



# American Ferret Association, Inc.

PO Box 554 ♦ Frederick, Maryland 21705-0554  
www.ferret.org ♦ afa@ferret.org ♦ 1-888-FERRET-1

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## Summary of State- And Territory-Level Ferret Regulations July 2009

David Gaines - Director, AFA Legal and Legislative Affairs

*County and city codes/ordinances are cited for large or prominent localities only. Omission of any particular locality does not imply that ferrets are legal there.*

**\* = Rabies vaccination required in this state**

Alabama -No state-level pet shop regulation

Alaska -Legalized in 1985  
-No state-level pet shop regulation

**American Samoa No companion animals besides dogs/cats are permitted**

Arizona -State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs

Arkansas -State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs

**California Ferrets are illegal in California except by special permit issued by the Dept. of Fish and Game.**

From [www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/species/nuis\\_exo/ferret/](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/species/nuis_exo/ferret/): "In California, domestic ferrets are legal to import, transport, or possess only by permit. Permits are issued for specific purposes, such as for medical research or for transportation of confiscated ferrets or rescued stray ones out of state. Importation and possession of ferrets as pets are not permitted in California. Many of the states in the U.S. that allow ferrets as pets do so under permits or certain restrictions."

"Since the mid 1980s, ferret organizations have promoted legalization of ferrets as pets in the states that had prohibited such ownership. Eight states legalized ferrets as pets since then: Alaska in 1985, Pennsylvania in 1987, Vermont in 1989, Georgia in 1991, New Hampshire and Utah in 1993, Michigan in 1994, and Massachusetts in 1996. Only California and Hawaii prohibit importation and possession of ferrets as pets."

From [www.cdfa.org](http://www.cdfa.org) (California Domestic Ferret Association): "**If Your Ferret is Seized** - When a Fish & Game warden or a police officer knocks on your door, you do not have to allow them entry without a properly signed search warrant. This search warrant must show "probable cause"  
(for example, if your neighbor reported you, his name must appear on the search

warrant).

“If they have a search warrant that meets the above criteria, and they find domestic ferrets on your property or in your home, you have the right to make decisions regarding your pet’s transport out of state. At your expense, you may choose to have it shipped to a permanent adoptive home of your choice, in one of the 48 other states that permits ownership. You may choose, at your expense, to have it sent to one of the adoptive centers in a 'legal state', setup by [CDFA]. Please be advised that your pet(s) will be placed in (a) carefully selected permanent adoptive home(s). You may relinquish your ferret(s) to a DFG permit holder or you may seek to obtain a DFG permit if you intend to assist with rescues in your region. You may elect to have the confiscating officer handle the situation at his or her discretion. There is, however, no guarantee that your pet(s) will not be destroyed.”

- Colorado
- Colorado has arguably the most extensive ferret-related state-level regulations in the country
  - Particularly comprehensive state-level pet shop regulations that include ferrets within the definition of “pet animal” (Colo. Rev. Stat.. § 35-80-102)
  - Unusually detailed, ferret-specific regulations for the humane housing of ferrets in pet stores. Cages must allow each pet animal to turn around, engage in normal movements, and socialize with cage mates. Specific cage size chart is listed for ferrets (8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1201-11), including specification of a hammock as an acceptable sleeping platform, and banning cedar shavings as a bedding material.
  - Ferrets are **not** included within the statute (§ 35-80-108) that prohibits anyone from selling kittens and puppies less than 8 weeks old, or guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits under 4 weeks old.
  - Both ferret breeders and ferret hobby breeders (defined as less than 24 ferrets transferred per year) are specifically regulated ( 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1201-11). The relevant statute also addresses how ferrets should be transported in carriers.

- Connecticut
- State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs
  - Ferrets were at one time required to be licensed but that statute has been repealed

- Delaware
- State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs

### District of Columbia

- **Ferrets are illegal in the District of Columbia (§ 8-1808 (h)(1))**
- The section of the D.C. code dealing with animal control contains a list of permitted animals which includes only dogs, cats, rabbits, domesticated rodents, caged birds, non-poisonous snakes, fish, turtles, and racing pigeons.
- However, per Peggy Keller (Chief, Div. of Animal Disease Prevention, Bureau of Community Hygiene, D.C. Dept. of Health, 202/535-2322), exemption permits will be used upon request on a case-by-case basis.

