Ferret Colors and Patterns

There is only one “breed” of ferret, but they can come in many colors and patterns. Many colorations of ferret are being bred today. Sable is the most common and cinnamon is the most rare, but ferrets come in a myriad of color patterns.

There are eight basic ferret colors: Albino, Black, Black Sable, Champagne, Chocolate, Cinnamon, Dark-Eyed White and Sable. The following definitions are for the perfect example of that color. As we all know there is no perfect ferret so you will need to find the closest color definition that matches your ferret. The one item that may not match up is nose color, especially if your ferret is in between two colors like sable and chocolate. Plus Marshall Farms tends to produce quite a few pink nosed sables that are regularly seen at shows.

Albino: The guard hair and undercoat are white/cream*. The eyes are pink/red and nose is pink.

Black: The guard hair is true black and the undercoat is white. The eyes are black and the nose can be black, near black or speckled black.

Black Sable: The guard hair is dark ash blackish brown with no warm brown tone and the undercoat is white/cream. The eyes are dark brown or near black. The nose is blackish brown and can be solid, mottled or heavily speckled.

Champagne: The guard hair is tan or a diluted version of chocolate and the undercoat is white/cream. The eyes are light to dark burgundy and the nose is beige/pink or pink with a beige or light brown ‘T’ outline.

Chocolate: The guard hair is warm milk chocolate brown and the undercoat is white. The eyes are brown or dark burgundy and the nose is pink, brick, beige or pink with a light brown ‘T’ outline.

Cinnamon: The guard hair is rich light reddish brown and the undercoat is white or white with a golden hue. The nose is brick, beige or pink with a light brown or brick ‘T’ outline.

Dark-Eyed White: The guard hair and undercoat is white/cream*. The eyes are burgundy or black and the nose is pink.

Sable: The guard hair is warm deep brown and the undercoat is white/cream/light golden. The eyes are brown to near black and the nose is light brown, speckled/mottled brown or pink with a brown ‘T’ outline.

* This color will have the same guard hair and undercoat color. In all other colors the guard hair and undercoat colors will be different.
Now that you know the basic ferret colors the fun begins determining your ferret’s pattern. Trying to identify all the possible color patterns in ferrets can make you crazy. Ferrets can and regularly have multiple patterns. You say you have a sable ferret but are you sure? Maybe it’s really a sable solid or a sable standard or a sable mitt or a sable point or a sable point mitt or a sable roan or a sable roan mitt or a sable point roan mitt. Confused? In the winter your ferret is a sable point and then in the summer after shedding becomes a sable standard. Your ferret gets a bit older and starts getting white guard hairs on his hind quarters. Now your ferret is a sable roan or a sable mutt. Having fun? First you’ll need to know some more terms in order to determine your ferret’s pattern.

**Bib**—White patches under the neck.
**Mitt**—White feet where the white stops at the ankle.
**Points**—The ferret’s legs, shoulders, tail and mask.
**Roaning**—A mixture of white guard hairs scattered throughout the coat, like salt and pepper usually in a uniform mixture.
**Stocking**—White feet where the white extends halfway up the leg.

Next let’s talk about masks. There are three different styles of masks.

**Standard/Full**—A solid band of color around and between each eye.
**T-Bar**—A solid band of color around and between each eye up to the top of the head.
**V**—A thin strip of color around each eye and down to the nose.

There are nine basic ferret patterns: **Blaze, Mitt, Mutt, Panda, Point, Roan, Solid, Standard, and Striped/Patterned**.

**Blaze**: The blaze can be any coat color except white and has a long white blaze from the top of the head (above the eyes and below the ears) down the back of the neck. The eyes should be varying shades of ruby to brown. The nose should be pink or pink with a light outline. White knee patches may be present and all feet should have white tips or mitts. A white tip can be found on the tail. Masks will vary depending on color concentration including minor color rings around the eyes. Blazes can also have a bib, a white or speckled belly, and guard hair roaning.

**Mitt**: The mitt can be any coat color except white and has white feet with a contrasting leg color and a white bib.

**Mutt**: The mutt can be any coat color with mismatched roaning, dots, spots, and patterns. Mutts have multiple colors and/or no distinct color pattern.
**Panda:** The panda can be any coat color except white and should have an almost completely white head. A darker concentration of color is found across the shoulders and the hips. The eyes are burgundy. The nose is pink or pink with a light outline. Knee patches may be present and mitts/stockings should be present on all four feet. A white tip can be found on the tail. Small color rings or patches around the eyes and small color markings in front of the ears can be found but there should not be a mask. Pandas can have a white or speckled belly and guard hair roaning.

**Point:** The point can be any coat color except white and will show a distinct difference in color concentration between the body color and the points. The mask will be a thin 'V' mask for black, black sable, sable, cinnamon and chocolate, not a full or 'T' bar mask. Champagnes can have a thin 'V' mask or no mask at all. The nose color will be lighter than the colors listed for each of the basic colors.

**Roan:** The roan can be any coat color except all white. There should be 40% to 60% of white guard hairs present (body and points only) for the pattern to be considered a roan. The colored guard hairs should be evenly sprinkled throughout the body.

**Solid:** The solid can be any coat color except all white. The percentage of colored guard hairs should be ideally 100% in relation to white guard hairs which should be realistically 0% in the body and points. This pattern gives an appearance of solid color concentration from the head to the tail. Masks are either full or 'T' bar.

**Standard:** The standard can be any coat color except all white. The percentage of colored guard hairs should be ideally 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 discernible. Masks are either full or 'T' bar.

**Striped/Patterned:** The striped/patterned can be any coat color except all white. The pattern should have a minimum of 90% white guard hairs with either a sprinkling of colored guard hairs throughout the body, or colored spots and/or a colored stripe down the back.

Hopefully this has helped you make your best educated guess as to what color your ferret is. If you still can’t decide, take a couple pictures of your ferret then email them to me at jbferretz@gmail.com and I’ll see what I can do to help! But just remember, color isn’t important. Health, longevity and an interactive disposition is what makes a great pet ferret!

Vickie McKimmey is the American Ferret Association’s Shows and Special Events Director, Senior Licensed Judge, and Office Manager. She has owned, bred and shown ferrets since 1988, and authored the book *Ferrets (Animal Planet Pet Care Library) (2007).*
AFA is a national organization dedicated to ferrets and ferret enthusiasts everywhere.

The American Ferret Association’s goals are to:

**Promote** the domestic ferret as a companion animal through public education such as shows, newsletters, legislative education, etc.

**Protect** the domestic ferret against anti-ferret legislation, mistreatment, unsound breeding methods, needless scientific research, and any practice deemed to lower the health standards or survivability of the animal.

**Provide** constant and up-to-date information on vets, research data, rescue shelters, and other information of interest to ferret owners and pet professionals.

**American Ferret Association, Inc.**
PO Box 554
Frederick, MD  21705-0554

1-888-FERRET-1
www.ferret.org
afa@ferret.org