

# Paws-It!

## Washington Ferret Rescue & Shelter



Volume 11 Issue 1

### Junk-food Junkies!



*Yeah, yeah, I can take a hint!*

With some ferrets, it's very clear which treats they enjoy. They learn to come running when they hear a treat container shake, or will drive you batty begging for treats the second you walk in the door, 'til they find a place to crash at night.

Many ferret treats contain a large amount of sugar, so they really should be given in "treat amounts". This means only 1-2 treats per day, and being really strong to be able to say "no" to those pouty faces!

Pictured above is Gizmo with a can of 8 in 1 Ferret Treats. My ferrets love all the different flavors. Each can contains raisins, pieces of good-smelling kibble, and multi-colored snacks that most ferrets really enjoy.

Yogis are another popular treat. They are also made with

a lot of sugar, so again, please give these in limited quantities! My ferrets give the paws up for the peanut butter flavored ones, as well as the banana.

I, personally, add Cheerios and pieces of their own kibble to the treat container, so that I can give out more treats without worrying that I'm overdosing them on sugar. Putting their food into the container lets it pick up the "treat" smell that makes most treats so appealing.

For those of you that don't think your ferret can be fooled by giving him/her a piece of kibble instead of an actual treat—try it! It's special because it's coming from you! Sassy (pictured at the end) would take every last piece of kibble you were willing to give her. Now that is a \*real\* beggar!

Most ferrets love Ferretone (made by 8 in 1)! I can put it on a ferret belly & easily trim nails. I typically take a bottle with me when we go in to see the vet—while the ferret is licking away, he's blissfully unaware that the vet is poking and prodding him!

Ferrets are primary carnivores and as such, they do not have the ability to obtain enough nutritional value from fruits & vegetables to be able

*Written by Megan Reuther*

to subside on them alone, or even as a large portion of their diet. Even so, some ferret owners like to give their ferrets just a little bit as a treat every so often. Popular fruits are watermelon, strawberries, bananas and raisins. One of my ferrets adored broccoli, of all things! So really, it all depends on your ferret's taste buds!

Other popular treats are Pounce Tartar Control (various flavors), Craisins (dried cranberries) and Trail mix (minus the chocolate).

To get their little minds working, treat dispensers that randomly drop treats can be entertaining, and can help reduce cage boredom. Around Easter time, those plastic eggs become available. They can be loosely fitted together so the ferret is able to pry them apart to earn the treat.

Chicken Gravy (<http://www.trifl.org/gravy.shtml>) can be put into real egg shells and distributed among the group. The ferrets can eat the shell with no ill-effects—it's actually good for them!



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### How to Contact Us!

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## What's New?

### General Update:

YAY, our email lists are back on-line! You should now be receiving our newsletters regularly (every other month)—if you're still reading from the web, go sign up! We'll also be adding new lists, so watch for those.

### Ferret Frolic:

We're finally going to have our first ever Ferret Frolic! We're thinking the afternoon of **August 21st** sounds like a good day & time.... That should even be enough time for us to actually get organized! So, save the date—and bring your fuzzibutt(s) out to see us (and maybe go

home with a new buddy or two)! If you would like to help organize this event, please contact Charity Bohannan at [ferrest.of.all@comcast.net](mailto:ferrest.of.all@comcast.net). We're in need of prizes, sponsors, event ideas—the whole shebang!

### Garage Sale:

Start saving your stuff! We'll be hosting our 2nd annual garage sale in Mill Creek on **May 1st**. Details will be available on our website soon.

### Sponsor a Ferret:

Any of our foster animals are eligible for sponsorship. Help pay for their food or medical care & at the same time, you'll

be helping us keep our foster program afloat!

### Thank you!

Thank you Lisa M. for sponsoring two of our kiddos, Lucy & Julie. Both girls are doing wonderfully in their foster homes!

### Happy Tales:

Would you like to share your experience adopting, fostering or sponsoring a ferret with us? We'd love to hear from you!! If you'd like to participate, please send your story & a picture or two to [liane@ferretlovers.com](mailto:liane@ferretlovers.com) & we'll get them posted right away!

## Tide-fresh Ferrets!



As you already know, ferrets have their own, distinct odor. Many people love it, but some ferret owners still haven't come around to enjoying it so much... So we thought we'd come up with a few tips to keep your fuzzies smelling fresh!