- Florida\*
- State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs/birds

- Georgia\*
- Legalized in 1991.
  - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Ga. Code Ann. § 4-11-2)
  - A license or permit is required for all species within order *Carnivora* “except that a European ferret (*Mustela putorius furo*) may be sold, purchased, exhibited, or held as

a pet without a license or permit; provided, however, that the ferret owner can provide valid documentation that the ferret was sexually neutered prior to seven months of age and is vaccinated against rabies with a properly administered vaccine approved for use on ferrets by the United States Department of Agriculture” (O.C.G.A. § 27-5-5(b)(1)(K))

- Guam - Importation permissible via 120-day or expedited 30-day quarantine; 10 GCA §34201 defines “dog or cat” as animals within the orders Carnivora, Marsupialia, and Chiroptera
- Hawai’i** **Due to the state’s rabies-free status, ferrets are illegal in Hawai’i.**
- Idaho\* - No state-level pet shop regulation
- Illinois - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Ill. Ann. Stat. ch. 225, para. 605/2)  
- “It is unlawful to use a ferret or any other small mammal which is used in the same or similar manner for which ferrets are used for the purpose of frightening or driving any mammals from their dens or hiding places.” (520 ILCS 5/2.33)  
- Licensing for pet ferrets is no longer required as of May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 (IL Admin. Code § 8:1b-25.45, repealed 5/1/07)  
- Chicago requires ferrets four months old to have rabies vax (Chicago Mun. Code § 7-12-200)
- Indiana\* - Minimal pet shop regulation
- Iowa - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Iowa Code Ann. § 162.2)  
- “It is unlawful to have in possession while hunting or to use while hunting any ferret or any device or any substance to be used for chasing animals from their dens.” (Iowa Code 481A.53)  
- Child care centers - Health and safety policies: “No ferrets, reptiles, including turtles, or birds of the parrot family shall be kept on site.” (Iowa Admin. Code § 441—109.10(14))
- Kansas - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Kan. Stat. Ann. § 47-1701)  
- Wildlife, Parks, and Recreation: It is unlawful for any person, unless authorized by law or rules and regulations of the secretary, to use ferrets in the holes, dens, runways or houses of wildlife, except as permitted by rules and regulations of the secretary; (Kansas Stat. Ann. § 32-1003)  
- City of Lawrence requires rabies vax for ferrets 4 months and older
- Kentucky\* - No state-level pet shop regulation  
- Ferrets are not allowed to be used in hunting and a ferret permit is required if a pet ferret “was born in the wild” - no permit required for a “ferret which has been born and raised in captivity” (Kentucky Rev. Statutes § 150.355)  
- “Ferret” is defined as “any musteline [*sic*] three (3) months of age or older for which there exists a United States Department of Agriculture approved rabies vaccine” (Kentucky Rev. Statutes § 258.005(8))  
- Ferrets brought into the state must be accompanied by a Certificate of Veterinary

Inspection and have rabies vax (4 months or older) (302 Kentucky Admin. Reg. 20:040, Sec. 10(2)(a))

- A ferret that has had rabies vax in another state is not required to be vaccinated again when brought into the state (Kentucky Rev. Statutes § 258.035)
- City of Louisville requires that ferrets be licensed

Louisiana - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §14:102.1)

Maine\* - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Maine Rev. Stat. Ann. Tit. 17, § 1011, Maine Rev. Stat. Ann. Tit. 7, § 3907)

- A person, firm, corporation or other business entity may not sell or offer for sale or resale in the State any ferret that is less than 8 weeks of age as determined by examination for adult canine dentition. (Maine Rev. Stat. Title 7, §3970-A)
- Cannot import a ferret less than 8 weeks of age without its mother. (Maine Rev. Stat. Title 7, §3970-A)
- The section in the Maine Revised Statutes dealing with, among other restrictions, “written notification to purchaser that ferrets have been known to engage in unprovoked attacks on children and that public health authorities may demand immediate euthanasia of ferrets involved in biting incidents for rabies testing purposes” was repealed in 1997 (Maine Rev. Stat. Title 7, §3966 - §3970, all sections repealed)
- If a ferret needs to be euthanized and tested for rabies, “the owner of a domesticated ferret....shall pay transportation and testing costs for that animal” (Maine Rev. Stat. Title 22, §1313-A)

Maryland\* - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Md. Crim. Law Code Ann. § 10-601)

- Prince George’s County requires that ferrets be licensed

Massachusetts\* - Legalized in 1996.

