
Introducing Ferrets - Will They Get Along...?

Most ferrets love playing with other ferrets!

However there are exceptions. Some ferrets do not get along with other ferrets at all! This can make introducing ferrets a negative experience for you.

If you look at distant wild cousins of the ferret, the Polecat or Stoat (which today's domesticated ferret most probably originates from) you will find that they are in fact solitary animals by nature. They would only ever meet other of their kind during mating season.

“Ferrets are, by nature, independent creatures which live solitary lives, so they have minimal social needs. However, through domestication, ferrets retain many socialization behaviors common to older kits or young juveniles, which includes the need for frequent physical contact and play.” - Bob Church (ferret expert)

In most cases the pet ferret has lost the solitary quality about it due to many thousands of years of domestication , where the social personality was preferred and the solitary quality/personality been outbred.

This means that the majority of domesticated ferrets these days are very social animals who will get along with others when properly introduced. However there will always be those that will still have a more solitary personality and will simply not get along with their kind.

Another few factors that need to be considered when planning on introducing ferrets to each other are the fact that they can be territorial and they also abide to a hierarchy system.

So there may be a few scuffles when first introducing ferrets, this is completely normal!

If you have the space and the patience for two ferrets instead of one, your ferret will (in most cases) thoroughly enjoy its friend and you may enjoy the peace of them playing together while you do other things.

Before introducing ferrets to each other be sure to make sure both a healthy and cannot catch any diseases or parasites off each other. If one is not healthy then you may need to quarantine it for a while till it gets better, before commencing with introductions.

Think ahead

If you plan on getting two ferrets, it is better to get them both at the same time (siblings are great if you can manage) and while they're young. Introducing a new ferret to an older, more established ferret can cause territorial issues that may be difficult to deal with.

Most common way of introducing ferrets

More experienced ferret owners already know that ferrets are usually bound to have a hierarchy squabble/fight at first. This is usually inevitable due to their nature.

This is why more experienced ferret owners are more likely to introduce new ferrets by simply placing them together on neutral territory (eg. in a different room of the house that is not part of the other ferrets territory). This way they normally get their initial fight out of the way and become friends faster.

Supervision is essential with this method and make sure that the ferrets are evenly matched (size wise) as older ferrets can kill young kits.

Generally with the initial fight the rule goes: No blood, no worries. If blood is drawn then you have to separate them immediately.

Also watch out that the animals do not get too stressed using this method. If you are a new ferret owner and have not experienced a ferret fight before then it is best to use the ferret introduction methods below.

The start slow and work your way up method of introducing ferrets

If you do decide to get a new ferret after you've owned your current ferret for awhile, socialize them the way you would with any other animal. Start slow and work your way up. It may be awhile before they can share a [cage](#), so if you are purchasing a new ferret, make sure you buy (or borrow a cage off a friend) its own cage to use at first.

If they just don't get along, you can always keep them in separate cages and let them out at different times during the day to play.

First Time Introductions

When introducing ferrets for the first time, be careful to limit their interaction from ten to fifteen minutes. Not only is prolonged interaction hard on you, but it is hard on them by causing unnecessary stress. Work your way up, even if the shrieks' become too much, a little more interaction each time.

Choose Your New Ferret Carefully

It is said that female ferrets can be less social and are more likely to be aggressive towards new ferrets. However this is not always the case. Sometimes males can be more aggressive (especially if they are unneutered).

In this case it is important to know your ferrets personality and how gentle/rough they are. If your ferret generally gets along with other ferrets, animals or people then it will be more likely to get along with another ferret which you bring home, no matter the sex.

Desex your ferret and get another ferret that is already desexed

Getting a desexed ferret, if you plan on not breeding can reduce conflict and aggression between the two new mates (and towards you), because less hormones are raging through their bodies. This makes introducing ferrets a bit easier.

Some things that you can do to have a harmonious existence

When ferrets experience their first interaction, they 'sniff' each other (just like dogs they can sniff each other's butts), and determine a hierarchy and pecking order (so to speak), then the alligator rolls and throat clamps start. Low pitched screaming (more like a squeal squeak) when it gets louder, like crying, means that it may be getting too rough. You can break it up at this stage.

Forced bath time

Get a gentle (preferably for ferrets) shampoo which is safe for ferrets and bathe them together. It is important that they go through their first bath together as bath time is usually not the most pleasant experience for ferrets. This can help them bond as they are both subjected to the experience at the same time.

They may be slightly stressed and confused (thinking that their owner is trying to drown them). However, they will inadvertently bond through the kinship of stress, and forget for a moment that they want to kill each other (they might be thankful they got through it together!).

Another important aspect of this method is that they will now SMELL THE SAME. It will not last long, so time is of the essence. Dry them together and then see how they get along after that. It might have proved to be an exhausting experience which can lead to them sleeping together, once they have dried off.

Switch bedding

Whilst keeping the ferrets separated (either in two separate cages or separating the top from the bottom of your multilevel cage) switch their bedding, hammock and blanky's.

This will allow them to ' [smell](#) ' each other's scent, whilst not interacting. This gets them more familiar with each other, which might reduce aggression when reintroduced.

Hold them together

Hold the new ferret in one hand and your old one in the other and slowly bring them together. This allows you to introduce them to each other while you're in control. They will sniff each other, but if it turns aggressive you can immediately separate them.

Let your ferret choose its friend

If you are planning on getting another ferret but want to cut down the introduction process then take your ferret to the nearest ferret welfare society and ask them to choose a few ferrets that yours may get along with. Generally people who work in ferret welfare societies know each ferret individually and can pick the ferrets that may be best suitable (personality wise) to your ferret.

Some ferrets will just sniff each other and start to play. If this happens then you have more then likely got a match made in heaven

When it comes to introducing ferrets, if at first your ferrets do not get along don't be discouraged as it has been known for ferrets to take up to a few months to get used to each other and live in harmony. Commitment to the introduction is the key. Make sure you persevere with their routine and hopefully soon you will see them play fighting rather than actually fighting.

Don't give up, and good luck!