aleutian disease is a parvovirus that can be transmitted from ferret to ferret. Ferrets may contract the disease and never develop signs or symptoms but act as a carrier. Symptoms are widely variable and may include hind quarter weakness, lethargy, blood in the stool, twitching or seizures, anemia, and enlargement of the liver or spleen. Please note that all of these symptoms can be associated with more common diseases. No treatment is available for Aleutian mink disease.
4. Biting: Depending on state regulations, if your ferret bites someone and that person chooses to pursue the matter, your ferret may be seized, euthanized, and tested for rabies. Fortunately, most states follow a more progressive approach, permitting your ferret to remain in quarantine for a period of time (usually 10 days) to determine whether he is a rabies carrier.

### The host organization's responsibilities

1. Veterinarian check: All ferrets entering the show hall for any reason should be examined by a qualified veterinarian to ensure that they are healthy and free of visible parasites or disease. Vaccination records are checked at this time to make certain that all ferrets are currently protected against rabies and canine distemper with USDA vaccines licensed for use in ferrets.
2. Disinfectant procedures: All judges and training stewards should wear plastic aprons and short sleeves. Between every ferret judged, the judge must sanitize his/her apron, hands, arms, and table using a parvocide. Care should be taken to keep ferrets away from clothing, hair, and other surfaces that can not be easily disinfected.

## Your responsibilities

1. Minimize contact: The most important step you can take to keep your ferret safe is to minimize his contact with other people and ferrets. Do not let persons other than the judge handle your ferret or stick their fingers in your ferret's cage. Use a cover to shield three sides and the top of your ferrets' cage or carrier. Do not handle other people's ferrets. If you do handle any other ferrets, disinfect your hands and arms with a parvocide. You can purchase concentrated parvocide at most large pet stores or through pet supply catalogs. Follow the instructions for diluting the solution and bring some in a spray bottle along with a roll of paper towels. Do not let your ferrets mingle with other people or their ferrets, and don't put your ferret in anyone else's cage or carrier.
2. Be responsible: If your ferret is ill or if you suspect that your ferret may be ill, do not bring him to the show. The stressful environment of the show hall is no place for an ill ferret, and it is unfair to others to potentially endanger their ferrets.
3. Disinfect at home: When you return home from the show, remove and launder your show-going clothes and change your shoes before entering the house. Clean and disinfect your show cage and litter pan. You may even wish to keep your show ferrets separate from the home crowd for a day or two after returning. If you adopt a new ferret at a show, quarantine him for at least 10 days before integrating him.

## **Complaints**

All complaints must be received in writing. Issues regarding the way the show was run should be addressed to the host club/organization. Issues regarding the judging, scoring, titles, etc., should be directed to the AFA.

## Appendix A: Color and Pattern Chart

### Color and pattern per the AFA show system

When describing a ferret's appearance, two terms are used: color and pattern. *Color* refers to the color of the ferret's guard hair, undercoat, eyes, and nose. *Pattern* always refers to the concentration and distribution of color on the body, mask, and nose. When applicable, pattern can also refer to white markings that appear on the head or feet. Using the tables below, you should be able to describe your ferret's color and pattern. The final table lists the color/pattern names as you would use them to describe your ferret, particularly on an AFA show entry form.

### Color standards

	Guard hairs	Undercoat	Eyes	Nose
Albino (see Note #1)	white to cream, with white preferable	white to cream, with white preferable	ruby red only	pink only
Black	true black	preferred is white, but a slight golden hue is acceptable	black or near black	Preferred is black or near black. Speckled black is acceptable.
Black Sable	dark ash blackish brown with no warm brown tone, with noticeable black glossy shine	preferred is a white to cream but not yellow	dark brown or near black	Preferred is ash blackish brown, though mottled or heavy speckled blackish brown is acceptable.
Champagne (see Note #2)	tan or diluted version of chocolate	preferred is a white to cream but not yellow	light to dark burgundy	Preferred is beige, pink, or pink with a beige or light brown 'T' outline.
Chocolate	warm milk chocolate brown	preferred is white, but a slight golden hue is acceptable	brown is preferred, dark burgundy is acceptable	Preferred is pink, beige, or pink with light brown 'T' outline. A brick nose color is acceptable.
Cinnamon (see Note #2)	rich light reddish brown	preferred is a golden hue, but a white is acceptable	light to dark burgundy	Preferred is brick colored, beige/pink, with light brown or brick "T" outline. Pink is allowed but not preferred.
Dark-eyed White (see Note #3)	white to cream, with white preferable	white to cream, with white preferable	burgundy	pink only
Sable	warm deep brown	preferred is a white to cream or light golden but not yellow	brown or near black	Preferred is a light brown, speckled/mottled brown, or brown "T" outline.