- Ferrets must be inoculated before sale by pet shop. (Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 131, § 77)
- Must be spayed or neutered (Mass. Reg. Code tit. 321, § 2.07)

Michigan\* - Legalized in 1994.

- State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. § 287.331)
- Michigan enacted an extensive, multi-section law upon legalization in 1994 dealing exclusively with ferrets (Act 358, 287.891 - 287.898)
- Defines and regulates hobby breeding of ferrets, e.g. ferrets must be 10 weeks old prior to sale (Act 358, 287.893)
- Ferrets under 6 weeks of age cannot be imported unless accompanied by the natural mother; has a rabies vax certificate if over 12 weeks; has a canine distemper vax certificate if over 6 weeks. (Act 358 of 1994, 287.895)

**Grand Rapids** “No person may keep on their premises within the city any wild animals as "pets." Wild animals include, but are not limited to alligators, badgers, poisonous lizards, lemurs, bears, wild birds, large cats, nonhuman primates, coyotes, deer, wolves, dog-wolf, and ferrets.”

- Minnesota\* - State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Minn. Stat. Ann. § 346.36)  
 - A person may not take a protected wild animal with the aid of a ferret. (Minn. Art. 2, Ch. 97B.101, § 21)  
 - Permit required in the City of St. Paul (Code of Ord. § 20-198.02 (b))
- Mississippi - State-level pet shop regulation but only for exotic birds  
 - Rabies vax recommended but not required
- Missouri - State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs
- Montana - State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs  
 - The definition of “domestic animal” includes the “Eurasian ferret” (MCA § 87-5-702)
- Nebraska - State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs  
 - The definition of “domestic animals” does not include ferrets; rabies vax required only for domestic animals although ferrets are identified as a rabies vector (Neb. Admin. Code, Title 173, 5-004.01)  
 - Hospitals must establish a rabies vaccination policy for hospital-owned pets, including ferrets (Neb. Admin. Code, Title 175, 9-006, 14D)
- Nevada\* - State-level pet shop regulation, but only applicable to cats/dogs  
 - In foster homes for children, “Exotic or potentially dangerous pets or other animals, including ferrets and boa constrictors, are prohibited without the written approval of a licensing authority representative.” (Nev. Admin. Code, 424.590.1)
- New Hampshire\*  
 - Legalized in 1993.  
 - Ferrets offered for sale by pet shops must be vaccinated and have a health certificate. (N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 437:10)  
 - No importation allowed of a ferret under 8 weeks old; pet shops may not offer for sale a ferret under 8 weeks old. (N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 437:10, N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 437:9, N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 437:11)  
 - “No person, while hunting or obviously on his way to or from hunting, shall have a ferret in his possession, custody or control.” (N.H. Admin. Code, Title XVIII, 207:6)  
 - (N.H. CODE ADMIN. R FIS 804 - POSSESSION OF WILDLIFE, PART Fis 802 GENERAL CHAPTER REQUIREMENTS, Fis 804.02 Non-controlled Species - Possession. (a) A permit to possess wildlife shall not be required for any person to possess wildlife designated as non-controlled as specified in (b), below. (b) For purposes of this part, the following species or groups of wildlife shall be designated as non-controlled: (4) The following mammals: Chinchillas, domesticated, (Chinchilla spp); Gerbils, domesticated; Guinea Pigs, domesticated (Cavia spp); Hamsters, domesticated (Cricetus cricetus); Mice, domesticated (Mus musculus); Rats, domesticated (Rattus norvegicus and Rattus rattus); **Ferrets, domesticated (Mustela putorius furo)**; Llamas (Lama glama); Alpaca (Lama pacos); Pot belly pigs, domesticated; Rabbits, domesticated; African pigmy hedgehog; Sugar glider (Petaurus breviceps); Tenrec (Tenrec ecaudatus); and Yak (Bos grunniens)
- New Jersey - Individual hobby permit required for possession (NJ Admin Code § 7:25-4.3 (a) (2) (i), § 7:25-4.6 (a) (1))

