

**Prob. #6: Stereo speakers sit on the floor.**

Why? Any ferret owner knows that a speaker on the floor is just asking to be gotten in. Ferrets can easily dig through most fabric coverings and eventually through your woofer, tweeter or bass speakers. Ferrets will then use the space to sleep or nest. Ferrets can lose their hearing.

Solution: Hang speakers from ceiling, place high on sturdy stands. Check regularly for damage and evidence of ferret entry.

**Prob. #7: My children leave their toys about the house.**

Why? Just like with any toy, there pose certain dangers to children and ferrets. Small eyes and other attachments, as well as rubber pieces can be easily swallowed causing blockages and tummy upset. Sharp items can result in your ferret losing an eye or getting stabbed.

Solution: Use basic common sense and keep anything that looks dangerous out of reach. The alternative is expensive surgery, of which your ferret may not survive.

**Prob. #8: The front door back door does not have a storm door or is not screened.**

Why? Ferrets can easily slip by an unwary owner and get outside faster than the blink of an eye. Ferrets are not wild animals and cannot survive well on their own and could starve to death, or get so dehydrated that they will die.

Solution: Install storm doors, or place wood, or plexi high enough for a ferret not to jump over in front of door.

**Prob. #9: The space under my doors is larger than an 1" high.**

Why? Even the biggest of ferrets can wedge themselves under a door. Some will even get through and get into everything you didn't want them to.

Solution: Install wood, plexi, or coroplast pieces large enough to block space. Check on a regular basis for evidence of ferret entry.

**Prob. #10: Wall to wall carpet in areas of the house.**

Why? Ferrets love to dig on carpet. It may seem harmless at first, but given time, ferrets can dig through any carpet available. The most common areas are in front of doors and in front of furniture (like couches).

Solution: Purchase and install heavy plastic runners in front of doors, secure with duct tape.

**Prob. #11: I have area rugs through out the house.**

Why? The most common injury to a ferret is through being stepped on. Area rugs are easy for a ferret to get under and cosy enough to sleep under.

Solution: Always check before walking or stepping on areas rugs. Small ferrets barely make a visible bump. Be safe... walk around or lift rug.

**Prob. #12: Access to cords phone electrical blinds**

Why? Not all ferrets have the same attractions to particular items. Electrical cords will give your ferret a severe shock and put him into cardiac arrest, or give him severe burns. Ferrets can hang or twist themselves up in all sorts of hanging cords, including blinds, and phone cords. It is also possible that your ferret will pull hard enough on an item's cord to bring it down upon his head, causing severe injuries.

Solution: Tie up all loose cords up and out of the reach using tie-wraps, twist-ties, elastic bands. Secure items to wall.

**Prob. #13: Rubber items near floor feet on furniture**

**door stoppers** **shoes** **feet on equipment**

Why? Ferrets in general love rubber, the #1 reason ferrets get blockages, or stomach related problems. Expensive surgery is the only way to save your ferret's life.

Solution: Remove stoppers and replace with direct door hang type, place items out of reach, or deny access to room(s).

**Prob. #14: I have small tables shelves bookcases that contain ornaments other small items.**

Why? Ferrets are good climbers and their curious nature will eventually lead them to find and break your precious heirlooms. Broken glass is dangerous, small items can be ingested, and some items contain dangerous leads and paints that will cause serious health risks to your ferret. Books can be pulled out and potentially fall on your other ferret or pet.

Solution: Small items should be put behind glass, or out of reach. Tables should be sturdy as to not be tipped over and potentially fall on the ferret. Tables and shelves should not be placed near couches or chairs unless you want your ferret to have access to them. Remember that light bulbs get hot too! Be careful of the placement of your lighting items.

**Prob. #15: I have textured walls textured wallpaper open closets other textured walls textured wallpaper**

Why? Ferrets are excellent climbers and items like these make it easier for them to reach high places. Ferrets are not very good and getting down once they have managed to climb up. Falls can break bones, and cause internal injuries.

