

Selecting a Cage for Your Ferret

By Alicia Drakiotes

Our pet ferrets require caging at times – some more than others. Caging serves various purposes: It can provide a safe and secure environment for your beloved pets when you cannot be there to supervise them. Caging can also be helpful and curative in housing a ferret who is recuperating from illness. It's also beneficial in the transport of ferrets from one place to another.



How do I choose a cage for my ferret?

In finding and selecting cage units for your ferret, several things should be kept in mind:

- The number of ferrets who will reside in the cage
- The level of activity of the ferret(s) who will occupy the cage
- The length of time each day the ferret(s) will be caged
- The amenities that will be in the cage unit (such as a litter box, food bowl, water bottle, hammocks, and bedding)

To decide which cage is right for your animals, the first thing you'll need to consider is the number of ferrets and the ages of the ferrets who will reside in the cage. Obviously, if you have more than one ferret in a cage, you'll need to have a larger cage and possibly a multi-tier unit. If you adopt an older ferret, you probably will not use a multi-tier cage for long, since ferrets get a bit arthritic later in life, so for older ferrets a unit with 1 or 1 1/2 tiers will suffice.

Younger, more active ferrets need to move around freely, so a roomy cage is preferable. I recommend a minimum size of 18 inches high x 18 inches deep x 30 inches wide. A two-story unit is especially nice for your ferret when she is young and energetic. If the ferret is confined for six hours or more each day, she will need lots of space. Boredom and lack of exercise make for an unhealthy ferret. If you have ferrets who gnaw or chew to get out, it usually means they need more roaming time out of the cage.

When considering the size of the cage, keep in mind that much of the first floor of the cage will be taken up by a litter box, a food dish, a water bottle and bedding. If you want to use a high-backed litter pan (these work the best), check the cage doors to make sure they will accommodate the size of the litter box.

Another thing to consider is the construction or composition materials of the unit. Cages are available in a multitude of different materials, such as galvanized wire, enameled wire, powder-coated wire (baked-on finish), PVC (poly-coated vinyl) wire, and stainless steel. They can have plastic or wire floors, and a variety of ramps.

If you decide on galvanized wire, the cage needs to be scrubbed and brushed thoroughly with a cleaning solution and dried before being occupied by ferrets. Why?

The galvanized metal dust particles contain zinc, which is toxic to ferrets. By cleaning the cage prior to putting the ferret inside, you rule out the possibility of toxicity from chewing on the wire. Don't use Lysol or similar chemical solutions in cleaning, since residue from these compounds can be lethal. Use a warm soapy solution, and rinse well.

Coated wires have potential risks, too. You need to make sure the coating on the wire will not easily flake or chip off the cage with use. You don't want your ferret to ingest the vinyl coating material because a large piece of vinyl could cause a blockage of the stomach and intestines.

What about cleaning the cage?

Another consideration when buying a cage is how easy it will be to clean. Is the cage you are considering designed and constructed to allow easy access for cleaning, changing bedding, or checking on the occupants? From time to time, each cage needs a deep cleaning because loose hair becomes caught in the wire and the cage acquires household dust, along with spilled litter, food and water. Does the cage setup you're considering allow quick and efficient cleanup?

What about safety issues?

Caging should be free from sharp edges to alleviate injury to both humans and their ferrets. A solid floor is better than a mesh one. If you do get a cage with a mesh floor, make sure the mesh is tightly woven, to minimize the chance of your ferret catching a toe or toenail. If you have a cage with ramps, strategic placement of hammocks within the cage unit will help to catch a falling ferret. This is a good insurance policy and perhaps even a lifesaver.

A cage is a good investment for the health and safety of your pet, so put some time and thought into choosing the right caging for your ferret.

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See also: [Setting Up Your Ferret's Cage](#)