

# Ferret Odor Control

Ferrets are part of the Mustilidae family which means they are related to skunks and weasels. They have a natural musk odor which to some people can be quite offensive. The objectionable odor is primarily the result of the influence of sex hormones on normal skin secretions. Neutering males and spaying females is generally quite sufficient in controlling odor. The surgical procedures are usually done a 6-8 months of age.

Not only is spaying and neutering a benefit for controlling odor, but it also provides numerous behavior and health benefits. Neutering male ferrets helps reduce any aggressive tendencies. Spaying females is extremely important as an unspayed female who reaches her first heat cycle without being bred will remain in heat for up to 160 days. This sustained heat cycle is dangerous and life threatening as it results in bone marrow suppression and death is possible. Any female ferret not intended for breeding should be spayed between 6 - 8 months of age.

Ferrets also have a very pungent and equally objectionable secretion occasionally produced by the ferret's scent glands. Some owners will also have their pet ferrets descented.

While neutering, spaying and even descenting will remove most of the objectionable smells, ferrets may still have some residual musk scent. Feeding diets low in fish may also help reduce odor.