



### **Kansas City Ferret Hotline Association and Shelter General Information, 2002**

**Origins:** The Kansas City Ferret Hotline and Shelter was founded in March, 1992. We will be 10 years old this spring, something the directress never imagined. The original goal was to provide education for the pet community by placing an informational brochure in veterinary offices, and pet stores. But the ferrets started coming in and nothing has ever stemmed the flow.

**Capacity:** Originally the shelter was in the basement of the house but in 1994 we put an addition on the house specifically configured for the ferrets with many windows, tile floors, separate sinks, and immediate access to the laundry room. We have a current cage capacity of 90. Although this was severely tested in the Fall of 2001 by the sudden arrival of 48 confiscated foundlings we much prefer our usual census of between 40 and 50. All caging and storage furniture is on wheels so that walls and floors may be accessed and kept clean.

**Staffing:** Physical capacity is meaningless without consideration of the energy it takes to properly care for dozens of ferrets. Fortunately we have a stable volunteer staff of 3-4 people who clean cages, scrub floors, wash toys, and play with the foundlings at least one day a week each. The directress assumes overall responsibility for ferret care and well-being. There are also volunteers who can be called upon for help when census is up or when the directress is out of town (this does actually happen, though rarely). Young people sometimes help in order to fulfill service requirements from schools or other programs. There is, from time to time, one paid person, a young man who would rather clean cages and cuddle ferrets than play basketball after school. The directress pays him from her own funds rather than from the ferrets' account because he provides such welcome relief when her schedule becomes overwhelming.

**Funding:** The Kansas City Ferret Hotline Association is a 501c3, non-profit organization. Our annual budget runs around \$6,500. More than half of our funding comes from adoption fees and most of the rest comes from tax-deductible contributions. We do occasionally hold fund raising events and sell ferret products but have decided that the energy this sort of activity involves is better spent on the ferrets. We sell donated used cages at a discount to people who adopt. Our major expense is, of course, veterinary fees and supplies, about \$4,000/year. Were it not for the generous attitude of our favorite vets we would run a deficit every year. We spend about \$125/mo on food and shelter supplies, \$50/mo on education. The directress contributes utilities, as the shelter is part of her home.

#### **Goals, Services and Activities:**

*Education* is our primary goal and we participate in "pet education days" at PetSmart stores about once a month. We also put out an informational newsletter, sporadically, that is bulk mailed to over 600 individuals, pet stores, veterinary offices, and departments of animal control. Our hotline number is listed in the yellow and white pages of the telephone directory and we receive about 10 calls a week from people seeking information about ferrets and/or about adopting ferrets. Every initial caller receives an informational mailing that includes articles about first ferrets, cages, and ferret proofing along with our basic brochure and an application for adoption form. We frequently send information about specific problems such as litter training, biting, and ferret illnesses. We also occasionally meet with directors and/or staff at some of the larger animal shelters in the KC area.

A secondary goal was intended to be the *sheltering and adoption* to good homes of wayward ferrets. In reality this is our primary activity and consumes most of our resources. We no longer do any ferret sitting but do make referrals to veterinarians who provide this service. In 2002 we took in 109 ferrets. Of these 48 were a group confiscated by the state from a woman who was breeding, 10 were 2-3 week old babies that someone “mistakenly” bred (we were able to save 5), and 5 were found rather than given up. We placed 123 ferrets including 22 of the confiscated group that went to other shelters, and 19 who were fostered. We had 10 deaths, an unusually high number for us but 5 of these were babies that were just too young to survive. And we had 18 returns, including fosters that needed additional attention. Our contract stipulates that if an adopted ferret ever needs to be given up it must come back to us. Ferrets that come back more than once become permanent residents or are carefully fostered. We currently have 3 permanent residents including 2 V-hobs, one elderly and one younger one recently acquired and vasectomized. Almost all ferrets that are placed have been neutered or spayed and all have up to date canine distemper vaccinations.

Our third goal is the *promotion of rational legal regulation* regarding European Domestic Ferrets. To this end we testify at city council hearings and lobby individual city and county legislators. We were able to achieve legal status for ferrets in Kansas City, Missouri in 1994 by successfully having them removed from a list of dangerous animals. In 2001, however, we were unable to block city regulations requiring ferret licensing and rabies vaccination. The new ordinance also limits the number of ferrets a household may have. Although we have no objection to having ferrets vaccinated against rabies we feel it is unfair that ferrets are the only small animals whose numbers per household are limited or whose licensure is required.

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