

# Animal Welfare (Keeping and Breeding of Ferrets in the ACT) Mandatory Code of Practice 2024

Disallowable instrument DI2024-229

made under the

**Animal Welfare Act 1992, Section 23 (Mandatory code of practice)**

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## 1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Animal Welfare (Keeping and Breeding of Ferrets in the ACT) Mandatory Code of Practice 2024*.

## 2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after it is notified.

## 3 Application

This Mandatory Code of Practice applies to those people who own, keep, care for and breed ferrets in the ACT.

## 4 Approval

I approve the Code of Practice for the Keeping and Breeding of Ferrets in the ACT, attached to this instrument, as a mandatory code of practice under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

I am satisfied that adequate consultation has occurred in developing this Code of Practice.

Tara Cheyne MLA  
Minister for City Services  
9 July 2024

# Code of Practice for the Keeping and Breeding of Ferrets in the ACT

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# Introduction

## Purpose

This Code of Practice for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) has been prepared with guidance from the ACT Animal Welfare Advisory Committee. Its purpose is to provide information and describe minimum standards of care to achieve acceptable animal welfare outcomes for ferrets.

Sections 109(3)(a), (b) and (c) of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* provide that the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee has the functions of advising the Minister and participating in the development of approved codes of practice and mandatory codes of practice. Section 22 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* authorises the Minister to approve a code of practice related to animal welfare and section 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* authorises the Minister to approve a code of practice that is mandatory in whole or in part.

This Code is a mandatory code of practice approved under section 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

This Code of Practice includes mandatory standards as well as guidelines that are considered essential for meeting the requirements specified under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

## Who is the Code intended for?

This Code is limited in its application to people who own, keep, care for and breed ferrets in the ACT. Although the basic principles of good animal welfare as outlined in this Code are universally relevant, this Code does not apply to animals other than ferrets.

The overall objective of this Code is that ferrets kept in the ACT are provided with care that maximises their long-term health and well-being; and are protected from pain, distress, danger, illness and injury. This Code provides guidance for ferret owners as to the appropriate means of caring for pet ferrets.

## Welfare Framework

The *Animal Welfare Act 1992* states the main objects of the Act are to recognise:

- a) animals are sentient beings able to subjectively feel and perceive the world around them; and
- b) animals have intrinsic value, and deserve to be treated with compassion, and have a quality of life that reflects their intrinsic value; and
- c) people have a duty to care for the physical and mental welfare of animals.

This Code of Practice sets out guidelines for best practices as well as mandatory minimum standards of care for animals in line with the Objects of the Act.

There are five Domains to which every animal is entitled namely:

1. **Nutrition** — factors that involve the animal’s access to sufficient, balanced, varied, and clean food and water.
2. **Environment** — factors that enable comfort through temperature, substrate, space, air, odour, noise, and predictability,
3. **Health** — factors that enable good health through the absence of disease, injury, impairment with a good fitness level.
4. **Behaviour** — factors that provide varied, novel, and engaging environmental challenges through sensory inputs, exploration, foraging, bonding, playing, retreating, and others.
5. **Mental state** — the fifth domain represents the combined effect of the other four domains on the animal’s mental state. The aim is for the mental state of the animal to benefit from predominantly positive states, such as pleasure, comfort, or vitality, while reducing negative states such as fear, frustration, hunger, pain, or boredom.

The five Domains for Animal Welfare are welfare principles that provide a model that is applicable across species and situations including the Code of Practice for the Keeping and Breeding of Ferrets in the ACT.

### **Overall welfare objectives**

Since humans can alter and control an animal’s environment, animal welfare includes the concept that people have duties and responsibilities towards animals. The greater the level of interference or control of an animal’s environment, the greater our responsibility. This Code of Practice aims to give effect to the contemporary understanding of animal welfare including the recognition of sentience and the concept that animals have a right to both mental and physical wellbeing.

Animal welfare considerations are essential in the keeping of animals. This Code is based on established experience and current scientific knowledge and is open to future review as appropriate. Animal welfare in a modern context describes how well an animal is, both mentally and physically. Achieving good animal welfare relies on recognising the five domains of welfare for animals.