The less you bathe your ferret, the less he's going to smell. Read that again; it's really true! Shampoos & soaps strip the coat of essential oils that help keep your ferret warm & relatively waterproof. In response to this, their glands go into overdrive trying to replenish those oils and can result in your ferret smelling worse in a few days than before you bathed him!

Keeping your ferrets' ears cleaned (weekly) and keeping his laundry clean are the two things that will really help his smell. The smell from your detergent often rubs off on your ferret as he rubs his oils onto his bedding. The cleaner you keep his bedding the better he will smell!

We also recommend that you use litter only in the litter box, not throughout the

entire bottom of the cage. Carefresh, woodchips and similar products can become dusty and will retain the oils from your ferret's coat. Bedding should consist of plain, old ordinary towels. They can be easily laundered and changed out as needed.

Strong smelling clay litters can also be a source of foul odors. We use wood stove pellets at the Shelter. When they break down they have sort of a woody smell to them, instead of an overpowering scented litter smell. Recycled newspaper litters do a good job, but aren't as good in the smell department. Plus they can be more expensive.

*Cleaning your ferret's litter box at least once a day is strongly recommended.*

If you decide to bathe your ferrets anyway, please choose a ferret shampoo or one safe for kittens. Human shampoos have a different pH from animal fur, and are not recommended. However, baby shampoos have a close to neutral pH, and can be safely used. Flea shampoos and the like that are labeled for dogs can be poisonous to ferrets, so please read those labels carefully!

In a ferret's mind, there is a difference between "bathing" and playing in the water. Bathing is usually best accomplished **quickly** in the sink or tub. Soap your ferret, rinse him off and let him run crazily around the room drying himself off on anything available. Even the walls can be absorbent when you're a wet ferret! Do not be alarmed by this silly behavior—it's totally normal!

*Written by Megan Reuther*

Playing in water can be a fun & cooling activity in the summertime. Rubbing the ferret dry afterward works almost as well as giving him a bath, plus it's less drying to his coat. Large Rubbermaid tubs can be filled with an inch or two of water for them to splash around in. Most ferrets enjoy washing their faces daily. You may even catch a curious ferret playing in his own water bowl!

Some ferrets particularly enjoy swimming. Leaving a towel hanging over the edge of the tub so they can climb out, or constructing an area for them to climb out helps them decide when they've had enough.

Certain ferrets have a soap fetish and may try to take a chomp out of your bar soap, or try to steal it, so do watch for that. Soap can make them feel ill if they ingest it. If your ferret is vomiting, please consult a veterinarian. Then there's also that rubber fascination—if you can't find your tub stopper, check your ferret's stash!

Hopefully, some of the above will help you with the odor issues your little guys might have.



## The Adventures of Smeagol

I'd been ferretless for about 4 years. One day my son, Zackary, simply asked, "Can we get a ferret, mom?" and voila! the next thing I know, Smeagol has entered our lives at four months of age. He is definitely a cuddle bug! Smeagol is one of the most affectionate ferrets I've ever had the pleasure of knowing.

Smeagol is also one of the most well traveled ferrets I know. By his first few months with us, Smeagol had been camping at Crater Lake, Pacific Beach, Lake Quinault & had been on various Cascade hikes.

Smeagol is my co-pilot. His cage fits snugly in the passenger seat and he's



frequently out riding on my son's lap during the driving portion of our trips. He likes to sit on my window-side arm and let the wind hit his face, kind of like a dog, though of course, I'm very careful how I let him do this. He's most content to sit on my shoulders, snuggled in my hair, watching the traffic zoom by. We don't let him run around the car as a ferret underfoot can easily equal an accident! Smeagol is content to just cuddle for the ride.

Crater Lake was Smeagol's first big adventure. He was too small for any harnesses so it was either in my arms, running amok in one of the tents, or in his cage. We were a large group, so he was out frequently and loved all the attention. We found nice shady spots at different locations to keep his cage out of the hot July sun, and we moved his cage to the car at night while we slept, lest any bears become curious.

Then the magic day happened. He fit into a harness! Now our freedom was unlimited. Smeagol walks like a dog on a retractable leash. He goes to parks, beaches, festivals, and out for plain old walks around the neighborhood. He even went Trick-or-Treating with us on Halloween! He loves night walks; they are his special treat. We always bring Smeagol his own bottle of water and bag of treats and offer them often.

*Written by Sharon E. Citti*

Pacific Beach was Smeagol's favorite camp-out. He loved all the sand! He and Zackary dug holes together, ran from waves together, chased birds, and just ran each other ragged. Smeagol was also the hit of the beach. He made many new friends that weekend and reveled in the attention. Being on the harness he was out most of the time, and believe me he enjoyed this level of freedom!

