

FERRET, DOMESTIC

RANGE:

Europe, Asia and North America

HABITAT:

Woods and hilly thickets preferred but adapted to sand dunes and sea cliffs as well.

SIZE:

Male: 20 inches long (5 1/2 inches is tail) and weighing up to 3 lbs.

Female: Slightly smaller and a little over half the weight

LIFE EXPECTANCY:

6-8 years

REPRODUCTION:

Mate in early spring - gestation period about 6 weeks -littler size usually 5-6.

DIET:

Wild: Rats, mice, rabbits, birds and their eggs, frogs, lizards and snakes.

Zoo: High protein dog food, feline diet, fish and bananas

BEHAVIOR:

- Largely nocturnal.
- Semi-domesticated; they are sometimes used for hunting rabbits (their long, thin bodies and short stocky legs are effective adaptations for burrowing.)
- At grooming time, these animals prefer privacy and will hide under something.
- Anal gland produces musk which is used to mark territory and is also used for defense.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Ferrets belong to the Mustelidae family which also includes weasels, badgers, otters, minks and skunks.
- When taken young, they are easily tamed.
- They were domesticated as early as the 4th century B.C.
- These animals are basically gentle creatures but one should be careful not to touch their heads.
- Because of their strong body odor, they probably wouldn't make a desirable pet. In England they were known as "foul-marten."
- Coat is blackish-brown with lighter under fur showing through. Have yellowish patches on ears, face and nose.

STATUS:

Common throughout Europe. Rare in the British Isles except in Wales, where its numbers are increasing.

theZOO
LOUISVILLE

Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Mustelidae
Genus:	Mustela
Species:	putorius