## Color concentration pattern standards

	Color concentration	Mask type	Nose
Point (Siamese)	The point pattern will show a distinct difference in color concentration between the body color and the points	The mask must be a thin "V" mask for black, black sable, sable, cinnamon, and chocolates, not a full or "T" bar mask. Champagnes may have a "V" mask or no mask.	The nose color should be lighter than the above-stated nose colors, meaning pink, beige, or "T" outline.
Roan	50% to 60% colored guard hairs (any color) vs. 40% to 50% white guard hairs	The mask depends on the color and underlying pattern.	The nose color also depends on the color and underlying pattern.
Solids	The percentage of colored guard hairs should be ideally 100% in relation to white guard hairs, which should be 0% in the body and points. This pattern gives an appearance of solid color concentration from the head to the tail	full or "T" bar mask	appropriate for color standard
Standards	The percentage of colored guard hairs should be approximately 90% to 100% in relation to white guard hairs, but the color concentration is not as heavy as in the solid pattern. The body will appear lighter in color (concentration) and the points will be easily discernable.	full or "T" bar mask	appropriate for color standard

## White marking pattern standards

	Head markings	Eyes	Nose	Mitts	Other Markings
Blaze	There must be a long white blaze from the forehead, between the ears, down the back of the neck, preferably to the shoulders. Mask will vary depending on the color concentration standard. Minor color rings around the eyes and small masks are acceptable. Full masks are not acceptable.	Eyes should be varying shades of ruby to brown.	The nose should be pink or pink with a light outline.	Front feet and hind feet should have white tips or mitts.	Knee patches may be present and a white tip on the tail is acceptable. Bib, white, or speckled bellies and roaning are also acceptable.
Panda	The preferred Panda should have an almost completely white head, which includes the neck and throat. Colored guard hairs forming eye rings are acceptable.	Eyes should be varying shades of burgundy.	The nose should be pink or pink with a light outline.	Mitts should be present on all four feet.	Knee patches may be present and a white tip on the tail is acceptable.

## Other patterns

Mitts	Mitts (white feet) can be present with any color or pattern combination except for albino, dark-eyed white, and dark-eyed white pattern where they wouldn't be plausible.
-------	---

## Color/pattern combination chart

(Use these color-pattern descriptions when entering ferrets in AFA championship shows.)

	Albino (see Note #1)	Black	Black Sable	Champagne	Chocolate	Cinnamon	Dark-eyed White and Dark-eyed White Pattern (see Note #3)	Sable
Blaze	N/A	Black Blaze	Black Sable Blaze	Champagne Blaze	Chocolate Blaze	Cinnamon Blaze	N/A	Sable Blaze
Panda	N/A	Black Panda	Black Sable Panda	Champagne Panda	Chocolate Panda	Cinnamon Panda	N/A	Sable Panda
Point (Siamese)	N/A	Black Point	N/A	Champagne Point	Chocolate Point	Cinnamon Point	N/A	Sable Point
Roans	N/A	Black Roan (also known as medium silver)	Black Sable Roan	Champagne Roan	Chocolate Roan	Cinnamon Roan	N/A	Sable Roan
Solid	N/A	Black Solid (only applicable with mitts; known as a Black Mitt)	Black Sable Solid	Champagne Solid	Chocolate Solid	Cinnamon Solid	N/A	Sable Solid
Standard	N/A	Black Standard (only applicable with mitts; known as a Black Mitt)	Black Sable Standard	Champagne Standard	Chocolate Standard	Cinnamon Standard	N/A	Sable Standard

### Notes:

- Albino is absence of pigment (guard hairs will be white) and absence of pattern.
- A noticeable color difference exists between Cinnamons and Champagnes; Cinnamons will display a strong reddish cast to the guard hairs. Cinnamons are not as common as Champagnes.
- All entries in this line will be called Dark-eyed Whites or Dark-eyed White Patterns regardless of which other color is present.

