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# Domestic Ferret

*Mustela putorius furo*

**Class:** *Mammalia*

**Order:** *Carnivora*

**Family:** *Mustelidae*

**Characteristics:** L. 13-16 in. Wt. max 5lbs. Long, slender body; short legs; black mask across eyes. 5 non-retractable, long claws per paw; 34 canine teeth. Sexually dimorphic - male larger. 7 fur colors- sable most common. Very high metabolism - eats about 10 times a day. Subject to distemper, rabies, parasites, diarrhea, colds and flu. An Albino, a characteristic favored by captive breeders, is easily picked out by predators because of poor camouflage.

**Behavior:** Crepuscular –sleeps 18 hrs a day. Playful and fastidious. Can be trained to litter box, Will interact with cats, dogs or other animals. Inquisitive, likes to tunnel under anything. Seeks attention and responds to discipline. Likes to dance, wrestle, stalk, roll, bite and kick playfully, hopping in every direction. May cluck, screech, bark or hiss. Will hunt rabbits and other small game if used for ferreting. Have been known to kill pet birds.

**Reproduction:** During breeding season (March to August) male will mate with as many females as he has access to. Up to fifteen 6-12 gm kits, born altricial after 42 day gestation, are weaned at 3-6 weeks and reach sexual maturity at 6 months. At this time breeders let the kits go to new owners. Males do not participate in care. Reach adulthood at 1 year.

## **Diet:**

Wild: Strictly carnivorous diet such as rodents, rabbits, reptiles, birds.  
Zoo: Commercial ferret food or cat food.

**Conservation:** Domestic ferrets, as common pets, are in no danger of extinction. The wild black-footed ferret was once thought extinct but has been located and reintroduced in Wyoming and is thriving.

**FYI:** Domesticated from European polecats 2000 years ago. *Mustela putorius furo* (Latin) means “weasel-like stinky thief.” Sometimes used for hunts known as “ferreting.”  
Can carry or cause domestic animal diseases if not vaccinated.  
Male called a “hob;” female, a “jill.”



## **Range & Habitat:**

Formerly European forests. Now found worldwide as a popular pets or working animals.

**Lifespan:** up to 6-10 years in captivity. Unknown in the wild.

## **Special Adaptations:**

Have been used successfully for research. Are bred in a large variety of colors and patterns.

## **IUCN Conservation Status:**

Not Evaluated



NOT EVALUATED	DATA DEFICIENT	LEAST CONCERN	NEAR THREATENED	VULNERABLE	ENDANGERED	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED	EXTINCT IN THE WILD	EXTINCT
DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW	EX	