



# American Ferret Association, Inc.

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1-888-FERRET-1

## Baby Ferrets Need Your Help Right Now!

- Do you get frustrated by seeing 5 week old ferret kits (babies) in the stores, some still with stitches or incision infections?
- How about the babies who have prolapsed rectums, because they aren't yet fully weaned and their bodies can't yet process the dry kibble they're being fed?
- Do you cry over the news of baby ferrets dying in transport?

Now you and I have a real opportunity to actually change these outcomes and improve conditions for ferret babies throughout the entire U.S.!

How? Simply by writing a letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), urging the department to adopt new protective regulations. Guidelines and pointers for such letters will follow.



5 week old kits - not yet weaned and are too young to be shipped.

First, we are pleased to announce that a major milestone has been reached in the effort to get the USDA and APHIS (Animal Plant Health Inspection Service) to adopt ferret-specific regulations under the Animal Welfare Act. For the first time, these agencies have accepted a petition to consider revisions in regulations affecting ferret breeding farms, dealers and research institutions under USDA control.

There have been two previous attempts to improve USDA/APHIS standards for ferrets. The first was initiated by volunteers of the Georgia Domestic Ferret Association; the second

by our own American Ferret Association, Inc. (AFA). Unfortunately, neither of these efforts was supported by enough public feedback to get USDA/APHIS to even accept a petition for considering regulatory changes. The organizers' hard work was wonderful, but the ferret community did not do its part. Now, a multi-group effort has cleared the first hurdle, but needs your help to clear the second.

Last year, people realized that improving conditions for ferret kits involved specific rules of procedure and a multi-step process. The first step was to petition the relevant agencies to consider ferret-specific regulations. This time large numbers of the ferret community WROTE IN AND WERE COUNTED. The result? For the very FIRST time, a successful petition set the stage for improving ferret standards nationally!

So, what next? We have only a few weeks to show the government that improving standards for ferrets has widespread public support. If enough of us write in to show that support, we can eliminate some of the worst conditions affecting the well-being of baby ferrets. In place of the sadness and frustration we now often feel at the plight of helpless kits, we could expect them to enjoy a healthy, happy start in life. On the other hand, if we don't do our part, the entire effort will fall back to square one.

We CAN get national regulations to forbid breeding farms, dealers and research institutions from selling or transporting ferrets younger than 8 weeks. Besides protecting the kits themselves, such changes would also help our overburdened shelter community through a dramatic drop in kits that purchasers can't deal with because they're too young to be easily maintained. Moreover, we can prevent entire shipments of ferrets from dying of heat stroke at airports. We can make sure they aren't crowded into tiny, unmonitored cages or exposed to other animals who can injure them. By taking just a single action to show our support now, we can help the pets we love in many ways!

## Write a Letter Now!

In March, 2004, several ferret organizations sent a petition to the USDA requesting a revision in the requirements for ferret housing and transport that apply to breeding farms, dealers and research institutions under USDA control. The proposed changes would not apply to small breeders who sell privately; they would apply only to farms that breed ferrets for wholesale, to their distributors, and to the transport they use.

The USDA has accepted this petition, and has now requested public input. They ask three main questions (condensed here):

**1. Should specific standards be implemented for the welfare of domestic ferrets? If yes, please explain what standards you believe are needed.**

**2. What specific problems have dealers, exhibitors, or research facilities had with the current handling, care, treatment, and transportation standards and how would ferret-specific standards eliminate them?**

**3. Should there be minimum age requirements for the transportation of domestic ferrets, and, if so, what factors should be considered in determining those requirements?**

The deadline for responding is **November 18, 2005**. You may respond by regular mail, by email, or on the via EDOCKET. We are told that sending a letter by mail is the most effective option, so even if you choose to respond via EDOCKET, please also mail your letter with three copies to the USDA address below. All copies of the letter need an original signature. It is URGENT that the USDA get a strong response from the ferret community to move forward with the development of new regulations! For help on what items to include in your letter, please see the attached content suggestions. The full text of the request for input and how to respond is included in this packet, or go to [www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html) and click on All Recent Publications. Scroll down to Animal Welfare; Standards for Ferrets, Docket No. 04-088-1.

If you use EDOCKET (which is said to be anonymous so that those in California can use it),

your comments will take 24 to 72 hours to appear.

The link is: [www.regulations.gov/](http://www.regulations.gov/)

- In the Agency drop-down box, select Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- In the Keyword drop-down box, enter ferret
- Click Submit.

This will bring up a list including the original edocket (APHIS-2005-0063). The last column in the list is an Add Comments button which will bring up the edocket form for you to enter your comments.

If you use the snail mail option, remember to send the original and three copies of your letter with original signatures on each to:

Docket No. 04-088-1

Regulatory Analysis and Development

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The American Ferret Association and the International Ferret Congress will be hosting information on their web sites:

American Ferret Association, Inc.

[www.ferret.org](http://www.ferret.org)

The International Ferret Congress

[www.ferretcongress.org](http://www.ferretcongress.org)

IFC will include: the Notice of Petition and Request for Comments; sample letters to the USDA; and the transcript of Dr. Sandra Kudrak's presentation at the 2005 International Ferret Symposium in St. Louis this spring. Dr. Kudrak's talk provides an excellent overview of the very complex multi-year process of creating new regulations, of where we are in the process, and what is yet to be done.

Please prepare what YOU will write in your letter to the USDA, and plan to communicate this urgent need to the vets in your area and to the other ferret groups you are a part of. Input is needed from both individuals and organizations. Keep in mind that we've got as far as we have thus far only through the dedicated efforts of members of the ferret community who last year urged the USDA to take action. It's up to us now to keep up the good work!

Remember, November 18, 2005 is the deadline to submit your letters! Those of us who are interested in the welfare of ferrets are the only ones who can make good things happen for them. Please write your letter today!