

Ferret Winter-Care Tips

By Alicia Drakiotes

Can heating units be a danger to my ferret?

American houses are heated by a variety of methods, some of which can be dangerous to ferrets. Ferrets, who are very inquisitive, can be quite adept at prying the covers off baseboard units, exposing themselves to possible burns from the hot pipes. Radiators containing steam or hot water are also dangerous – contact with the hot metal could easily cause burns. So, to prevent burns, you need to keep your ferret away from radiators and baseboard heaters.



In the event that you do find a burn on your ferret, you should immerse the injured area in cool water, and get the ferret to a veterinarian as soon as possible. Dehydration and shock can occur in severe burn situations, and pain medication will be needed in all cases.

Different dangers exist with forced hot air heaters. Ferrets have been known to crawl into vent systems, requiring a search of the house with squeaky toys while disassembling the ductwork. Make sure all vents in your house are securely fastened.

Can the dry air be detrimental to my ferret?

Heating of all types leads to dry air in the house. You can offset the dehydrating effects of dry heat by keeping a humidifier going and making sure all your pets have plenty of water. Vaseline or aloe can be used on dry noses and paws.

What else do I need to know?

Keeping ferrets free from drafts in the winter months will reduce the chances that they will develop colds. If left untreated, common colds can cause dehydration and even death in your pet ferret. Check the walls, windows and doorways to make sure no drafts are seeping in. Moving your ferret's housing to an inside wall is always a good plan.

Ferrets don't have to be completely insulated from cold weather. When it comes to playtime, many of them actually like playing outside in the snow for a few minutes! You just don't want to leave them out in the cold for hours, since they can develop respiratory problems (e.g., pneumonia) from cold drafts and over-chilling.

If you are going to keep your ferret outdoors in cold weather, you must start keeping him outdoors in the late spring, so his body can gradually acclimate to the weather changes and build up a sufficient coat. He'll need to have a high-fat diet in cold weather, as well as a draft-proof, insulated nesting box.

At the other extreme, make sure your ferrets don't get overheated. Ferrets are most comfortable at temperatures of 55 to 68 degrees. Put a few blankets or snuggle sacks in a cool room and you'll have a happy ferret.

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