### **Compliance with the Code**

The Code of Practice is made under section 23 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, which allows the Minister to approve a Code of Practice, part or all of which has mandatory force.

Failing to comply with the mandatory standards in this Code of Practice is an offence. It is also an offence to fail to follow a direction to comply with this Code of Practice. The following sections of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* outline these offences and their penalties:

- Section 24A (Reckless failure to comply with a code of practice);
- Section 24B (Failure to comply with mandatory code); and
- Section 24D (Failure to comply with direction to comply with mandatory code).

Sections 24A and 24B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* provide that it is an offence to fail to comply with a mandatory code of practice. Compliance with this Code is compulsory for all owners and carers of ferrets in the ACT. For penalty units see *Legislation Act 2001*, section 133.

## **Structure of the Code**

This Code of Practice includes **mandatory standards** that must be met.

### ***Mandatory standards***

In this Code of Practice there are minimum standards that must be met for the appropriate care and welfare of ferrets. These standards appear under the heading *Mandatory standards* and include the word “must”. They are outlined in a rectangular box.

Mandatory standards must be complied with, and non-compliance can constitute an offence under the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*.

### ***Guidelines***

In this Code of Practice, Guidelines are recommended practices to achieve desirable animal welfare outcomes. The guidelines complement the mandatory standards and should be used as guidance for all owners. Guidelines use the word ‘should’. Non-compliance with one or more guidelines will not in itself constitute an offence under law but may be used to help inform decision-makers of what is considered appropriate care in the event of prosecution.

## **Relation to other Codes**

Several Codes of Practice for animal welfare have been published over time by the ACT Government. Taken together, the Codes create a matrix of animal welfare provisions that provide guidance on most of the important animal welfare issues in the ACT. The Codes are subject to reviews and updates and additional codes may be developed as industries, technologies, attitudes and best practice animal welfare evolves.

Under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* you are required by law to be the holder of a licence to import, keep, sell or export ferrets, and you must apply for a licence before obtaining a ferret. Licences under Chapter 11 of the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* can be submitted online and are valid for three (3) years.

The *Code of Practice for the Sale of Animals in the ACT other than Stock and Commercial Scale Poultry (2021)* requires that a person rehoming an animal, whether by sale or otherwise, must provide the new owner with relevant information on the care of the animal rehomed. In the case of a ferret for whom a new home has been found that information should cover diet, accurate sex of the ferret, when to desex and vaccinate, worming, grooming, housing, identification and general health care. Providing this code to the new carer is advisable.

## Definitions for this Code

In this Code:

**Animal** – has the same meaning as in the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* and *Domestic Animals Act 2000*.

**Carer** – a carer can be, for example, a dog owner, commercial dog walker, or person who has the dog in their current control.

**Death** – evidence of proof of death **must** be confirmed before disposal of any animal remains. In confirming death, a combination of criteria should be used including absence of heartbeat (determined by lack of pulse or audible heartbeat by use of a stethoscope), absence of breathing, absence of corneal reflex, absence of withdrawal reflexes; greying of the mucous membranes; and rigor mortis.

**Euthanasia** – humanely killing an animal to prevent or bring to an end to suffering of any kind.

**Financial gain** – means any monetary or material gain that significantly exceeds the recovery costs reasonably incurred in caring for an animal up to the time of sale.

**Humane killing** – when an animal is either killed instantly or rendered insensible until death, ensuring that pain, suffering, or distress is minimised.

**Owner** – an owner of a dog can be a keeper, carer, handler, breeder, or purchaser. Each comes with their own responsibilities.

**Rehoming** – means any process of finding a new permanent home for an animal other than for financial gain.

**Responsible ownership** – an owner or carer is responsible for every stage and for all aspects of a dog's life, from birth to death.

**Regularly** – at appropriate intervals to achieve the expected or desired outcome

**Adequate Water** – means water that—

- (a) is at a temperature and of a quality that the animal will drink; and
- (b) is of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the physiological needs of the animal; and
- (c) is not harmful to the animal.

## **1. Responsibilities**

S1.1 A person must take reasonable actions to safeguard the welfare of ferrets under their care, to ensure the animals have good mental and physical wellbeing.

S1.2 A person must take appropriate actions to minimise fear and distress in ferrets under their care and address any risks to their welfare.