- "No person shall hunt, kill or destroy, or attempt to hunt, kill or destroy, a hare or rabbit with ferrets, or have a ferret in possession in the woods or fields, under a penalty of fifty dollars for each offense." (NJ Stat. § 23:4-14)

New Mexico - No state-level pet shop regulation

New York State\*

- Rabies vax required

**New York City** As of 1999, ferrets are not permitted in all five boroughs of New York City per the NYC Board of Health (New York City Health Code Section 161.01)

North Carolina

- State-level pet shop regulations but "animal" is defined only as a dog or cat (N.C. Gen. Statutes. § 19A-23)

North Dakota

- No state-level pet shop regulation

- "captive-bred, currently vaccinated ferret" is listed within the definition of "domestic animal" in the Rabies Control section of the state code (N.D. Century Code § 23-36-01(5))

- Ferrets are included in the list of "nontraditional livestock" (N.D. Century Code § 48-12-01.1-02(1))

Ohio

- State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 941.01)

- Veterinarian certificate required prior to importing animals into Ohio (Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 941.01)

- Ferrets that bite people must be quarantined for at least ten days and cannot be released without rabies vax (Ohio Admin. Code 3701-3-29)

- Ferrets cannot be used to hunt wild animals (Ohio Rev. Code § 1531.20)

Oklahoma\*

- No state-level pet shop regulation

- "Domestic animal" means a companion animal including dogs, cats, and ferrets. "Ferret" is defined as *mustela putorius furo* (Oklahoma Admin. Code 310:599-1-2)

- Ferrets that bite people must be quarantined for at least ten days and on the last day of quarantine must be given rabies vax if the ferret is unvaccinated. (Oklahoma Admin. Code 310:599-3-1)

Oregon

- State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Oregon Admin. Rules 603-015-0045, 603-015-0050, 603-015-0060; Oregon Rev. Statutes § 596.990)

Pennsylvania

- Legalized in 1997.

- State-level pet shop regulations apply mainly to dogs - "animal" is not defined at the state level

- Ferrets are included with weasels, martens, and polecats within the specifications for permitted caging of wild animals by permit holders (58 Pa. Code § 147.285 (4)(xx))

**Hazleton** All members of family *mustelidae*, including ferrets, fall within the definition of “wild or exotic animal” in the Hazleton City animal control ordinance and are thus prohibited (§ 89-2 (D))

**Puerto Rico** Ferrets are illegal in Puerto Rico but the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources is considering a revision of the list of species that may be sold as pets.

**Rhode Island\***

- State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (R.I. Gen. Laws § 4-19-1, 4-19-2)
- Either possession or breeding (“distribution”) requires a permit from the Dept. of Environmental Management ([http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/f\\_wferet.pdf](http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/f_wferet.pdf))
- Ferrets that are suspected of rabies shall be handled “according to the recommendations of the most current Compendium” and may be euthanized, restrained, quarantined, or disposed of at the recommendation of the responsible animal control officer (Rhode Island Rabies Control Board Rules and Regulations Governing the Suppression of Rabies, section 7.09)
- Either possession or breeding (“distribution”) requires a permit from the Dept. of Environmental Management ([http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/f\\_wferet.pdf](http://www.dem.ri.gov/pubs/regs/regs/fishwild/f_wferet.pdf))

**South Carolina**

- State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (South Carolina Code § 47-13-160)

- “Purchasers of a domesticated ferret must be provided with a notice not less than eight inches by eleven inches which shall bear the following inscription in letters not less than three-fourths inch high:”

“Each business establishment in this State, to which has been issued a retail sales tax license, which offers ferrets for sale must prominently display a notice not less than eight inches by eleven inches which shall bear the following inscription in letters not less than three-fourths inch high “

"Ferrets have a propensity to make unprovoked attacks that cause bodily injury to a human being" (South Carolina Code § 47-5-50(B) & (C))

**South Dakota**

- No state-level pet shop regulation
- The black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) is protected by state law and cannot be taken, trapped, killed, hunted, or possessed (So. Dakota Admin. Rules 41:08:04:01)

**Tennessee**

- No state-level pet shop regulation

**Texas**

- No state-level pet shop regulation
- Fort Worth requires ferrets to be licensed. (Fort Worth City Code, Ch. 6, Art. VI, Sec. 6-43(a)(2)) In addition, although the section of the Fort Worth City Code that mandates rabies vax for dogs and cats does not mention ferrets (Fort Worth City

Code, Ch. 6, Art. V, Sec. 6-41(a)(1)), a different section in the code allows animal control to impound ferrets that do not “have a valid current rabies vaccination” (Fort Worth City Code, Ch. 6, Art. VI, Sec. 6-43(a)(4)). No age is specified.

