



## *Ferret - 1996-97 Nationwide Ferret Survey Of State Wildlife Agencies*

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State of California  
The Resources Agency  
Department of Fish and Game  
Habitat Conservation and Planning Branch

### **1996-97 NATIONWIDE FERRET SURVEY OF STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES <sup>1</sup>**

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NOTE: This Internet version of the report does not include Appendix B tables. The full report is available on request from California Department of Fish and Game, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA 95811.

**SUMMARY.** In October 1996, the California Department of Fish and Game mailed a survey questionnaire to each state wildlife agency in the nation to obtain legal and natural history information regarding domestic ferrets (*Mustela putorius furo*). All state wildlife agencies, including California, were polled. The goal was to determine the concerns of each state wildlife agency and to clarify what authority and role each state wildlife agency had regarding ferrets. This was undertaken to obtain information for use by California Department of Fish and Game in assessing environmental concerns relating to proposed legalization of ferrets as pets in California. All states responded. A database was developed and survey results were tabulated to summarize the wide array of responses state agencies provided on agency authority and other legal background, ferret classification and terminology, status of ferrets owned or wild, and environmental concerns.

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*1 Jurek, R.M., and P. Ryan. 1999. 1996-97 Nationwide ferret survey of state wildlife agencies. Calif. Dep. of Fish and Game, Habitat Conservation and Planning Branch, Species Conservation and Recovery Program report. Sacramento, CA. 14 pp. plus appendices.*

### **BACKGROUND**

Restrictions on the importation and possession of domestic ferrets (*Mustela putorius furo*) have been in effect under California state law and regulations since 1933. Promotion of domestic ferrets as pet animals began nationally in the 1970s, and subsequently some states that formerly restricted possession of ferrets enacted laws to legalize them as pets. By the early 1990s, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) had addressed many ferret possession issues but did not eliminate restrictions on ferret possession. California is one of two states where possession of ferrets as pets is still not allowed.

Since 1994, ferret organizations have promoted legislative changes to allow importation and ownership of ferrets in California for pet purposes, but several proposed bills failed passage.

In 1995, the California Domestic Ferret Association publicly requested that the Commission remove the domestic ferret from the list of restricted "wild animals" under Title 14, Section 671. At their November 2, 1995 meeting, the Commission voted to submit a notice of proposed regulatory action to the Office of Administrative Law to consider removing the ferret from that list. That regulatory process was to be initiated after a draft environmental document had been completed for public review. The Department of Fish and Game (Department) was asked by the Commission to prepare an environmental document. The Department responded at that time that the earliest staff could begin work on such a document would be in spring 1996.

The Department's Wildlife Management Division reassigned endangered species staff time to this undertaking in May 1996. To establish the scope of the document, the Department focussed on two main areas of information gathering. The first was a bibliographic search. The Department contracted with the University of California at Davis to conduct an extensive literature search of libraries, Internet sources, and other information sources. That bibliography was published as an administrative report in 1997 ([Whisson and Moore, 1997](#)).

The other part of the scoping process entailed canvassing each state for pertinent information on their laws and regulations and on the status of the ferret. The goal was to determine the concerns of each state wildlife agency and to clarify what authority and role each state wildlife agency had regarding ferrets. Such information would be useful to the Department for preparing the environmental document for the Commission. A questionnaire was developed for this survey.

In October 1996, the Wildlife Management Division of California Department of Fish and Game mailed the questionnaire to each state wildlife agency in the nation.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Attorney General had been conducting a legal analysis of the Commission's power to designate "wild animals" and limitations, if any, of adopted regulations. In November 1996, the State Deputy Attorney General informed the Commission that, in his opinion, the Commission did not have the authority to adopt regulations to remove restrictions on ferrets, so legalization of ferrets was a legislative matter. On November 8, 1996, the Commission accepted that decision and proposed to work with the California Legislature on legislation to provide guidance and clarification to the Commission. Therefore, with no pending Commission action, there was no longer a need for the environmental document. However, the nationwide survey information would be useful if future legislation or Commission actions include requirements for environmental documentation.

## **SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

The four-page Domestic Ferret Questionnaire form ([Appendix A](#)) covered many of the subject areas pertinent to wildlife agencies, such as agency authority and other legal background, terminology, status of ferrets owned or wild, and environmental concerns.