### **Guidelines**

G1.1 It is important that anyone keeping ferrets as pets can identify the signs of fear and distress. Acute signs may include freezing, distress vocalisation, rapid shallow breathing, trembling, biting and scratching. Longer term, fear and distress may manifest into health issues such as weight loss, dehydration, failure to nest, overgrooming, failure to groom, increased aggression towards humans and fighting with other animals in their environment.



## 2. Environment and housing

### ***Mandatory standards***

- S2.1 All ferrets must be provided with a living environment that minimise stress. The following must be provided at a minimum standard:
- a) Adequate space to play, hide, move freely, jump, stretch out and stand fully upright on hind limbs;
  - b) A variety of places to explore and rest;
  - c) Mental stimulation through the provision of enrichment;
  - d) Companionship through regular positive contact with other ferrets or humans; and
  - e) Safety from direct risk of harm, such as being attacked by other animals or humans;
- S2.2 Ferrets must be kept in a cool area and must not be exposed to high temperatures to avoid heat stress and exhaustion.
- S2.3 Ferrets must be kept in an escape-proof enclosure to protect wildlife and the ferret from harm.
- S2.4 Ferrets must be provided with adequate and appropriate food and water to maintain the animal's good health and comfort;

### ***Guidelines***

- G2.1 Ferrets do not have well-developed sweat glands and can experience heat stress and exhaustion. It is recommended ferrets are maintained in the temperature range of 15°C to 24°C.
- G2.2 Ferrets enclosure should provide opportunities for the ferret to exhibit a wide range of breed specific behaviours to socialise.
- G2.3 The appropriate size for a ferret's enclosure depends on how much time and opportunity they are given to roam freely outside their enclosure, in a safe environment.
- G2.4 Ferrets require daily exercise. Ferrets living in a small hutch should have access to an exercise area that is safe and in which they can be left for at least two hours each day. If ferrets roam in the house or backyard they must be supervised as they can chew and swallow hazardous objects.
- G2.5 Ferrets require mental stimulation and should be provided items including varied diet, gnaw blocks, toys and play with a keeper or carer.
- G2.6 If you have more than one ferret, which is recommended, then you need to meet social needs and to provide stimulation and to factor that in

when deciding on the appropriate size of the enclosure. The recommended minimum size is 2m<sup>2</sup> or more. This will accommodate two (2) ferrets. The enclosure should also allow the ferret to reach up to the full length of their body and climb. A larger cage is recommended wherever possible.

- G2.7 The design of the enclosure should allow for some privacy, so the ferret can sleep or be alone, when they choose to. The enclosure needs a dry, warm sleeping chamber, and a nest box and nesting material, such as soft hay or shredded paper. Ideally a layer of absorbent substrate should be placed under the paper or straw to absorb moisture.
- G2.8 A ferret enclosure needs separate areas for different activities. In particular there should be a discrete area for food and water, and a separate area for toileting, with a litter tray. Ferrets will also need a vertical surface for scent-marking.
- G2.9 In the wild, ferrets live in burrows, and thus in captivity they appreciate the provision of materials, such as tubes in which they can crawl and play games. In captivity, ferrets should be provided with a range of products to support their mental stimulation and wellbeing, such as containers, tubes and toys.
- G2.10 The floor of a ferret enclosure should be solid continuous floor with a smooth non-slip finish. Open flooring systems, such as grids or mesh should not be used for ferrets.
- G2.11 If your ferret is housed in a hutch, do not place the hutch in direct sunlight during warmer months. Keep it in the shade even on warm to cool days. It does not take long for heat to build up in small areas. On hot days it may be necessary to provide a frozen drink bottle or ice brick in the nesting area of the hutch to reduce the temperature.
- G2.12 Ferrets benefit from a normal day/night cycle and can be stressed if kept in an area which is continually exposed to light conditions. Ferrets also prefer having areas where they can hide in low light which will minimise stress.
- G2.13 Ferrets are crepuscular, that is they are generally most active at dusk and dawn and this should be considered when providing them opportunities for play and interaction and appropriate times to rest.
- G2.14 Ferrets can be sensitive to loud and high-pitched noises. They should be protected from significant noise and disturbance as this can lead to stress and behavioural issues if not managed appropriately.