Solution: Keep items away from the walls, remove wallpaper, put doors on closets or raise clothes off floor.

**Prob. #16: Vacuo-flo system installed in the home.**

Why? The suction openings located in your walls are large enough for a small ferret to get a face caught in suffocating them. Ferrets are notorious for wanting to pull covers off of many things.

Solution: Secure the covers with duct tape and check on a regular basis for secureness.

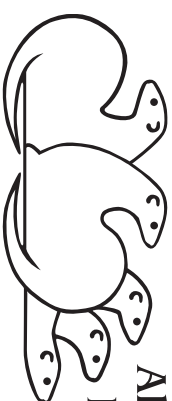
**Prob. #17: I have plants that are non-poisonous**

**poisonous (See list below:)**  
 aloe vera  amaryllis  asparagus fern  azalea  baby's breath  caladium  chinese evergreen  clematis  croton  cyclamen  daffodils  dieffenbachia  dracaena palm  eucaalyptus  ivy  fiddle-leaf fig  geranium  indian rubber plant  marigolda  jersusalem cherry  lily of the valley  mistletoe  poinsettia  philodendron  pothos  sago palm  spilt leaf  schefflera  rhododendron  snake plant

**Note: This list contains only the most common types of plants that people have in their homes. There are many more that are poisonous to ferrets. It is important that you research any and all plants that you may have in your home! Also note that some plants go by many different names, i.e. *dieffenbachia* is also known as *dumb cane*, a *snake plant* is also a *mother-in-law's tongue*. Know your plants!**

Why? Ferrets love to dig and your plants are a prime spot to satisfy that need. But some ferrets are attracted to plants and love to play with them. Some will eat the leaves. Some of the plants listed above will cause heavy salivation, enlargement of the tongue which can block the air way, and swelling of the air passageway. This will lead to death. Some plants cause the heart to stop. Some plant roots are also lethal.

Solution: Purchase and install chicken wire, window meshing, stones, or bricks to cover the plant dirt. Purchase/build alternative digging boxes. Observe your ferrets around your plants and see if they are interested in more than just playing with them. Raise them off the floor, hang them from the ceiling, encase in a separate room. As a last resort you may have to get rid of any poisonous plants and replace them with safer ones.



Alberta  
Ferret  
Society

### The Alberta Ferret Society

is a non-profit, charitable organization, dedicated to Alberta's ferrets. We are a no-kill shelter, and where humanely possible, foster all ferrets in a loving environment until adopted by a new family.

### Our Mission . . .

To promote the health and well being of all ferrets through education, demonstration, communication, rehabilitation, and rescue.

### Memberships . . .

Membership to the AFS entitles you to our bi-monthly, newsletter, "Bandit's Bulletin", discounts at participating stores, voting rights, and much more. If you would like to become a member of the Alberta Ferret Society, give us a call.

### Questions?

**Our Edmonton Centre:**  
Ferret Hot Line (Local Edmonton and Area):  
(780) 447-3336

**Ferret Hot Line (outside local Edmonton and Area):**  
1-877-FERRET-0 (toll free)  
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**Our Calgary Centre:**  
Ferret Hot Line: 1-877-FERRET-0 (toll free)  
E-mail: [adoptions.calgary@albertaferretsociety.com](mailto:adoptions.calgary@albertaferretsociety.com)

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# Ferret Proofing Your Home



Making an environment safe for your ferret is key to playing a part in its mental and physical health.

This brochure outlines how to see things from a ferret's perspective and how to access the dangers to ferret in your home.



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## Why the Need To Ferret Proof . . .

One of the first questions asked is usually "Why do I need to ferret proof my home when my ferrets are caged most of the time?" Firstly, ferrets should never be caged for long periods of time. Exercise is extremely important to the physical health of your ferret as it builds strong bones and muscles, which in turn build stronger immune systems. A good amount of out of cage time also is great for mental stimulation which aids in making them happier and calmer in nature. Secondly, your home needs to be safe for when they are out which will give you greater peace of mind knowing that their chances of getting seriously hurt are minimal or greatly reduced.