### Agency Authority

The questionnaire asked where state legal authority resided for setting regulations on importation and possession of ferrets; whether there were state regulations prohibiting the release of ferrets from captivity; and whether the state wildlife agency had authority to enforce ferret laws and regulations.

It asked which entities in state government had authority for issuing permits to import and possess ferrets for various uses, such as for pet keeping and use in sport hunting. Also, it asked whether there were restrictions or permit requirements for persons to breed ferrets for various purposes. Respondents were asked to provide details on breeding permit fee structure and restrictions.

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of any local government ordinances prohibiting ownership of ferrets.

### Legal History

Regarding the history of ferret restrictions, states were asked when, if ever, the state wildlife agency received authority to regulate importation or possession of ferrets; and when importation and possession were legalized in the state, and by what entity.

## Classification and Terminology

The questionnaire requested information on how ferrets were classified under state laws and regulations, and what nomenclature and other terms were used to identify the species.

## Owned Ferrets

Each agency was asked to estimate the number of ferrets owned in their state, under various categories of use. They were asked what restrictions and permit requirements exist for captive breeding of ferrets and, if applicable, the number of permits issued.

## Stray and Feral Ferrets

The agencies were asked whether they had evidence of stray ferrets in urban areas and in the wild, what facilities handle lost or abandoned ferrets, and what actions agencies would take upon discovering individual ferrets on state wildlife lands. Regarding survival of ferrets in the wild, agencies were asked whether they had documentation that individuals survived more than a few days in the wild; whether they suspected or had documented evidence of ferrets breeding in the wild, currently or in the past; and what the likelihood was that ferrets had established a breeding population in the state. Also, the questionnaire asked what effort the wildlife agency had made to assess the status of ferrets in the wild, and how the effort was made. Each agency was asked what actions it would take upon discovering an established breeding population of ferrets in the state.

## Environmental Issues

Respondents were asked to describe their environmental concerns. The questionnaire requested whether an environmental impact report or written evaluation was prepared for legalizing ferret ownership. Also, for states that regulate ferret ownership, it asked how useful regulation is in meeting state concerns.

Also, the respondents were asked to provide copies of pertinent reports and materials, such as copies of regulations.

## **RESPONSES AND FOLLOW-UP**

By December 1996, 73% of the states had responded. That month, the Department mailed a follow-up questionnaire to the remaining states, and telephone call reminders were made to all states that still had not responded by January 1997 to the second mailing. By April 1997, all remaining states had responded.

Questionnaire responses were reviewed by staff for completeness and clarity. When incomplete questionnaires or unclear responses were found, the contact person listed on the questionnaire was reached by telephone and requested to provide the missing information or clarification. The individual who completed the original questionnaire was asked to provide the information, or to have other appropriate individuals do so.

Responses were entered into a database (Visual dBASE®) for tabulation and summary. Questionnaire results are summarized below. For details of responses by the states, see the tabulations in [Appendix B](#) (Note: The 50 pages of tables comprising this appendix are not available in this Internet version).

## **RESULTS**

### History of State Legalization

According to these responses, ferrets have never been prohibited by state law in 36 states (72%). In one of these, Ohio, ferrets are not prohibited except for use in sport hunting (Appendix B-1).

Of 14 states with a history of having had prohibitions, eight reported that legalization has since occurred, all within the period 1985-1995. In 1985, a court decision in Alaska resulted in removal of that state's authority to prohibit ferret ownership. From 1987 through 1995, seven more states legalized ferret ownership. This was done by state legislation in six states and by state wildlife agency action in one (Utah).

	<b>Year Legalized</b>	<b>How Legalized</b>
<b>Alaska</b>	1985	Court decision
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	1987	State legislation

<b>Vermont</b>	1989	State legislation
<b>Georgia</b>	1991	State legislation
<b>New Hampshire</b>	1993	State legislation
<b>Utah</b>	1993	Action by state wildlife agency
<b>Michigan</b>	1994	State legislation
<b>Massachusetts</b>	1995	State legislation

In six states, ferrets are prohibited, except under certain conditions (see [Classification](#)). Permits are required for possession as pets or for breeding in Kentucky, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. In California and Hawaii, importation and possession for pet keeping or breeding are illegal, as no permits are issued (see [Classification](#)).