We have an active 2004 planned with trips back to Pacific Beach, Deception Pass, & Lincoln City, Oregon on the agenda already. My son misses 'our volcano' Rainier, so she's due for a visit soon—likely May.



Yep, that's one well traveled ferret.

## At the Bridge ... We would like to remember those fuzzies who brought us so much joy... Their time with us was too short.

**Vampe & Rosco**—Misty B. will miss Vampe & Rosco. Vampe was one of Misty's first foster ferrets from WFRS, and as her name implies had a passion for chomping...but Misty loved her anyway! Misty fell in love with Rosco & his buddy Joey when she decided she was ready to "temporarily" foster for us again. Temporarily turned to permanently, as many of our fosters do, and he lived out his life in a wonderful home.

**Shadow & Potto**—The shelter was sad to see Shadow & Potto leave us. Shadow came in completely naked from adrenal disease. She was so distressed at having lost her human that she stopped eating, and despite all of our efforts, could not be coaxed into wanting to live again. Potto was a malnourished surrender that passed due to similar circumstances.

**Hazard & Lucky**—Jeremy & Chrissy said their goodbyes to Hazard & Lucky recently. Both suffered from adrenal disease, and had other health complications. Jeremy cared for them while they were ill, and sadly had to let them go when their times came.

**Bear & Gimle**—Bear was Charity & Jason's first foster boy from WFRS. They celebrated his life, battled with him through lymphoma, and helped him find his way to the other side when he decided it was time. Gimle was a special bald boy that grabbed a hold of Jason's heart the minute he came through the shelter doors. He had a wonderful life with Charity & Jason and I know how heartbroken they were to see him go.

**Sadie**—Hella & family will miss sweet Sadie. Sadie was insulinomic from a

young age, and Hella & Dave scheduled their lives around her to make sure she was fed around the clock and doing well. She will be dearly missed.

**Galen**—Galen lived with Jeff & Cara and received the absolute best care possible. He also had insulinoma so badly that no drug would touch it. He was a big lump of a ferret and a cuddlebug through and through. He will be sadly missed by all his friends, furred & skin.

**Sophie**—Sophie was a dear, sweet little girl that had a passion for cleaning ears and snuggling. She found her way to Susan's home where she received the all the love & spoiling she could stand throughout her golden years.

# Ferretting Out the Fuzzy History of our Stinky Little Thieves

Written by Leanna Aker

Yes, the history is literally fuzzy. And yes, our little pets are officially known as *Mustela putorius furo*, which translates loosely to “mouse-catching smelly thief.” The ferret is thought to be a descendant of the Siberian (*Mustela eversmanni*) or Eastern European (*Mustela putorius putorius*) polecat. The domestic ferret and European polecats are actually genetically similar enough to interbreed.

The most commonly-told story is that ferrets were domesticated by the Egyptians thousands of years ago for rodent control. Indeed, drawings of ferrets have been found in crypts and temples of ancient Egypt. However, history speaks to the contrary, as no evidence of either the European or Steppe polecats have been found in that area, nor have any mummified ferret remains ever been found. In addition, recent archaeological evidence has revealed unquestionably domesticated ferret remains in a medieval castle in Belgium.

The lack of written evidence about domesticated ferrets and the resultant multiple theories about their origin are notable. Some theorize that ferrets were popular with the lower classes, and as such, their written history would be non-existent. In addition, archaeologists have been historically more concerned with royalty, tombs, and the like, so the history of ferrets may still be buried, so to speak.

What is certain is that man’s use of ferrets dates back at least to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Ferrets were found mentioned from 450-425 BC in plays by Aristophanes, by Aristotle around 350BC, and by Pliny in AD 79. In addition, some early translations of the bible, including the older King James versions, translate one particular word in Leviticus as “ferret”. However, most new translations have rejected this as an error, instead using “gecko” or “lizard.”

The early, domesticated ferret was indeed used for hunting and rodent control. The return of the Crusaders through Italy and Byzantium in AD 400 brought a new focus on hunting to Western and Central Europe. The ferret moved across Europe with the conquering Romans, flushing rabbits from their warrens for

hunters. Interestingly, though wild European polecats tended to be sable in coloring, white or albino domesticated ferrets were used for hunting as it made retrieval in the field easier.