## When Is My Home Ferret Proofed Enough?

Ferret proofing is one of the most important tasks that you will ever do. It will need to be checked and maintained on an ongoing basis until which time ferrets no longer live in your home. Even though you may believe that your home is safe, all it takes is for one serious injury or even the death of a ferret to learn that ferret proofing must be done routinely and for life. Ferrets are as unique as people when it comes to what they like or what will be attractive to them. Although you may have a ferret at present that doesn't climb on the furniture, the friend you adopt for him in the future might. It is important to always observe a new ferret in your home and watch for clues as to their particular likes and dislikes. This will help ferret proof in the future.

## How Do I Know What is Safe or Not?

That's a great question, and it is not necessarily easy to answer. Because ferrets are so unique, you will need to observe them closely to find out the areas of your home that attract them the most. This brochure outlines the most common dangers and attractions to ferrets in general. You will need to take what you have learned here and modify it to meet the specifics of your ferret.

## Important Things to Know . . .

- 1. A ferret who is of normal weight can fit its entire body through a hole that accommodates its head.** For some ferrets this means that the hole could be as small as 1.25". Heavier ferrets can easily get caught in any size of hole that is smaller than their bodies can allow. Ferrets have been known to get stuck in these holes and die.
- 2. Ferrets are extremely intelligent and will use this intelligence to work out ways to get to seemingly impossible areas.** Ferrets are known for their problem solving abilities. No task is too great for them to figure out. All they need is the opportunity to find out.
- 3. Just because things are off the ground does not necessarily make them out of reach for a ferret.** Ferrets are excellent climbers and will use this talent to get into upper cupboards, shelves, and closets.
- 4. Ferret have great memories when figuring out how to get some where and will use their experiences to figure out the new ones.** It is important to think like a ferret. The best way to start is to view things from their perspective. Start by getting down close to the floor. Anything reachable can be used as a stepping stone to the next area.

## Section 1 - KITCHENS

- Prob. #1: Open spaces between wall and**  **fridge**  **stove**  **dishwasher**  
Why? Ferrets will often wedge themselves into places that they cannot get out of. Refrigerators have fans that can cut their face, or feet. Stoves/dishwashers get hot burning a ferret's sensitive skin.
- Solution:** Block with wood, coroplast, plexiglass, cardboard, etc. Make sure that the items used cannot be removed easily.
- Prob. #2: Oven and oven storage can easily be opened.**  
**Cupboards can easily be opened.**

Why? Ferrets like to explore everything. They may accidentally ingest directly or by licking of their fur, poisonous chemicals that may make your ferret very sick, or cause death. A ferret could easily become trapped or burned in an oven storage area.

- Solution:** Purchase/install child-proof locks, magnetic locks, roll clips. Make sure that cupboards/oven doors cannot be opened easily.
- Prob. #3: Easy access to sharp utensils, or small appliances.**  
Why? Ferrets climb very well and could accidentally turn on appliances, or reach areas that carry potentials for serious injuries.
- Solution:** Move appliances to higher location, or different location that is unaccessible to ferrets.
- Prob. #4: Access to garbage.**

Why? Ferrets can ingest food wrappers, containers, etc. causing blockages which are serious health risks for ferrets. Contaminated foods like raw chicken, spread salmonella to all areas they are in contact with. Ferrets can get ill from ingesting spoiled, or moldy foods.- Solution:** Purchase high garbage bin, put bin behind secured cupboard, put lock on garbage bin, make sure bin has lid that straps on tight and is difficult to access.

