



BLUE RIDGE FERRET RESCUE

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Ferret Introductions

What to do once you are home

Once you are home with your new ferret, this is going to be the most crucial part of introducing your ferrets together. In these stages, it is important not to rush the process, or in doing so can cause the process to be longer and stress the ferrets out more.

You may start out by keeping the ferrets in separate rooms for the first couple of days. In doing so lets the new ferret:

- Get used to its new environment
- Get used to new smells
- Relax from the drive
- Get used to your scent and other family members

Starting the introduction process

With any introduction, this is going to have to be a slow process, and nothing you want to rush. In rushing, it can make it worse.

In the initial stage, it is recommended to put the new ferret in a different room than the other ferrets for the first few days and even up to a week as stated above. During this time, start placing some of the new ferret's items – blankets and bedding is recommended, in the other room where your other ferret is and vice versa. This allows both ferrets to get used to each other's smell without physically seeing each other. After a few days and they show no interest in the items anymore, you may stick these blanket(s) in the cages. In doing so, allows the ferrets to get used to another ferret's smell in their cage. After this initial week, you move to the next step.

The next step is to let the new ferret play in the other room where the other ferret is while supervising! This lets the new one sniff around, get used to everything and investigate the other ferret cage and can let them see each other. The caged ferret can sniff and vice versa with the safety of the cage between them. During this, it is important to watch the behavior of both ferrets. Things to look out for are:

- Wagging tails – can be good or bad (depending on the other behaviors)
- Dooking – good (but can be bad in some cases)
- Puffed Tails/Fur – not good
- Trying to bite through the cage – not good
- Constantly trying to reach/grab each other – not good
- Hissing – not good

In rare and some occasions, ferrets may dook and wag their tail as a bad sign, but it is important to watch their behaviors fully, whether good or bad.

A good introduction here, would be that they check each other out, no hissing, or puffed fur and then they go about their day. If in the case you see any bad signs from above occur, this means that they are not ready and need more time. Repeat this every other day or so if they show any bad signs. If they do well, allow this same interaction to happen for the next few days to a week and even longer. Next thing would be to move the new ferret into the same room as the other ferret(s), but not next to each other yet. After doing so, repeat the process above with all ferrets, switching them out and letting them investigate each other through the cages. If they do well, move the cages next to each other little by little each day and continue the next couple of days.

If you feel comfortable and see that neither ferret is showing signs of aggression through the cages, you may move to letting them both out at the same time, while supervised the entire time. Do **NOT** leave the room at any point. Here is also a critical point. While they are both out, some things you may notice occur would be:

- Sniffing butts
- Sniffing ears
- Dooking
- Tail Wagging
- Hissing
- Puffed Fur/Puffed Tail
- Neck biting

Not all of these are necessarily a bad thing to see. The time to split the ferret up would be if you notice, one playing too rough, going for the neck and biting/shaking head, hissing, puffed tail, or constant chasing and trying to bite. Any of these signs, it is time to split them up and go back to letting one play while the other is in the cage and vice versa. This can take a couple days,

month or longer. However, when you notice they are doing well, allow playtime together while supervised and making sure nothing happens. Normally at this point, they are good to go and can play together. It is not uncommon to notice ferrets yelping when the other bites/plays too hard as they are getting used to each other's play style. In these times you can let them be as it is their way of teaching each other not to bite too hard, other times, you can split them up and still allow them to play together. Just always be on the watch for this behavior. Sometimes, they need a break, and you can put one or both up to relax.

When the time arrives that they are doing well together, please keep in mind to never let them play unsupervised, no matter if you think they are okay with each other. Things can unexpectedly happen, such as one getting hurt, getting into something they shouldn't, or them getting into a tussle. If you are deemed to make sure they get along, or need some assistance, please always feel free to reach out to BRFR and we would be more than happy to help with the process and determine what the next steps would be and see what other options can assist with the scenario.