

## American Council on Ferret Health, Welfare & Policy

5611 16th Street, NW Washington, DC 20011-6809

202.545.6843/Fax: 202.545.6844

*Dear Doctor:*

On August 5, 2005, the US Department of Agriculture published a “**Notice of Petition and Request for Comments**” regarding whether the federal government should develop species-specific standards for ferrets [see: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ac/ferretpetition.pdf>].

Under the Animal Welfare Act (7 USC 2131) ferrets are included under Title 9 Code of Federal Regulations Part 3, Subpart F, as “Other Animals.” In contrast to dogs, cats, guinea pigs, hamsters, or rabbits, **ferrets do not have specific regulations addressing their needs**. Ferret-specific requirements would specify minimal husbandry, such as cage size, feeding and exercise routines. Current regulations require puppies and kittens to be at least 8 weeks old to be transported for sale to the public; no such restrictions apply to ferret kits! New regulations would apply to those who already must comply with federal regulations (e.g., dealers, exhibitors, research facilities, transportation companies) to ensure the health and welfare of ferrets.

As veterinary healthcare experts, USDA needs to hear your voice. Send a letter to USDA addressing one or more of the following questions:

**1. *Why should species-specific regulations for ferrets be developed?***

Describe how ferrets *differ* from currently regulated animals (dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits) with respect to:

- How they respond to various environments
- Housing requirements
- Surgical procedures
- Feeding schedules, etc.

**2. *What problems have arisen due to a lack of species-specific regulations for ferrets?***

Describe your observations. In particular, provide a list of the number of ferrets seen in your practice over the past 3 to 5 years (longer if data are available), purchased from commercial entities (NOT backyard or home-grown breeders), that you would consider to have been “too young” at the time of sale and what complications were encountered. For each case provide the following (if available):

- Date [month/year] seen
- Point of Purchase [pet store, chain pet store, “feed store,” other – describe]
- Reason ferret was seen by you/your clinic [example: “difficulty eating hard food,” “prolapsed rectum,” “respiratory infection,” etc.]
- Clinical and laboratory observations
- Diagnosis
- Intervention (e.g., “described weaning,” “prescribed antibiotics” “performed surgery”, etc.)
- Outcome [what happened to the ferret]; if unknown, state “lost to follow up”
- Time and Costs involved in the treatment (estimate if not known) **[Please include a time and/or cost analysis: this information is needed by USDA]**

Include in your letter your **FULL NAME, DEGREES, AFFILIATION, WORK ADDRESS, and DOCKET No: 04-088-1**. You may address your letter to: **Jerry DePoyster, DVM, Senior Veterinary Medical Officer, Animal Care, APHIS, USDA**. Send **1 ORIGINAL and 3 COPIES** of your letter to:

**DOCKET No. 04-088-1  
USDA, APHIS Animal Care – Station 3C71  
ATTN: Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD  
4700 River Road, Unit No. 118  
Riverdale, MD 20737-1238**

Or post electronically at: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Keyword box, enter “ferret” and click Submit. Click on **APHIS-2005-0063** to view comments or click on **Add Comments** button to submit your comments.

***SUBMISSION DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 18, 2005.***