- Prob. #5: Open areas under lower cupboards/basboards.**  
Why? Ferrets can get through holes and openings 1 1/2 to 2" wide. Ferrets have been known to get in walls, and other areas that are difficult to free them from. They can't always find their way back and can get severely dehydrated, or end up starving to death.
- Solution:** Block all open areas with wood, plexiglass, coroplast, etc. Area should be strongly secured.

## Section 2 - MAIN LIVING AREAS

- Prob. #1: Owning**  **hide-a-bed**  **rocking chair**  **a recliner**  
Why? Ferrets love to explore in and around these items. Because of their quickness, a ferret can run under the rockers of a rocking chair and have body parts caught, or be crushed. Hide-a-beds also can crush a ferret easily.
- Solution:** Get rid of hide-a-bed. Keep in room away from ferret access, check thoroughly before putting away - always have two people to do this: one to put the bed away, and the other to watch for the quick movements of a ferret jumping in. Place large block of wood or metal under rocker to prevent it from rocking.

- Prob. #2: Owning a real fireplace.**  
Why? It is dust filled when not in use, and can give ferrets respiratory problems. Ferrets are easily excited and many not notice the fireplace, when in use, that it is hot and dangerous, and unknowingly jump or dance into it. A ferret can easily get burned.
- Solution:** Cover the fireplace with an approved cover that is solid. Mesh does not keep ferrets out and is easy for them to climb.

- Prob. #3: Access to the underside of my**  **couch**  **chair**  
Why? Ferrets can easily dig through the thin coverings under your furniture, getting caught underneath, or make a nesting site

for themselves. Unsuspecting owners come home and may potentially sit on their beloved pet.

- Solution:** Remove feet so that furniture sits flat on floor. use duct tape, wood or plexi to cover bottom of couch. Check periodically for wear and tear, and potential replacement. Always physically check your furniture before you sit down!

## Section 3 - BATHROOMS

- Prob. #1: Lower cupboards contain**  **cleaning materials**  **razors/blades**  **shampoo/conditioners/soap**  
Why? Most cleaning solutions are poisonous. Ferrets will chew up rubber gloves and ingest rubber pieces. Soaps generally are not poisonous but will give your ferret diarrhea if eaten. Razors are sharp and will cause injury.
- Solution:** Purchase and install child-proof locks, magnetic locks, roll clips. Make sure that cupboards cannot be opened easily.
- Prob. #2: Ferrets will have access to garbage.**  
Why? Ferrets can ingest sanitary items, containers, etc., causing blockages which are serious health risks for ferrets.
- Solution:** Put bin behind secured cupboard, put lock on garbage bin, make sure bin has lid that straps on tight.

- Prob. #3: I have a**  **tub**  **toilet bowl**  
Why? Like tubs, ferrets can get trapped in an open toilet bowl. Ferrets have been known to develop hypothermia from exposure to cold water and could even drown. Alternatively, ferrets can get caught in the tub and could get overly stressed trying to get out.
- Solution:** Keep the toilet lid down and items away from the bowl that may be used to climb into the toilet. Keep shower curtain inside the tub as they will use it to climb or install a shower door. Install a rubber mat and towel to give the ferret a way to get out. Never leave a tub full of water unsupervised with ferrets running loose!

- Prob. #4: Rubber drain stoppers in the**  **TUB:**  **loose or chained and/or**  **SINK:**  **loose or chained**  
Why? Ferrets love rubber, the #1 reason ferrets get blockages, or stomach related problems. Expensive surgery is the only cure.
- Solution:** Chain all stoppers, or install metal plungers for tub and sink. Small rubber balls can also be used as stoppers.

