

## CARE OF FERRETS

- ✓ **HOUSING:** Cage designed specifically for ferrets, with multiple levels for climbing. Wire cage bottoms are not recommended as they entrap ferrets' feet and lead to injury. The larger the cage, the better. Free roam of the house can pose serious hazards as ferrets can squeeze themselves into very small crevices. Homes need to be “ferret-proofed” before allowing a ferret any free roam without constant supervision.
- ✓ **SUBSTRATE:** Cedar and pine shavings have been found to cause liver damage and irritation to the respiratory tract of small mammals. There are several recycled paper products on the market that work well for the litter box; most ferrets will choose the corner they want it in, and they will be better about using it the cleaner it is kept. Soft material may be provided for bedding, but must be monitored to make sure the ferret does not ingest fibers. Most cat toys are suitable for ferrets with the exception of frayed fabric or rope and foam rubber. Ferrets have a propensity to ingest various plastics and foam rubber and become easily obstructed. As the small intestine of a ferret is very narrow, it only takes an object the size of a pea to cause an obstruction.
- ✓ **FEEDING:** Ferrets are strict carnivores, with an intestinal tract that is significantly shorter than that of a cat. Some exotic veterinarians recommend feeding kitten food, and this may work well in some individuals, but ferret-specific diets are still best. Feline diets, while close, still contain more fiber than most ferrets can handle. A good way to determine this is to look at the consistency of the stool. If the ferret's stool looks grainy (like birdseed), there is too much fiber in that diet for that ferret. Good quality cat treats are acceptable, cereals and dried fruits should be used only sparingly if at all.
- ✓ **VETERINARY CARE:** We recommend a wellness exam at the time of purchase/adoption, then exams every six months. Blood work should be done sometime in the first two to three years of age to obtain a normal database, then annually to screen for the development of age-related diseases. Ferrets have a very high metabolic rate and are susceptible to some quite serious diseases, so maintaining a close relationship with your exotic vet is very important. Always contact your ferret's veterinarian with questions and concerns-this is a better source for information than pet stores or the internet.