### 3. Handling

#### ***Mandatory standards***

- S3.1 Children must be closely supervised around ferrets to ensure the safety of the child and the animal.
- S3.2
- S3.3 Ferrets must never be picked up or handled in such a way as to cause them fear, pain, distress or injury\*.
- S3.4 Ferrets must never be tethered. This means not securing an animal to an object or running line by means of a leash, chain, rope or other material. An animal fighting against a fixed tether can cause serious injuries that can result in death. (This does not include where ferrets are being walked and appropriately supervised on a harness and lead).
- S3.5 Collars must never be placed on ferrets.
- S3.6 Aversive training techniques and devices that cause pain must not be used on ferrets for any reason.

#### ***\*How to handle a ferret:***

Ferrets benefit from regular and confident (gentle but firm) handling. They should be handled in a quiet and calm manner, in order to avoid fear, pain, distress or injury. It is important to handle ferrets often, especially when they are young.

Ferrets should be picked up with two hands, one under the chest with the fingers and thumb enclosing the front legs, and one supporting the hind quarters. They must never be picked up by the legs or tail. Incorrect handling of ferrets can result in serious injury to the ferret and the handler.

*Note: All visitors and children should be instructed and supervised while interacting with and handling ferrets.*

#### ***Guidelines***

- G3.1 Ferrets should be trained with positive reinforcement to naturally want to seek out contact and handling from their keeper.
- G3.2 Ferrets should be introduced gradually to accessories such as harnesses, transport cages or exercise balls. The use of positive reinforcement with treats or other positive reward system can help with acclimatising ferrets to new items in their environment and new experiences.
- G3.3 Ferrets should be allowed to familiarise themselves with any new experience or environment. They should also be socialised with other ferrets, ideally of the same litter and humans when it is safe to do so.

## 4. Hygiene

### ***Mandatory standards***

- S4.1 A person responsible for a ferret must maintain a hygienic environment for the ferret by:
- a) Regularly washing the ferret's food and water bowls; and
  - b) Preventing a build-up of faeces and wet substrate or nesting material in the cage; and
  - c) Regularly cleaning the ferret's cage, including furnishings and accessories.
- S4.2 A person responsible for a ferret must properly groom and maintain the hygiene/cleanliness of the ferret.
- S4.3 People with respiratory infections that are in close proximity to and handling ferrets must put in place extra hygiene practices to avoid infecting the ferret such as hand washing and wearing masks.

### ***Guidelines***

- G4.1 Water bowls should be washed daily, suspended sipper bottles at least twice weekly.
- G4.2 Suspended food hoppers for dry pellets should be cleaned at least weekly and bowls every second day.
- G4.3 Uneaten fresh produce should be removed within 24 hours of feeding.
- G4.4 Enclosures should be cleaned and disinfected weekly.
- G4.5 Cleaning and disinfecting agents should be chosen on the basis of their suitability, safety and effectiveness. Bleach or chlorine based disinfectants are effective against common ferret pathogens. Manufacturers' instructions for the use of cleaning and disinfecting agents should be followed, an overly dilute solution may be ineffective and too concentrated a solution may be toxic to animals. All disinfectants should be thoroughly rinsed away with water following application.
- G4.6 Faeces should be removed daily from litter trays and from the enclosure in general where needed.
- G4.7 Litter trays should be easy to enter and exit, large enough for the ferret to turn around, and contain at least 5 centimetres of litter.
- G4.8 Litter trays should be kept separate from food and sleeping areas and should be cleaned using separate cleaning equipment.

- G4.9 Litter should be completely changed every two (2) days or every day if used by several ferrets. Litter trays should be washed, and scalded with hot water every time the litter is changed. And cleaned separately from water and food containers. Additional trays may be required when housing multiple ferrets.
- G4.10 The base substrate (not just the litter) should be completely changed at least weekly, ideally at the same time the cage has been washed. If stocking density is high then more regular replacement will be required. Higher quality substrate allows ferrets to turn over the litter so that the top remains dry and the soiled moist bedding is underneath.
- G4.11 Nesting material should also be discarded and replaced once per week.
- G4.12 If substrate or nesting material becomes wet i.e., from a leaky water container, it must be replaced quickly to minimise the risk of the ferrets suffering from hypothermia from exposure to wet bedding or illness from mould growing in the cage.
- G4.13 Washing your ferret too often is not recommended due to the risk of increasing oil production under the skin. At most, ferrets should be washed once per month with a ferret specific shampoo.

