

# CAMPING WITH FERRETS: NO PETS LEFT BEHIND

by Doreen Anderson

When you're a ferret owner, one of the hardest things to figure out is what to do with your ferrets when you want to go on vacation. If you're like me, finding a pet sitter that you can trust to keep your babies safe is difficult. Finding one that is ferret knowledgeable is near impossible! So what do you do with your ferrets when you want or need to go away?

My family loves camping, so we decided that purchasing a small camper, and setting it up with cages for our ferrets, was the best option for us. We kept it simple and purchased a used 16 ft pull-behind camper. It has a queen-sized bed, a full bath, and a kitchenette. I used my favorite cage, a Ferret Nation, because of its size and ease in cleaning. I love that both doors open wide, giving me full access to the shelves and bottom for cleaning. I also used a Martin's cage that I had on hand. I put the camper's kitchen table that converts to a sofa/bed/bench, in the bench position and covered the bench with a thick, vinyl tablecloth to protect the cushions. I added the cage and secured it to the framing with brackets and a rope. I pack a separate exercise pen, spare bedding, emergency supplies (a/d food, syringe, glucose meter, karo syrup, pooping pumpkin and any medications I may have on hand), food, and wood pellets for litter. We turn on the a/c or heat the night before so the temperature is acceptable by the time we hit the road. We have a generator for emergencies, just in case we lose power, and we use a Ryobi portable air conditioner for traveling from point A to point B. We try to travel either early in the morning or in the evening if the outside temperatures are too hot. Once we get to our destination, we're able to plug into an electric power source and use the camper's a/c or heat as needed. In extreme temperatures, we are able to put the ferrets into a smaller cage and have them ride in our truck's cab with us.

The exercise pen/playpen is used outside (if it's not too hot) for playtime and exercise. I also tend to feed them their breakfast and dinner in the playpen, although they also have kibble and water available in their cage 24/7. They are never left unsupervised when they're out in the playpen.

We have enjoyed many fun trips with our entourage of ferrets and small dogs. So much so that I had a friend make some stickers for the camper: NO PETS LEFT BEHIND. However, we have run into some hardships when trying to live up to this self-imposed mission. I find that the stress I feel when traveling with my ferrets has made our vacations less of a vacation. For example, I worry about losing power when we travel in the warmer weather. Ferrets can handle colder temps a lot better than the heat. Where I live and where we like to travel on vacation, heat can pose a real threat. Summer temps can be 90 degrees and above, and summer storms can take out the power source at a campground on any summer day. I find that extremely stressful.

Another downfall about camping with ferrets is the rainy season. I feel terribly guilty if they can't get their outdoor time. In addition, when they don't get their exercise pen time, it makes cleaning their cage much more difficult. We all know how hard it is to clean, or try to clean, a cage with the ferrets in the cage, lol. It's entertaining and hilarious the first time or two, but after that it's just impractical. It can take the fun out of any trip!

So my bottom line is that traveling with ferrets in the summer is a worry. It's much less stressful to find and pay someone to come stay at my home to care for my ferrets! But, in the Fall and Spring, we do love taking our ferrets with us. No Pets Left Behind.