#### Regulation Authority

In more than half (54%, or 27/50) of the states, neither the state wildlife agency, natural resources agency, or the wildlife commission had authority for setting ferret-related regulations (Appendix B-2). Those states responding that they had no regulations in this regard were Idaho, Iowa, and Ohio.

Here are responses to the question, "Which entity(ies) has authority for setting state regulations regarding the importation and possession of domestic ferrets in your state?" [five possible entities and 'None' were listed; more than one entry could be marked]:

Note: In many summary tables in this report, totals exceed 50 states or 100%, because states could mark more than one pertinent answer for many of the questions.

<b>Entity/Agency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number (of 50)</b>
<b>Wildlife/Natural Resources *</b>	30% *	15 *
<b>Wildlife Commission *</b>	18 *	9 *
<b>Legislature</b>	40	20
<b>Agriculture</b>	36	18
<b>Health Department</b>	22	11
<b>None</b>	6	3
<b>Other State Government Agency</b>	4	2
<b>Board of Animal Health/State Vet</b>	6	3
<b>Local Agencies</b>	8	4

\* The number of states with authority under a state wildlife agency, or natural resource agency, or wildlife commission, or a combination of them, totaled 23.

#### State Wildlife Agency Authority to Regulate Ferrets

To the question, "When did your state wildlife agency receive authority to regulate importation or possession of domestic ferrets?," 56% (28/50) of the state wildlife agencies responded "Never". Three states did not have this information (Connecticut, North Carolina, and Vermont) (Appendix B-1).

Regulation authority had been granted to state wildlife agencies in 19 states.

Massachusetts	1920
Illinois	ca 1925
Michigan	1927
New Mexico	1927
Rhode Island	1929 (& 1981)
New Hampshire	1930s, until 1993
California	1933

Pennsylvania	1937
Kentucky	1942
Florida	1947
Nevada	1947
Virginia	1950
Alaska	1958
New Jersey	1969
New York	1972
Georgia	1977
Maryland	1985
Ohio	1994
Indiana	1995

State Wildlife Agency Authority to Enforce Ferret Laws and Regulations

About one third of the state wildlife agencies had authority to enforce laws and regulations on the importation and possession of ferrets. Also, about one third of the state wildlife agencies reported that they did not have authority to enforce laws and regulations on use of ferrets for hunting. About a quarter of the states had such authority regarding ferret breeding (Appendix B-3).

	YES		NO		No Report	
	Percent	No. (of 50)	Percent	No. (of 50)	Percent	No. (of 50)
<b>IMPORTATION</b>	34%	17	62%	31	4%	2
<b>POSSESSION</b>	30	15	66	33	4	2
<b>HUNTING</b>	62	31	34	17	4	2
<b>BREEDING</b>	26	13	70	35	4	2

Authority to Issue Permits

The state wildlife agency, natural resources agency, or state wildlife commission (or these in combination) had authority to issue permits to possess ferrets for certain uses, as follows (Appendix B-4):

	Percent with authority	Number (of 50)
<b>IMPORTATION</b>	28%	14
<b>HUNTING</b>	26	13
<b>BREEDING</b>	24	12
<b>PETS</b>	20	10
<b>LAB ANIMAL</b>	16	8
<b>FARM PEST CONTROL</b>	12	6

Agency Authority to Issue Permits for Pet Ferrets

Of the 24 states that listed an agency or agencies with authority to issue permits for keeping ferrets as pets, eight states listed the state wildlife/natural resource/commission; six listed "local governments", five listed the "state agriculture agency", and four listed combinations of these or other entities (Appendix B-4).

Agency Authority to Issue Permits for Use of Ferrets as Lab Animals

Of the 21 states that listed an agency or agencies with authority to issue permits for keeping ferrets as laboratory animals, eight marked the "state agriculture agency", seven listed the state wildlife/natural resource/commission; one listed the state wildlife/natural resources agency in combination with a "federal agency"; two others listed the "federal

agency"; and one each listed "Department of Environmental Conservation", "local government", and "state health agency" (Appendix B-4).