## 5. Nutrition

### ***Mandatory standards***

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| S5.1 | Adequate water must always be available; water should be checked daily and topped up as necessary.                                    |
| S5.2 | Ferrets must have access to a palatable diet that provides the nutritional requirements appropriate for their age and breeding stage. |

### ***Guidelines***

- G5.1 Ferrets are obligatory carnivores, which means they eat only meat. Specially formulated commercial ferret food is available.
- G5.2 The ferret's body condition and body weight should be monitored, and the amount of food provided may need to vary accordingly. Veterinary advice should be sought if there are ongoing issues with a ferret being underweight or overweight.
- G5.3 Where there are multiple ferrets housed together, the access to food should be monitored to ensure one ferret does not consume the majority of the food.
- G5.4 Water should be replaced daily, kept clean and out of direct sunlight and should be thawed or replaced if frozen.
- G5.5 If ferrets are provided with a raw food diet they must be carefully balanced as they can be deficient in or contain excessive nutrients. It is best to seek advice from an appropriately trained veterinarian or nutritionist.

## 6. Health

### ***Mandatory standards***

- S6.1 Ferrets must be checked daily. When a ferret's keeper or carer is away from home for longer than 24 hours, alternative arrangements must be in place to ensure the ferret's needs are met on a daily basis. Examples of such arrangements include:
- a) boarding with a competent third party; or
  - b) providing a live-in carer for the small mammal; or
  - c) having a person provide care for the ferret at the usual carer's home on a daily basis.
- S6.2 A person responsible for a ferret must provide ongoing health care to maintain the good health of the ferret.
- S6.3 Sick ferrets must be examined by a veterinarian.
- S6.4 All ferrets must be vaccinated by a veterinarian against Distemper Virus using an appropriate vaccine and dose.
- S6.5 All female ferrets must be desexed or have their reproductive cycles managed by a veterinarian. If this is not appropriately managed ferrets can develop conditions with their reproductive system which can be fatal. Female ferrets who are not bred may develop health concerns related to recurring heat cycles (hyperoestrogenism).
- S6.6 Ferrets must not have their anal sacs removed unless performed for medical reasons and by a veterinarian.

### ***Guidelines***

- G6.1 If any health issues develop, advice should be sought as soon as possible from a vet, ideally with experience with ferrets.
- G6.2 Health care for ferrets should include regular:
- a) Worming
  - b) Vaccinations
  - c) Heartworm prevention
  - d) Flea control.
- G6.3 Ferrets should be vaccinated against distemper virus as directed by a veterinarian. Usually two doses are required 4 weeks apart, between 6-12 weeks of life, then annually. Animals whose first vaccination occurs at greater than 12 weeks of age should have a single dose, then repeat annually.
- G6.4 Ferrets should be desexed around 6 months of age or provided with a reliable hormone contraception under the recommendation of an

experienced veterinarian. Ferrets who are desexed will not produce unwanted litters, are less aggressive and have a milder scent.

G6.5 Ferrets can suffer from heat stress. Once the temperature exceeds 25°C you must regularly monitor your ferret and take action to provide a cooler environment once the temperature reaches 30°C. See additional advice above in 'Environment and Housing'.

G6.6 Ferrets do have a strong scent. This is not to do with their anal glands (as some people believe). Having the anal glands removed will not affect their scent. There are two ways of reducing the scent:

- a) have your ferret desexed; and
- b) wash their bedding often.



## 7. Behavioural and social interactions

### ***Mandatory standards***

S7.1 Ferrets are social species and must have companionship.