The rodent-killing ferret was also introduced to manor houses, and in fact, was rumored to be so accepted, that Da Vinci painted one as the companion to a noble woman in “Lady with Ermine.” Over time, however, the ferret was replaced by the cat as a hunter, due both to the ferret’s musky odor and the perceived superior friendliness of cats. Offended ferret owners take heart; they did remain hunters in rural areas due to the fact that they were more reliable than cats. In addition, early ferrets were preferred as rodent hunters on sailing ships, as the nooks and crannies were too small for cats.



Indeed, ferrets arrived in North America by boat in the late 1600’s, possibly with the original settlers of the New World. Some could consider the little critters’ history on this Continent rocky. In the forties and fifties, ferrets were bred for their fur for the production of fake mink coats. Other industrial applications of ferret skills included the stringing of electrical and telephone cables, as recently as the late 1960’s. Boeing and British Columbia Telephones used ferrets to lay the guide wires for pulling heavy cables through conduits. This practice ended because, well, all ferrets know that tubes are for playing.

Today, the ferret is a fuzzy little domesticated pet, though working ferrets are still kept on European farms. In addition, the practice of hunting with fer-

rets, or “ferretting” is still conducted in Britain. But for most ferrets, their “job” has evolved into stealing important items from humans, terrorizing other household pets, and generally being cute and squishy. Have no doubt, the current domesticated ferret wouldn’t make it in the wild. While they will chase rodents and other small creatures for fun, ferrets no longer have the capability to hunt for sustenance. There are currently over one million ferrets living as pets in the United States, though in some locations, there is controversy about their hunting ability and its affect on the local fauna. California, Hawaii, and some other cities in the U.S. still make owning ferrets illegal.

While the origin of the domesticated ferret is uncertain, and the legality of owning ferrets in some locations is in question, there is no question that ferrets have captured the hearts of many animal lovers. Precocious, inquisitive, playful, and sleepy, the ferret has made its mark on the present, and will certainly continue to wardance its way into the future of many peoples’ lives.

## Superstitions:

If you are bitten on the neck by a ferret, you will become one of the undead. (Central and Eastern European tradition).

Drinking the remaining milk from a dish that a ferret has lapped from will cure you of whooping cough. (British and Irish tradition)

## Sources:

<http://www.animalforum.com/wferrethist.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/Petsburgh/Haven/6552/History.html>

<http://weaselwords.com/pages/art028.asp>

[http://www.ferrets.org/Ferret\\_History.htm](http://www.ferrets.org/Ferret_History.htm)

<http://www.luvferrets.com/history.htm>

<http://www.rud.dk/ferrets/faqhtml/history.html>

<http://www.baa.duke.edu/companat/Natural%20History/ferret/ferret%20natural%20history.htm>

# Ferrets Seeking Homes ...

## Adoptable Ferrets

**Mischief**—Mischief is an older dark sable girl that had a small tumor taken off her nose (it has since healed, and her nose fur is slowly re-growing). She's otherwise completely healthy & gets along with other ferrets—she just needs a new family!

**Possy & Missy**—Possy is a take-charge albino gal and Missy is slowly turning from silver to white, unable to decide which color she really wants to be. Both girls are sweet, sassy and would be a lot of fun.

**Joy & Speedy**—This duo is a bit older, and in need of some TLC. Both Joy & Speedy are dark sables that play well with others.

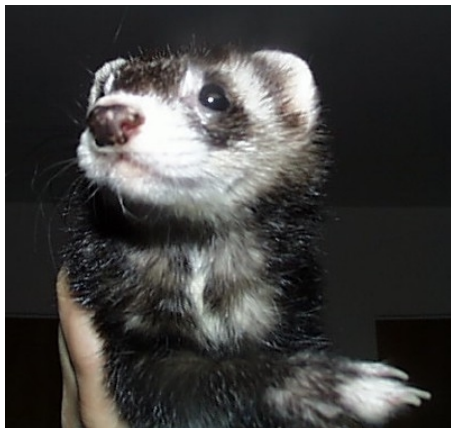
**Ren & Stinky**—This twosome is older, but you'd never know it. Ren is a petite silver girl that lives with her beefy silver/dark-eyed white buddy. They love to play and are both very sweet.

**Jasmine**—Jasmine is psycho. She dances and plays and plays and dances. That's all she ever does. She used to be a champagne blaze, but is now roaring out to become a dark-eyed white.

**Blaze & Tazia**—Blaze is a sable girl with a white racing stripe and Tazia is a cute silver/sable girl with a white bib. They play well with other ferrets, and all they need now is a new family!