### Agency Authority to Issue Permits for Use of Ferrets in Farm Pest Control

Of the 15 states that listed an agency or agencies with authority to issue permits for use of ferrets in farm pest control, six marked "state agriculture agency", three listed "state wildlife commission, three listed "state wildlife/natural resources agency", one listed "local government", and one listed "state agriculture agency" but also checked "activity is prohibited statewide". Ten other states indicated that the "activity is prohibited statewide" (Appendix B-4).

### Use of Ferrets for Sport Hunting

Twenty-two states (44%) reported that use of ferrets for sport hunting is prohibited statewide. No information on this topic was received from 16 states, and one state reported "Not applicable" (Appendix B-4).

Of 14 states reporting that some entity had authority to issue permits for use of ferrets for sport hunting, six indicated that authority resided with the state wildlife/natural resources agency, but two of these were states that reported the use to be prohibited statewide. Five states reported that the authority rested with the state wildlife commission, but one of these also reported that the use was prohibited statewide. Two states reported that the authority resided with both the state wildlife/natural resources agency and the state wildlife commission, and one state listed the authority residing with the state agricultural agency.

### Awareness of Local Government Ordinances Restricting Ownership

Forty-two state wildlife agencies (84%) indicated that they were not aware of local government restrictions on ownership of ferrets, and three others did not respond (Appendix B-3).

Only five states indicated that they were aware of local government agencies adopting ordinances prohibiting ownership of ferrets. Georgia listed Douglas County; Missouri listed Columbia; Ohio mentioned that several cities have such restrictions; and Texas listed San Antonio and perhaps Dallas, Ft. Worth, and Beaumont. Indiana gave no examples.

### Classification

State wildlife agencies use a variety of terms to classify ferrets under their regulations. Some states use more than one of the classifications described here. Five states reported that they used no such specific classifications. The most common classifications were "domestic animal" and "exotic", which were used alone or in combination with other classifications. Twenty-five (50%) of the states classified the ferret as a "domestic animal"; five of those states classified them as "exotic", as well. Sixteen states (32%) classified them as "exotic"; five of those states also classified them as both "exotic" and "domestic animal", and two classified them as "exotic" together with other classifications, including "prohibited" and "nongame" (Appendix B-5).

Only one or two states each classify ferrets as "nongame", "furbearer", "wild animal", "restricted", "non-protected", or other special designation.

The 50 states reported the following classifications used in regulations:

Nongame	4%
Furbearer	2%
Wild animal	4%
Domestic animal	50%
Exotic	32%
Prohibited, except under permit	10%
Restricted	4%
Not protected	4%
Not applicable (no specific designation)	10%
Other (Tennessee: "Class III Wildlife)	2%

Rhode Island reported that importation and possession of ferrets are prohibited, but did not classify them under that category, classifying them rather as a furbearer. Under Tennessee's Class III provision, no permit is required unless so

required by the department of agriculture.

### Nomenclature

Various names are used in state regulations to identify ferrets. Thirty-one (62%) of the states use "ferret", or "domestic ferret", or "European ferret", or a combination of these. Less common terms used by some states are fitch, fitch ferret or European fitch ferret, European polecat, polecat, and *Mustela putorius furo*. No states reported using the terms English ferret or polecat/ferret hybrid (Appendix B-5).

The 50 states reported the following nomenclature used in regulations:

### Estimated Number of Legally Possessed Ferrets

Forty states (80%) indicated that the number of legally possessed ferrets was "Unknown", or they gave no response, or listed it as not applicable. Hawaii listed the number as zero, and nine states estimated or listed totals ranging from 150 to over 20,000. Fourteen states indicated that there were no legal hunting ferrets (Appendix B-6).

