

BUNDLE OF JOY: FRIENDLY FERRET PROVIDES COMPANIONSHIP AND ENTERTAINMENT ON THE ROAD

By Linda Garner-Bunch, *Trucking Life*
Photos by Chris Hahn

Chris Hahn describes his furry co-pilot as “a bundle of joy” — at least while it’s asleep, which is about 18 hours a day. The remaining six hours, Hahn says Four Sox (better known as “Lilshit”) more closely resembles “a toddler on meth.”

That’s just fine with Hahn, a native of New Orleans who entered the trucking industry following a 14-year career as a chef. Even though he now basically lives on the road as an owner-operator, Hahn still practices his culinary skills. In addition to traveling with a grill for outdoor cooking, he’s customized his 2008 Kenworth T660 studio sleeper to include everything he needs to prepare meals.

“It literally has everything but the kitchen sink,” he said with a laugh.

The rig is also “ferret-proofed” to ensure the safety of both Lilshit and the equipment, and Hahn has created a network of tubes that allows the ferret to roam the truck from top to bottom. There’s also a plastic tub filled with toys to keep Lilshit entertained.

The idea of having a ferret as a driving companion came from a chance encounter at a Texas truck stop, where Hahn noticed a driver walking out of the shower area with a ferret sitting on his shoulder.

“When he saw me, and realized his ferret was out, he hurried up and threw (the ferret) in his bag and took off,” Hahn recalled.

“By the time it registered with me what I saw, he was already gone. I was like, ‘Wait, wait!’ A lightbulb went off in me,” he continued. “I’d been driving solo with no pets for several years, and I’m like, ‘You know, I’m bored. I’m lonely.’”

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions and risks, Hahn’s life, like that of many truckers, had become increasingly isolated.

“I didn’t want a cat; I didn’t want a dog,” he said. “When I saw that ferret, I’m like, ‘HmMMM.’”

Hahn spend the next four months researching ferrets and how to care for one as a pet (ferrets are domesticated mammals in the Mustelidae family, and are related to badgers, stoats and minks).

He acquired Lilshit, who will be 1 year old May 30, late last summer from a pet shop in Pendleton, Oregon.

“It was a little ‘mom and pop’ shop. They opened the cage and he came running up to me — it was love at first sight!” Hahn shared. And so, the shared travels of Hahn and Four Sox-Lilshit began.

“I’m so glad I got him, Hahn said. “His personality is just —”

Here, he paused, chuckled and then shared a tale about Lilshit’s hijinks.

“I went out to a restaurant last night, and SOMEBODY had a little fit because I left him alone,” he said. “He didn’t do anything really bad; it was stuff like missing the litterbox — intentionally — digging into the trash, things he knows he’s not supposed to do. But I wasn’t here, so he could do it.”



Such incidents are common among ferrets (and many other animals), but savvy owners can minimize the frequency through good “pet parenting.” Because ferrets sleep most of the day, their active hours can be quite a frenzy of activity, Hahn said.

“When they’re awake, they’re little Tasmanian devils,” he added. “It’s either 100 mph or (when asleep) the cutest thing you’ve ever seen.”

In addition to doing his homework before getting a ferret, Hahn says he has discovered a number of valuable resources online and through social media. Hahn is a member of several “ferret parent” groups, as well as a Facebook group called Trucking Furbabies that includes drivers with all sorts of pets.

Even though Lilshit might be considered high-maintenance by some, Hahn says he’s the perfect companion, and that the pair happily share the truck.

“How has he changed my life? It’s something that is entertaining,” Hahn explained. “Instead of waking up and thinking, ‘Oh God, I’ve gotta do this crap again,’ I’ve got him to put a smile on my face, so I can say, ‘OK, let’s do this crap again!’”

As with any pet, exercise is important. While Lilshit is free to roam the truck, he also has a harness and leash for exploring the great outdoors.

“When the weather’s warm, I like to grill,” he said. “So I’ll go sit behind the tractor-trailer, put the barbecue pit out on the grass, and I’ll bring him out there with me.”

Because ferrets, especially males, are known for having a distinctive “ferret-y” odor, Lilshit has been neutered and descented. Hahn further controls the scent by keeping a close watch on the animal’s diet and keeping his litter box clean.

Hahn offers the following advice for anyone considering having a ferret as a co-pilot: Make use of the resources on Facebook.

“Don’t just go out and buy one and wing it. Do your homework, because ferrets are expensive little pets, they have a whole lot of health problems — but they are a bundle of joy, too,” he shared.

“It’s not a dog; it’s not a cat. Your shoes will never be the same. They have a personality that is wonderfully unique,” he concluded.