**Rocky**—Rocky is a 5-6 year old sable girl that will need to go as an only ferret. She's completely people-oriented and would really like a whole person all to herself.

**Missy & Cosmo**—Missy is an adorable



sable girl & her buddy, Cosmo, is a blackmitt. Both girls are full of spunk and are definitely ready to get out of the shelter & into a new home!

**Baby, Rugrat & Lucifer**—Baby & Rugrat are both sable females, and Lucifer is a cute albino male. They are all around 3 years old and would really love a home where they could stay together.

**Titan**—Titan is a skinny 1-2 year old sable boy. He's in need of a little TLC, but is otherwise in good shape.

**Gus, Boo & Peek**—Boo & Peek are both sable blaze girls and Gus is a handsome sable male. They're between 1 & 2 years old, get along well with others and are lovely ferrets overall.



## Foster Ferrets

*Note: We do not charge an adoption fee for our foster ferrets, though many of them will require a vet visit or two in their golden years. The shelter provides medical care and any medications that the foster ferret will need for a low monthly donation of \$10-20 a month. Even this little amount, once a month, helps keep our foster program running, so that we are able to continue helping elderly/ill ferrets.*

**Manic & Panic**—Manic & Panic are older ladies. Manic is a cute chocolate girl, and Panic is a pretty & petite silver. Panic was mostly bald when she came into the shelter & Lupron is doing wonders for her!

**Lilly**—Lilly is a sable blaze that recently came into our shelter. She's been started on Lupron injections and will need to continue them for life. She's growing in

a great new coat and has put on some weight since she joined us. She would prefer to be an only-ferret, but can tolerate other ferrets if she has to.

**Halle & Jasmine**—Halle is a dark sable girl recently diagnosed with adrenal disease. Her sister is going to be a dark-eyed white when she finishes re-growing her fur. Both ferrets were recently started on Lupron and are now doing fantastic! They are silly, hyper girls and are actually not all that old (2 & 4 respectively).

**Precious & Lucky**—Precious is a tiny silver girl that's not adjusting to shelter life very well. Her buddy, Lucky, is a smaller chocolate male that's currently healthy.

**Sammy**—Sammy is an older silver boy that may have insulinoma. He will need a ferret savvy home to watch over him and potentially give him twice daily medication.

**Stormy**—Stormy is a 5-6 year old albino boy. He may have the beginnings of adrenal disease & will need to see our vet before he goes to a new home.

**Prince & Princess**—Princess is an adrenal DEW girl and Prince, her buddy, is healthy. Both adore each other, but are not too keen on other ferrets.

**Apple & Papaya**—Papaya is a 6 year old female that has adrenal disease. She was recently started on Lupron and will need to come to the shelter once a month to receive a shot. Apple, her buddy, is a yellow albino boy that's in great shape and is just as sweet as can be.

**Spirit & Shadow**—Spirit and Shadow are around 6.5 years old. Both are sables, and suffer from adrenal disease. They've been on Lupron for some time now, and will need to come in monthly to continue treatment.



Washington Ferret Rescue and Shelter  
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Bothell, WA 98011

**We're on the Web!**  
**[www.washingtonferret.org](http://www.washingtonferret.org)**

A 501(c)3 non-profit organization

## Yes, I want to help Washington Ferret Rescue & Shelter!

### Enclosed is my donation of:

\$5.00 ( )

\$10.00 ( )

\$15.00 ( )

\$20.00 ( )

Other ( )

Please make your donation payable to Washington Ferret Rescue & Shelter (or WFRS) and mail to:

**18724 Bothell Way NE**

**Bothell, WA 98011**

Contributions are tax-deductible under 501(c)3 regulations of the Internal Revenue Service. Appropriate receipts will be mailed for your records.

### Our Wish List:

Donations of time or money are always gladly accepted & appreciated!

Hammocks, Security Cubes—homemade or store bought, we can always use hanging sleep sacks of some sort.

Wood stove pellets for litter (found at Safeway, local hardware stores, the Grange, etc.)

Cages or carriers—clean or dirty, we don't care!

Volunteers to wash laundry, scoop boxes, scrub cages and cuddle ferrets.

More foster homes! Do you have room in your home for a few extra fuzzies for a few days/weeks? Do you have any medical training or are you interested in learning? Let us know!

Ferret Food (Mazuri, Totally Ferret, Marshalls & The Ferret Store's Superior Choice)

( ) I am moving! Please see below:

( ) Yes, I know of someone else who would like to receive the newsletters.

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