The nine states that estimated populations of legal ferrets gave the following numbers, according to categories of use (a question mark listed below means that "?" was part of the answer used by respondent on the form. An asterisk (\*) indicates that more detailed information is given in Appendix B-6):

State	Total	Pets	Breeding Stock	Lab Animals	Hunting Ferrets
Alaska	300	300	?	?	0
Arizona	10,000*	9,500?	500?	?	0
California	<500	0	0	<500	0
Illinois		> 671*	unknown*	prob. <100*	prob. 0
Kentucky	150	35*	25*	0	0
Massachusetts	~2,000*	~2,000	0*	100-200	0
New Jersey		20,000*	unknown	2,000	0
New York			-----6,000*-----		
Rhode Island		(pets: several thousands)			

### Stray Ferrets in Urban Areas

Most states reported having knowledge of stray ferrets in urban areas. Fifteen states (30%) reported "None", 28 states (56%) reported them to be "Rare" or "Sporadic", and New Mexico and Georgia (4%) reported them to be "Common" and "Frequent", respectively. Five states (10%) reported "Unknown" or gave no response (Appendix B-7).

No responses or the response "Unknown" were received from Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Montana, and Oregon regarding strays in urban areas.

### Ferrets Surviving in the Wild

Five states (10%) (Alaska, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Washington and Wyoming) reported free-living individual ferrets documented as having survived more than a few days in the wild. Three states (Kansas, Montana and Rhode Island) (6%) reported "Unknown". The other states reported having no such documentation (Appendix B-7).

### Ferrets Breeding in The Wild

No state reported suspected breeding or documented breeding by ferrets in the wild now (1996/97). Three states (6%) (Alaska, New Mexico, and Washington) reported suspected breeding by ferrets in the wild in the past. No state reported documented breeding by ferrets in the past. Connecticut gave no response to the question about whether breeding was suspected in the past, and Kansas reported "Unknown" (Appendix B-7).

### Knowledge of Breeding Populations

Asked about the potential for having established breeding populations of ferrets in the state, no state wildlife agency marked these possibilities: "definitely exists," "probably exists," "definitely existed but definitely no longer exists", or "definitely existed but current status is unknown." States could mark more than one category (Appendix B-7).

Ten states (20%) replied that an established breeding population "definitely does not exist", 27 (54%) replied that one "probably does not exist", and five (10%) replied that one "would not likely exist".

Seven states (14%) replied that such a population "cannot be determined without special survey". Three (6%) states (Indiana, Kansas and Texas) replied "Unknown".

No state wildlife agency marked the option that an established breeding population "would not be a serious concern".

Effort to Assess the Status of Ferrets in the Wild

Asked about the amount of effort the state wildlife agencies have made to assess the status of ferrets in the wild, 43 states (86%) reported "None". Respondents in 34 of the states reported that it was "not considered to be important", and six of the states reported that such assessment would be "desirable but not feasible" (Appendix B-8).

Seven states (14%) reported some level of effort to assess the status of ferrets in the wild. One state (Arizona) reported making an "intense effort." This was done as part of reintroduction efforts for the endangered black-footed ferret. One state (Wyoming) reported making a "moderate effort", which also related to black-footed ferret reintroduction efforts. Five states (10%) (Colorado, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, and Rhode Island) reported making "little effort".

Methods of Assessing Status of Ferrets in the Wild

Seventeen states indicated what method is used to assess status of ferrets in the wild. Of the seven states that reported having made some level of effort, six checked "opportunistically document", one marked "thoroughly check out all reports", one checked "special sampling", and two checked "concerted surveys." Ten states that did not report making some level of effort to assess status of ferrets in the wild indicated that they "opportunistically document". No state agency responded that they "routinely check during area studies" (Appendix B-8).

Control of Individual Ferrets Discovered on State Wildlife Lands

Each state marked one or more of the following responses about how individual ferrets would be controlled on state lands (Appendix B-8):

Action	Percent	Number (of 50)
Local area management decision	38%	19
Live trap and take to shelter (presumed pet)	32	16
Take by any means	32	16
Live trap and euthanasia	12	6
No action would be taken	8	4
Lethal traps	2	1

Agency Action Upon Discovery of Established Breeding Population

Each state marked one or more of the following responses about how breeding populations of ferrets would be handled (Appendix B-8):

Action	Percent	Number (of 50)
Attempt eradication	58%	29
Local area management decision	18	9
No action would be taken	4	2
Other:		
Capture and turn over to ferret groups	2	1
Unknown/undecided/determine extent then act	24	12

Prohibition on Release of Ferrets

Asked whether the state has regulations that clearly prohibit the release of ferrets from captivity, 23 states (46%) responded "Yes", and 27 (54%) responded "No" (Appendix B-3).