### ***Guidelines***

- G7.1 Companions should be of the same species wherever possible. Where this isn't possible, companionship can be provided by regular positive contact with humans.
- G7.2 Ferrets should receive sufficient time with people. Such contact should take into consideration the psychological needs of the species and the individual animal's behavioural preferences and may include talking, stroking, grooming, and playing in addition to the time spent providing food and water.
- G7.3 Ferrets should equally have time to rest and the opportunity to hide from contact with other animals and people should they choose to do so.
- G7.4 Males will be less likely to fight each other if introduced at a young age. Females and males can be prone to fighting so make sure you accustom new ferrets with each other in a supervised environment or through a mesh fence before they live together. Ferrets being introduced must be supervised carefully and separated when direct supervision is not possible. Advice on socialising (helping animals become accustomed to each other) should be sought from a veterinarian or experienced ferret keeper.
- G7.5 Keep ferrets separate from other animals. Ferrets are hunting animals and if mixed with guinea pigs, rabbits or even kittens they may attack or kill them.

## 8. Identification, lost and unwanted ferrets

### ***Mandatory standards***

S8.1 A ferret must not be abandoned or released into the environment. Where a keeper is no longer able to provide care for a ferret, every effort must be made to suitably re-home the ferret or surrender the ferret into the care of a shelter or reputable rescue or rehoming organisation.

*Note: It is an offence under the Nature Conservation Act 2014 (s138) to release any captive animal without a permit.*

### ***Guidelines***

G8.1 Ferrets should be micro-chipped by a suitably qualified person such as a veterinarian experienced in the care of ferrets. Details of the microchip should be registered on a national microchip database.

*Note: A microchip enables a ferret to be checked by veterinarians or animal welfare shelters to enable a quick return to the keeper.*

G8.2 Keepers who lose a ferret should act promptly to attempt to locate their lost pet for the animal's safety and to minimise the time the animal may be in distress.

G8.3 Keepers should ensure their contact details linked to a ferret's microchip are up to date.

G8.4 Keepers should provide information about their lost ferret to animal welfare shelters or rescue organisations and private veterinarians in the area.

G8.5 Persons finding a lost domesticated ferret should attempt to find the usual carer. This could include taking the ferret to a local veterinary practice to be scanned for a microchip and contacting organisations that assist with animal rescue and animal shelters.

## 9. Breeding

### ***Mandatory standards***

- S9.1 A ferret must not be mated unless it is of appropriate age, physical and genetic suitability for breeding.
- S9.2 Female ferrets must not be mated before 9 months of age.
- S9.3 Animals intended for breeding must be:
- a) checked by a veterinarian for sound health and physical maturity; and
  - b) not have any known heritable defects.
- S9.4 A person must only allow a ferret to breed if:
- a) they have obtained veterinary confirmation of the ferret's age, physical and genetic suitability for breeding; and
  - b) the person has the facilities and knowledge to care for the female and kits properly; and
  - c) the person has pre-arranged suitable and responsible homes for the kittens; and
  - d) the person is able to correctly identify the sex of any offspring and separate them into male and female groups to prevent unwanted breeding, or has pre-arranged for this to be done by a veterinarian.
- S9.5 A person responsible for a ferret must not allow the ferret to mate with its sibling or parent.

### ***Guidelines***

- G9.1 Prior to any decision to breed ferrets, a person should assess their own lifestyle, recognising that it takes time and energy and a significant financial outlay to produce, raise and find homes for every litter.
- G 9.2 Potential breeding animals should be:
- a) Checked by a veterinarian experienced in ferrets for sound health and physical maturity; and
  - b) an appropriate weight to avoid added risks of dystocia, and
  - c) vaccinated.
- G9.3 Ferrets usually breed once a year, mating in Spring and sometimes in Summer.
- G9.4 Ferret mating can be prolonged, noisy, and can result in injury to the female. Careful monitoring for injuries is required.

- G9.5 Males can become hostile to other males during breeding season and may need to be separated.
- G9.6 Kits should be checked at least twice daily and closely monitored when they leave the nest to ensure they do not become trapped or injured.
- G9.7 Heritable defects that should be considered include malocclusion or splayed legs.

## 10. Transport

Ferrets may be transported by motor vehicle, rail, air, by ship or carried by a pedestrian. During transportation ferrets can be subjected to a number of distressing experiences, including loud noises, close proximity to predatory species such as dogs or cats, sudden changes or extremes of temperature, poor ventilation, cramped conditions, motion sickness, thirst and hunger.

