
Bathing Tips

First of all, unless your ferret goes snorkeling in butterscotch pudding or has a bad case of fleas, you really don't need to bathe him/her very often at all. It doesn't affect the odor much; in fact, many ferrets smell *worse* for a few days following a bath. The best thing you can do to control your ferret's scent is to change his/her bedding every few days and keep the litter pans clean.

The problem with frequent bathing is that it can cause dry skin, especially in winter. There's nothing wrong with bathing your ferret only once a year. Once a month should be okay, but switch to less often if you have problems with dry skin. Most ferrets don't seem to mind baths much. Some ferrets enjoy a bath quite a bit, swimming around in the tub and diving for the drain plug.



The Bath

Fill a tub or kitchen sink partway with warm water. Many people have found that ferrets prefer their baths warmer than you'd expect, probably because their body temperatures are pretty high. You don't want to scald your ferret, but if you can put your hand or foot into the water and feel comfortable right away, it should

be okay. If you want to let your pet play in the water, fill a tub just deeper than the ferret is tall, and provide some sort of support (a box in the tub) in case he/she gets tired of swimming. You can also take him/her into the shower with you; many ferrets who don't like baths are perfectly happy being held in a shower.

Finally, bathe the ferret. Ferret shampoos are available, or no-tears baby shampoo works fine too. Some people like Pert for Kids if the ferret has dry skin. Wet the ferret completely, either in one half of a double sink or in a tub. Lather him/her from head to tail. Many ferrets start to struggle at this point, so let them put their hind legs on the side of the tub while they're being washed. Rinse the ferret thoroughly in clear, warm running water. For dry skin, some people then dip the ferret in a dilute solution of moisturizer in water, being careful to keep his/her head out.

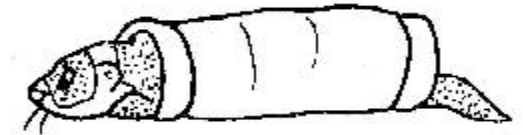
Older, sick, or weak ferrets can be gently cleaned using baby oil, which can also help get gooey things out of fur.

Drying off

Drying a wiggly, dripping ferret can be a lot of fun. Some people put a couple of towels and the ferrets together in a cardboard box or laundry basket that has been turned upside down with some weight on top, and let them dry themselves. You may want to start by holding the ferret in a towel at chest-level; hold his/her head and torso in one hand while drying him/her with the other. Wearing a terry bathrobe is helpful here too. You could also put your ferret on the floor in a towel and rub him/her dry, but he/

she'll probably think you're playing a rowdy game of tousel and try to run away. Once you've got him/her mostly dry, put him/her somewhere warm with a dry towel to roll in and he/she'll finish the job, although it's been mentioned that a damp ferret seems to lose all sense of judgment, suddenly thinking that walls, cage floors, milk cartons, and everything *except* the towel must be remarkably water-absorbent. You can also try using a hair dryer on its coolest setting, but many ferrets won't stand for that.

Immediately after a bath, many ferrets pretty much go nuts, thrashing and bouncing from side to side and rolling against everything in sight. Mainly they're trying to dry themselves, with a good bit of general excitement from the bath and drying process too.



Grooming Tips

Nail trimming

First, take the ferret in your lap. Drop several drops of Ferretone or Linatone upon its belly and point its nose toward the Ferretone. It will start licking the Ferretone and thus distracted, the ferret will not notice that its claws were being trimmed.

If you have trouble even with this method, and you have a helper, have the helper hold the ferret by the scruff of the neck and put Ferretone on one of his fingers. Scruffing a ferret will generally make her calm down and possibly even go limp, and if not, the Ferretone should keep her distracted.

Cut the nail just longer than the pink line inside it. Place the cut parallel to where the floor will be when the ferret stands, to prevent the tip from breaking later. Be careful not to nick the line or the toe, since in either case it'll bleed a lot and your ferret will decide nail clipping is not a good thing. Kwik-Stop, some other styptic powder, or corn starch is good to have around in case this happens, to stop the bleeding quickly, or you can hold a piece of tissue or paper towel over the nail and elevate the foot for a few minutes until it stops.



Cleaning ears

Check your pet's ears. They shouldn't need cleaning more than once a month at most, but if they seem unduly dirty, dampen a cotton swab with sweet oil (made for cleaning babies' ears) or an alcohol-based ear cleaner (only if dry skin is not a problem) and gently clean them.

Peroxide, water, and ointments are not recommended, because wet ears are much more prone to infections. Hold the swab along the animal's head rather than poking it into the ear, to avoid injuring the ear. Yellowish or brownish-red ear wax is normal, but if you see any black substance your pet probably has ear mites, which should be taken care of. Your vet will prescribe Tresaderm to kill the ear mites. Follow your vet's instructions on use.

There are also several excellent products made for cleaning cats' ears, which you just squirt in and they shake out. They're just fine for ferrets, and your vet should be able to tell you about them.

For more information, contact:

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Bathing and Grooming Tips