## Appendix B: Specialty class rings and point structure

### **Regular color/pattern specialty**

Coat Condition	25 points
Overall Color/Pattern	40 points
Judge's Impression	10 points

### **Mitt specialty**

Front Mitts Even	20 points
Back Mitts Even	15 points
Front and Back Mitts Even	10 points
True Definition Between Mitts and Body	20 points
Judge's Impression	10 points

### **Shelter/Senior/Physically Challenged**

Body Structure	30 points	30 points
Health and Maintenance	40 points	40 points
Disposition	20 points	20 points
Judge's Impression	10 points	10 points

### **Invitational Premier Specialty Class**

(Open to ferrets who have placed first or best in show within a specified time.)

Head	05 points
Skeletal Frame	15 points
Muscle Tone	10 points
Color/Pattern	05 points
Body Proportion	10 points
Health and Maintenance	25 points
Disposition	25 points
Judge's Impression	05 points

## Appendix C: Championship class point structure

### **Score sheet for adolescents, alters and breeders**

*Entry Number*

Sex

Age

Head 05 points

Skeletal Frame 15 points

Muscle Tone 10 points

Color/Pattern 05 points

Body Proportion 10 points

Health and Maintenance 25 points

Disposition 25 points

Judge's Impression 05 points

*Comments*

### **Score sheet for companions**

*Entry Number*

Sex

Age

Head 05 points

Skeletal Frame 10 points

Muscle Tone 05 points

Color/Pattern 05 points

Body Proportion 10 points

Health and Maintenance 30 points

Disposition 30 points

Judge's Impression 05 points

*Comments*

## Appendix D: Show title system

**Purpose:** Provide a forum open to all ferret enthusiasts to promote the education about the domestic pet ferret.

- Goals:**
1. Promote education about the domestic pet ferret to the public, breeders, medical & the commercial communities.
  2. Promote for the improvement of the species (*M. putorius furo*).
  3. Improve and enhance the public's view of this species.
  4. Promote the importance of routine vaccinations.

Each ferret will be judged and awarded a score in each championship/pet class ring in a show. These points will be accumulated in the American Ferret Association's Show System towards championship and companion class titles. The 'Title Certificates' will be sent out semi-annually for all ferrets that have accumulated points in the previous show season (Semi Annual Seasons: Jan-Jun and Jul-Dec). The titles will be awarded using the following criteria.

	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
Adolescent, Breeder & Later Alter Championship Bronze	200	400	600	800
Adolescent, Breeder & Later Alter Championship Silver	1200*	1600*	2000*	2400*
Adolescent, Breeder & Later Alter Championship Gold	3000**			
Companion Pet Class Pewter	150	300	450	600
Companion Pet Class Sterling	800*	1100*	1400*	1700*
Companion Pet Class Platinum	2000**			
Historically, * must place top 10; ** must place top 3				

Points awarded by a judge are used face value. No multiplier will be used. Add together the points awarded by each judge for an individual entry.

The Top Ten highest scoring ferrets in each ring in each class (adolescents, alters, breeders, companions) will receive a satin rosette. The points applied for each Top Ten rosette awarded to an entrant will be:

- |                     |   |            |
|---------------------|---|------------|
| 1st thru 3rd place  | ⇒ | 100 points |
| 4th thru 6th place  | ⇒ | 75 points  |
| 7th thru 10th place | ⇒ | 50 points  |
| Best In Show award  | ⇒ | 200 points |

Add any Top Ten award points to the championship ring judge's scores and you will have your ferret's score for the show! Good Luck!