

# GNC Domesticated Ferrets

## General Domesticated Ferret Information

### Scientific Name

*Mustela putorius furo*

### Size/Weight/Life Span

Just under 2 feet from nose to tail. Weight: 2-4 lbs. Life span is 7-10 years.

### Range

It is believed that ferrets were domesticated over 2500 years ago, possibly being descendants of the European polecat, and are now commonly found as pets all around the world.



### Diet

The ferret's wild ancestors primarily fed on rabbits and small rodents such as mice and rats. Most domesticated ferrets now eat commercial ferret food bought at pet stores.

### Breeding

Female ferrets, called jills, can have litter sizes of 5-13 babies, called kits. The kits are born blind, deaf, and almost hairless after a gestation of 38-44 days. Between 3 and 5 weeks later their eyes open and they can also start to hear.

### Population Status

As a purely domesticated animal, population is stable.

### Hard Workers

Today the domesticated ferret is mainly used for hunting, commonly called ferreting. Hunters will use trained ferrets, with their flexible and lean bodies, to crawl down into burrows and scare animals out. In early America, ferrets were frequently kept in barns, killing rodents that would have otherwise ruined the grains stored inside. Ferrets are also used to run wires and cables through tight spaces. It is fairly easy to train a ferret to pick up one end of a cable and carry it behind walls or throw ceiling grates to a desired location.

### About the GNC Ferrets

Ferrets sleep almost 20 hours a day, so it's not uncommon to find the GNC ferrets fast asleep in a large "ferret pile". Their cage has a separate room located off their main living space that allows them to sleep peacefully during the day. Though long sleepers, ferrets make the most of their awake time. Every morning before opening to the public, the ferrets are allowed to run around and explore the entire museum. During this time they get into no end of mischief, jumping into buckets, hiding in wood chips, play fighting with each other, and trying to explore anytime someone happens to open a door.



Greenburgh Nature Center, 99 Dromore Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

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