## Section 4 - BEDROOMS

- Prob. #1: I have a**  **water bed**  **box spring**  
Why? Waterbeds can be dangerous if poorly constructed. Ferrets like warm places and waterbeds fulfill this need well. Waterbed bags are made of heavy duty plastic and your ferret may chew on the bag causing a major leak in your bedroom. If the waterbed bag is filled with chemicals, the water may be harmful to your ferret. Box springs provide access to the ferret to get in between the mattress and the spring. If an unsuspecting owner sits on the bed, they will crush their ferret.
- Solution:** Waterbeds: Cover the waterbed bag completely with sheets. Do not allow any of the bag to show at any time. Buying larger sizes will help. Make sure bag fits the frame. Box Springs: Cover the bottom of the bed with wood or plexi to prevent the ferret from getting between the mattress and box spring.

- Prob. #2: Open spaces between wall and**  **chest/drawers**  **dresser**  **night stands.**  
Why? Ferrets will often wedge themselves into places that they cannot get out of. Because furniture can get heavy, the floor may sink slightly or already be uneven causing the furniture to have a wider space to the wall at the top than at the bottom.

- Solution:** Move furniture farther away from wall, place wedges under front legs of furniture to bring it closer to the wall at the top, stuff openings with old blankets, t-shirts, etc., to give the ferret something to sit on top of without falling through.

- Prob. #3: I use a**  **heating pad**  **electric blanket.**

Why? Ferrets love warmth, and ferrets like plastic and will chew on electrical cords and the plastic. Check both on a regular basis for bites from which they can electrocute themselves.

- Solution:** Keep unplugged when not in use, and supervise when in use and ferrets out. Keep out of reach behind secured doors.
- Prob. #4: I have castor's on my**  **bed**  **furniture**  **closet**  
Why? Heavy items such as these can cause internal injuries and even death should they be rolled over your ferret.
- Solution:** Always make a visual inspection before moving any item. Keep ferrets out of room when moving furniture.

## Section 5 - GENERAL AREAS

- Prob. #1: Access to open**  **stairs**  **railings.**  
Why? Ferrets have poor eyesight and are daredevils. They can easily crawl between the stairs or railings, and jump not knowing what they are jumping to. Large falls can break bones, crack ribs and pierce lungs, snap necks, and paralyze fully or partially.
- Solution:** Block off access to these stairs using wood, plexiglass, coroplast, etc. Make sure your ferret cannot jump over blockade.
- Prob. #2: I have**  **uncovered heat registers**  **loose registers**  **holes in the floor**  **openings in the floor**  
See Section 1, Prob. #5. Registers should be replaced if old or poor fitting. Use wood inside vent to tighten register fitting.
- Prob. #3: Access to**  **window**  **ledge**  **screens.**  
Why? Ferrets are excellent diggers and climbers. They can easily tear through a screen and fall to their deaths or break bones.
- Solution:** Make sure the ferret cannot use furniture or other items to reach the windows. Install aluminum or steel lattice on outside of windows.

- Prob. #4: I have**  **a balcony**  **sliding doors.**  
Why? Balconies are high enough, even from the first floor to either allow escape or a serious fall causing internal injuries or death. Sliding doors, which accompany most balconies, are heavy. Ferret will seize the opportunity of an open door to venture outside. If an unsuspecting owner does not close the door carefully, they could end up crushing the ferret in the door frame.
- Solution:** Block all open areas with wood, plexiglass, coroplast, etc. Balcony open areas should be strongly secured. Use same materials to keep ferrets in when door is opened and closed.

- Prob. #5: Access to the basement.**  
Why? If there was ever a worse place for a ferret, is has to be the basement. The basement contains a furnace (ouch! hot!), usually tons of storage items in stacked boxes (easy for them to get trapped in), containers of poisonous chemicals, etc., and many other unsafe items for your ferret. Many of our furry friends have escaped from basements by digging holes in dryer tubes and climbing up and out the vent to outside! Washers and dryers are common places for ferrets to want to sleep. Many have been killed because an unsuspecting owner did not check the machines before doing a load of laundry.
- Solution:** Put door on basement entrance, or keep closed. Install fine steel mesh over dryer vent exit just in case of an escape. Always check washer and dryer loads before closing the door and turning on. The life you save may be your ferret's!