

Your Ferret's Cage

Ferrets are highly social animals that should not be kept in a cage full time. They require a MINIMUM of four hours per day out of their cage, at least two of which should include human interaction. That said, when not under human supervision or when traveling, ferrets should have a large and well-ventilated cage for their protection.

Ferrets need exercise, affection and human companionship to remain happy and healthy. When it is necessary to cage a ferret, the cage should include plenty of soft bedding, safe toys, a water bottle, food crock and litter boxes filled with paper-based or wood-based pellet form litter. The ferret's living space should be temperature controlled with the temperature kept in their comfort range of between 50 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Ferrets cannot tolerate temperatures above 75 degrees Fahrenheit as they are quite heat sensitive.

There are a wide variety of cage options. Below are a few that many ferret owners use. The space you have for your ferret's cage and the number of ferrets that will be housed in it will determine which cage will work best for you.

Cages for in the House

Super Pet My First Home Multi-Level Cage

This is a good starter ferret cage. It also opens on the top. The entire cage lifts off of the purple base to take outside and wash or wash in the bath tub/shower. The shelves can be difficult to remove for cleaning but it is a good first cage. It comfortably fits two ferrets and three ferrets if they are small. For large/heavy ferrets over three pounds, the shelves may not be sturdy enough to support that weight.

At 24" x 24" x 41.5" high (a bit taller with stand and wheels, 46"), this isn't a huge cage but it is a good size and if you look around you can find one very well priced. It has three adjustable shelves and a ramp, a slide and a funnel tube to connect the levels. While this might not be the best cage available, it is one of the largest in its price range.

The wheel frame, purple base, and cage are separate pieces. The cage part folds flat, which is really nice. The wheels allow for easy moving around. This cage can be found in some local pet stores. It can be purchased online as well for under \$100.



Feisty Ferret Home 485 by Prevue

This is an ideal cage for those who want a sturdier option that's cheaper than the Ferret Nation below. The bottom floor pulls out for cleaning and the shelves can be removed as well. There are only doors on the right side but they open wide enough for you to get in and clean up. Ferrets can travel between both levels and the solid ramps make for easy cleaning and are safer for your ferret's paws. The doors shut with a clasp so you know they're secure. The bottom shelf comes in handy for storage. The top level does have a wire bottom so you'll want to cover it. You can buy a clear plastic runner and cut it to fit and then cover with cloth for extra comfort. Measurements for the double unit are 31"L x 20"W x 54"H with 1" bar spacing. Feisty Ferret cages can be purchased online at Petco.com, Ferret.com, Drsfostersmith.com etc.



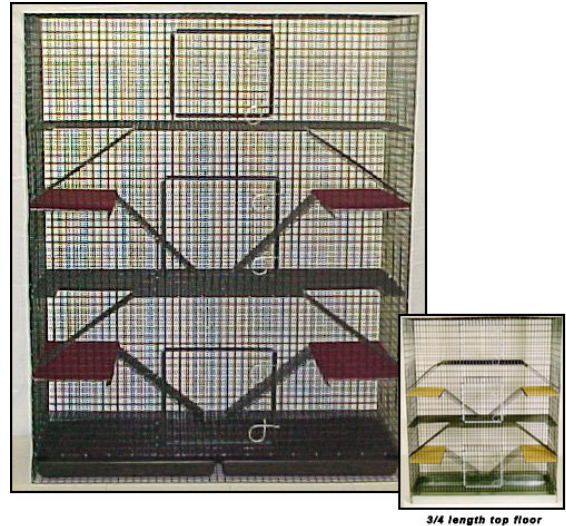
Ferret Nation 182 Double by Midwest

Many ferret lovers prefer this cage! A primary reason is that it is so easy to clean. The floors pull all the way out for cleaning. The double doors open wide for many purposes such as cleaning and replacing bedding. Ferrets can travel between both levels. Some people even add a third level at the top. Custom bedding for the Ferret Nation cage is readily available from bedding makers who sew sets to aid shelters through sales of their bedding. Measurements for the double unit are 36"L x 25"W x 63 1/4"H with 1" bar spacing and 12 gauge wire. Ferret Nation cages can be purchased online at Petco.com, Ferret.com, Drsfostersmith.com etc. Just Google "Ferret Nation" and search for good pricing options.



Martin's Cages "The Ferret Penthouse" (F-470)

This is a very roomy cage with a size of 48" x 18" x 60". The cage has five levels, including one full floor wire over the pan area, a full floor in middle of cage, a half floor and a top level is available as a full floor or a $\frac{3}{4}$ -length floor. The cage includes two 2½" deep slide-out style plastic pans side-by-side. It has eight ramps and four carpeted balconies. Access is through three doors. 3 doors. *PVC-coated is available.*



Smaller Cages – Not Recommended for Ferrets



Cages similar to those shown above can easily be found at local pet stores. However, these are truly just too small for a ferret to live in. The multiple level cages shown previously are appropriately sized cages for a ferret to stretch their legs and walk around a bit.