### ***Mandatory standards***

- S10.1 The person responsible for transporting them must ensure that ferrets are transported at all times in a way that minimises stress, does not cause injury and prevents escape.
- S10.2 A person responsible for transporting a ferret must:
- a) Confine the ferret in a travelling box or container which is:
    - i. Large enough to enable normal posture, the ability to turn around and lie down;
    - ii. Well-ventilated: there must be multiple holes on at least 3 sides to ensure adequate ventilation.
    - iii. Secure and escape-proof; and
    - iv. Lined with a suitable substrate for comfort and to absorb urine and faeces.
  - b) Provide travelling containers that do not have any projections that may cause injury to the ferret;
  - c) Ensure the travelling container(s) are secured or restrained in the vehicle;
  - d) Ensure that protection from extremes of heat or cold are provided in the transporting vehicle; and
  - e) Not transport the ferret in the boot or on the roof of a car; and not leave the animal unattended in a car if there is a possibility of heat stress occurring or in situations of extreme cold.
- S10.3 Transportation must be undertaken in the shortest time possible. If transported for longer than two hours, drinking water must be provided in a water vessel securely fixed to the side of the container. If in transport for four hours or longer, food must be provided. Animals under the age of three months and pregnant females must not be fasted for more than four hours.
- S10.4 Female ferrets with dependent young (<21 days old) or females in the latter stages of pregnancy must not be transported.

## **Guidelines**

G10.1 If transporting a ferret, the mode of transport will be determined in part by the distance to be travelled, the familiarity of the animal with travel, and its health status. When transporting a found or injured animal there may not be time or opportunity to follow all the suggestions included in these guidelines.

*Note: If transporting animals beyond the ACT the owner should check the legislation and requirements of other states and territories. It is illegal to keep ferrets as pets in some Australian states (e.g. Queensland).*

G10.2 Animals being transported should be confined in a suitable container made of rigid plastics, metal mesh (with soft resting place) or wood. Cardboard boxes should be avoided as ferrets can easily chew and scratch escape holes in cardboard containers.

G10.3 Containers should have the whole of one face of the container open and covered with bars, metal mesh or smooth expanded metal securely attached to the container. Where multiple cages are transported placement or stacking should not obstruct ventilation.

G10.4 Containers should be easy to clean and disinfect.

G10.5 Access to the container should be by a sliding or hinged door adequately secured to prevent accidental opening and escape.

G10.6 Ferrets are best transported singularly as transport containers do not allow enough space for them to move away from each other and the risk of stress and injury increases.

G10.7 Advice should be sought from the shipping, airline or railway or coach service when transporting a ferret interstate or overseas. International transport will be required to adhere to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and International Air Transport Associations (IATA) standards and requirements.

G10.8 The transport container should have both a label on the top and at least one of the 4 sides with the name, address and phone contact number of both the sender and receiver and a label saying LIVE ANIMAL, except when a ferret is travelling with its keeper or carer in a private motor vehicle.

G10.9 Tranquilising or sedating ferrets for transport is not recommended. Tranquillisers are prescription drugs that may have severe side effects, such as overheating or hypothermia due to disruption of temperature regulatory systems. Such drugs can only be prescribed by a veterinarian, with whom the keeper or carer has fully discussed their use.

## 11. Ending a ferret's life

*Note: Euthanasia is defined as the act to induce a humane death with the minimum of pain, fear or distress to the animal involved*

### **Mandatory standards**

- S11.1 Euthanasia must only occur if justified. Justifiable reasons must include one or more of the following:
- poor health and/or prognosis is poor quality of life, safety concerns; or due to specific animal management regulations and with a good reason.
- S11.2 If a person responsible for a ferret chooses (in accordance with Standard 11.1) to have the ferret euthanised the ferret may only be euthanised by a registered veterinarian.

### **Guidelines**

- G11.1 A person should not, without reasonable excuse, choose to have a ferret euthanised. This applies to ferrets in general, including unwanted ferrets and trapped ferrets.
- G11.2 Circumstances in which it might be reasonable to euthanise a ferret includes, but are not limited to, where the ferret is incurably ill, or injured or in pain and cannot be treated, or where a ferret exhibits uncontrolled behaviour that makes the ferret unable to be rehomed as set out in Standard 8.1 of this Code.