- Dallas requires ferrets over four months old to have rabies vax. (Dallas City Code, Ch. 7, Art. VII, Sec. 7-7.5)

#### U.S. Virgin Islands

- Ferrets are permissible but require import permits if you are bringing your ferret into the USVI from the mainland. You are required to submit an application (\$15 fee) to the Department of Agriculture; the application must also be approved by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The process can take a week to two weeks. Contact the Department of Agriculture at (340) 774-5182 for more information and to request the application forms.

- A health certificate from your veterinarian is necessary. It should state that the ferret has not been exposed to any communicable diseases, is healthy, and that its rabies shots are up to date. This certificate should be prepared within 10 days of travel. Rabies shots are considered up to date if they have been administered within the last year, but no longer longer than one year. Have these documents readily available when you are traveling, as you will have to produce them when checking in at the airlines.

#### Utah

- Legalized in 1993

- In Herriman City (§ 8.16.020 & 8.16.040) & unincorporated Salt Lake County, ferrets are legal but must be licensed per Salt Lake County Animal Services:

- The Herriman city ordinance is perhaps the most restrictive and comprehensive of its kind in the nation, requiring successful completion of a ferret ownership class for first-time license applicants; a rabies vax certificate; microchip implanting; a maximum of two adult ferrets, and an agreement to make ferrets and their housing available to city inspection annually. Interestingly, neutering/spaying is encouraged but not required.

- The Salt Lake County ordinance provides only for the ownership class and rabies vax certificate (§ 8.04.040). This is a particularly well-written ordinance which treats ferrets on an equal basis with dogs and cats.

**Salt Lake City Ferrets are included in the definition of “wild, exotic, or dangerous animal” and are therefore illegal in incorporated Salt Lake City and the University of Utah. (§ 8.04.010SS & § 8.04.430))**

#### Vermont

- Legalized in 1989.

- State-level pet shop regulation that indirectly includes ferrets (Vermont Statutes, Title 20, § 3901)

- Ferrets fall within the definition of “livestock” (Vermont Statutes, Title 10, § 374b(9))

- Ferrets are also specifically defined as a “domestic pet” along with dogs and cats (Vermont Statutes, Title 20, § 3541 (3))

- “Ferret” means only the European ferret *Mustela putorius [sic] furo*” (Vermont Statutes, Title 20, § 3541 (4))

- Impounded ferrets suspected of having rabies may be killed (Vermont Statutes, Title 20, § 3807)

#### Virginia

- Extensive state-level pet shop regulations that apply to ferrets only inferentially; ferrets do not fall specifically within the definition of “companion animal” although the



definition is such a vague combination of specifically-mentioned species (dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, nonhuman primates) and general descriptions that virtually any animal would fall under the definition (Virginia Code. § 3.1-796.66)  
- A special permit is required to possess, import, or sell any member of “family *Mustelidae*, all species except *Mustela putorius furo*” (Va. Admin. Code 4VAC15-30-40)

#### Washington\*

- No state-level pet shop regulation

#### West Virginia

- No state-level pet shop regulation  
- It is illegal to “hunt, catch, take, kill, injure or pursue a wild animal or bird with the use of a ferret” ( W.Va. Code § 20-2-5 (12))

#### Wisconsin

- Minimal state-level pet shop regulation  
- “Any ferret , rat, weasel, or guinea pig in possession or used while hunting” is considered a public nuisance (Wisconsin Statutes § 29.927(9))  
- “No person shall use or possess any ferret while hunting.” (Wisconsin Admin. Code NR 10.07 (3)(e))

#### Wyoming

- No state-level pet shop regulation  
- The black-footed ferret is defined as a “protected animal” (Wyoming Code § 23-1-101(a)(ix))