Remember, a ferret **MUST ABSOLUTELY** be allowed out of the cage **DAILY** for a minimum of 4 hours! If you are unable to provide this, a ferret may not be the right pet for you.

Travel Carriers

You will need a pet carrier to take your ferrets to the veterinarian for check-ups or if an emergency arises and they need to be removed to safety immediately. Make sure you get the right size for how many ferrets you may need to transport at one time. You can hang a hammock by tying it to the metal windows. A hammock cuts down on the shuffling around that may occur as you navigate the roads, including sudden stops. You will also need to lay paper on the bottom for accidents. You can also attach food and water bowls to the front door for longer trips. Travel carriers are often designed to be taken apart by dividing in half. They have wing-nut type fasteners to hold the halves together. Be careful as these often loosen and could create a hazard with the ferrets falling out! A decent carrier can cost \$50 or so depending on size.



Cage Necessities

There are several necessities for a ferret's cage. Food and water containers, a litter pan and bedding are all needed. For food, some ferret owners choose a heavy bowl. Ferrets may find this easy to tip over, spilling the food out into the pan under the cage and leaving them without! If you use a bowl make certain it is attached to the cage. One great solution is a Quick-Lock Crock. These are easy on/easy off, removable bowls that can be used for both food and water. They install in seconds onto all wire cages, with either vertical or horizontal wire. They are also dishwasher safe for easy cleaning. It is a good idea to put a crock under the water bottle as well so if leaks occur the cage doesn't become a wet mess. The crocks come in assorted colors and are widely available. Most crocks will cost around \$7.

Water bottles are essential. Most hold from 16 to 32 ounces. Even though your ferret will not drink that much in a day or two, you should change out the water every two days. If you've left water out for a couple days and went to drink it, you'll know that it starts to taste funny. Best to have fresh water for your companion.

Providing an acceptable pan and litter is also very important. Ferrets will not use a litter setup that they are uncomfortable with, leading to more messes out of the litter box and the need to clean the cage more often. The square, high back litter boxes can be hard to find in stores. There are triangle shaped litters boxes but they do not always work as well. Of course, this is dependent on the ferret and to what they are accustomed. Try different setups to determine what works best for your ferret. Some ferret owners use "red handle" clamps to hold the litter boxes in place or even heavy-duty chip clips! Ferrets are very strong and love to push litters boxes around or dump them over (rearrange!). Place one clamp at the top and back of the litter box and on the side if the litter box is in a corner where wire bars touch both sides of the litter box. You can get the "red handle" clamps at

Lowes or Home Depot. While these are very handy, make sure they are out of reach of little ferret mouths as many are coated with plastic or rubber that a ferret may try to chew.



Once a litter pan is selected, litter choices need to be made. It should be filled with paper-based or wood-based pellet form litter. Spread enough to cover the bottom of the pan. Some ferret owners also lay newspaper over the top. The litter will soak up urine and the newspaper will hold the feces. Simply pick up the paper, toss it out and replace with new newspaper. This way ferrets do not dig in the litter, which is a natural behavior for ferrets. You could just simply use newspaper all by itself too. The newspaper fits perfectly in the high back, square litter boxes. If you feed a high quality ferret kibble or a raw meat diet the poop should not smell. Ferrets urinate every three hours so it is necessary to change the newspaper daily or scoop daily. Ferrets are naturally clean animals but you, the caregiver, must keep their litter box clean daily and their bedding washed weekly or you will have smells/odors.

Bedding is another needed item in a ferret cage. Many custom bedding makers offer sizes that are made for specific cages. Ramp covers, shelf covers and hammocks are readily available. Fleece sleepers are a ferret favorite and are especially good for the winter. In the summer, you will want to switch to a cotton fabric that is cooler. It is recommended that you try several different styles, shapes, and sizes in the cage to determine which your ferret prefers. Another option is a bolster-style bed. Ferrets often like them with a small blanket placed

inside to hide beneath. You can use a clamp to keep it place or attach it the bottom of the cage.

Cage Accessories

On top of the basic needs ferrets have, it is also very important to provide ferrets with some enrichment when they are in the cage. Choose toys that have no chance of breaking and causing a chewing or choking hazard. This would include balls with bells inside and plush toys with squeakers. Hard plastic balls and “road kill” style toys are recommended. Additionally, it is not advisable to hang toys from the top of the cage as ferrets have been known to chew and ingest the string. Although a shower curtain ring can make a safe way to dangle a toy. If you're in doubt as to whether a toy is safe or not, better to leave it out for a time when you can supervise the playtime.

If you have further questions regarding what to put into a cage for your ferret, please feel free to post questions on the American Ferret Association Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/55169532486/>

Members of the American Ferret Association's Education Committee authored this article including Lindsey Breed Tootle, Pete Gould and Sarah Wednesday Fatality.

Contact the American Ferret Association to learn all about ferret care, foods & more!

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