

AMERICAN FERRET ASSOCIATION, INC. (AFA)

POSITION STATEMENT ON FERRET LEGALIZATION

Despite a steady, nationwide increase in the acceptance of ferrets as household companion animals over the last twenty-five years – mainly due to tireless educational and other outreach efforts on the part of ferret advocates and veterinarians specializing in small mammal medicine – several legal prohibitions remain. The principal jurisdictions where possession of ferrets remains prohibited by law as of June 2014 are the states of California and Hawai'i, the District of Columbia, and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The largest U.S. cities where possession of ferrets remains prohibited by law are New York City NY, Salt Lake City UT, and Allentown PA. A decreasing number of smaller cities and towns across the United States also maintains prohibitions on ferrets. Enforcement of these ferret bans is inconsistent and ranges from vigilant to rare.

In all of these cases, the legal ban on the domestic ferret (*mustela putorius furo*) is the result of a misclassification of the ferret as either a wild animal, an exotic animal, an animal that is naturally inclined towards harming human beings, an animal naturally inclined towards forming harmful feral colonies, or some combination of all of the above. **This is directly contrary to the long-established consensus within the zoological, veterinary, and animal welfare communities that ferrets are fully domesticated, suitable and appropriate household companion animals, and neither wild nor naturally inclined towards harm.**

- All ferrets sold at retail or adopted through shelters, and most ferrets sold through breeders, are neutered.
- All ferrets sold or available to be adopted through shelters for the purpose of being household companion animals are specifically bred to be docile, friendly, and suitable for co-existence with human beings and cannot survive away from human caretaking for more than a brief time.
- No evidence exists of any feral colony of ferrets ever being formed within the United States.
- There has not been a single reported case in the United States of ferret-to-human rabies transmission since such recordkeeping began in 1951, and a USDA-approved rabies vaccine for ferrets has been available since 1992.
- Like all mammals, ferrets are capable of biting but do so at a significantly lower rate than cats and dogs.

Therefore, in keeping with its core mission of promoting, protecting, and providing information on the domestic ferret, the AFA:

- **supports the repeal of all legal prohibitions against maintaining the domestic ferret as a household companion animal**
- **opposes laws requiring places where ferrets are sold to display signs warning people of their alleged “natural inclination to do harm” and supports the repeal of such laws that currently exist**
- **opposes the classification of *mustela putorius furo* as a wild, exotic, or dangerous animal - a classification contradicted by both science and history**
- **supports the position of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) that ferrets are suitable companion animals**
- **supports reasonable restrictions that are no more burdensome than similar restrictions applied to dogs and cats are, such as low cost licensing (as is commonly required for dogs and cats) and required rabies vaccinations for ferrets aged four months and older**