Facilities for Lost or Abandoned Ferrets

Wildlife agencies reported the following facilities that handle lost or abandoned ferrets (Appendix B-9):

Unk = unknown; NR = no report; hyphen = not applicable

Facility	Percent	Number of states	Permit Needed?			
			Yes	No	Unk	NR
<b>Humane Society shelters</b>	78%	39	7	29	2	1
<b>Private ferret shelters</b>	28	14	4	10		
<b>Wildlife rehabilitation centers</b>	20	10	4	6		
<b>Animal control centers</b>	10	5	2	2	1	
<b>State wildlife agency facilities</b>	4	2	-	-	-	
<b>State agriculture agency facilities</b>	2	1	-	-	-	
<b>State health agency facilities</b>	2	1	-	-	-	
<b>Cooperators ship out of state</b>	2	1	1	-	-	
<b>No facilities</b>	2	1	-	-	-	
<b>Unknown</b>	2	1	-	-	-	

Captive Breeding Restrictions

Agencies reported the following restrictions on captive breeding of ferrets (Appendix B-10):

Breeding of domestic ferrets for pet trade:

Not restricted = 60 % (30/50)	Under state permit = 16 % (8/50)
Not allowed = 8 % (4/50)	Under local permit = 2 % (1/50)

Breeding ferrets to supply laboratories:

Not restricted = 56 % (28/50)	Under state permit = 16 % (8/50)
Not allowed = 8 % (4/50)	Under local permit = 2 % (1/50)

Breeding for fur market:

Not restricted = 60 % (30/50)	Under state permit = 14 % (7/50)
Not allowed = 6 % (3/50)	Under local permit = 2 % (1/50)

Breeding for hunting:

Not restricted = 44 % (22/50)	Under state permit = 0
Not allowed = 34 % (17/50)	Under local permit = 2 % (1/50)

Importation or possession of European polecats for breeding purposes:

Not restricted = 42 % (21/50)	Under state permit = 20 % (10/50)
Not allowed = 10 % (5/50)	Under local permit = 4 % (2/50)

Importation or possession of hybrids (polecat/ferret) for breeding purposes:

Not restricted = 42 % (21/50)	Under state permit = 20 % (10/50)
Not allowed = 8 % (4/50)	Under local permit = 4 % (2/50)

## State Regulation of Breeding of Ferrets

Only 6 states (12%) provided permit information with regard to their regulating captive breeding of ferrets (Appendix B-11). Two other states reported they have issued no breeding permits, eight states reported that this subject is not applicable, and 35 states gave no response.

## Environmental Concerns

Respondents in half of the states described environmental concerns or lack thereof, and the other 25 states provided no comments. Their responses are list in Appendix B-8.

No state wildlife agency indicated that an established breeding population "would not be a serious concern" (See page 10, [Knowledge of Breeding Populations](#)).

Asked whether an environmental impact report, or equivalent, or a written evaluation was prepared for legalizing ferret ownership in the state, no state reported "Yes", six (12%) reported "No" (Georgia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Vermont), or "No" and "Not needed" (New Hampshire). One state (Michigan) responded "Unknown". The other states (43, or 86%) reported "Not applicable" (Appendix B-1).

States were asked to characterize how useful agency regulation of ferrets (e.g., by permit) is in meeting environmental and other state concerns. Respondents from eight states provided responses (Appendix B-11).

## LITERATURE CITED

[Whisson, D., and T. Moore. 1997. An annotated bibliography on the ferret \(\*Mustela putorius furo\*\). Calif. Dep. Fish and Game, Wildl. Manage. Div., Bird and Mammal Conservation Program Rep. 97-3, Sacramento, CA. 37 pp.](#)

### **Appendix A. Ferret Survey Questionnaire Cover Letter and Form**

#### Cover Letter

October 21, 1996

Dear (state wildlife agency):

The State of California restricts the importation and possession of domestic ferrets and prohibits them as pets. The California Fish and Game Commission has been petitioned to remove the ferret from these prohibitions.

Our Department is gathering background information for assessing the environmental concerns related to legalization of the domestic ferret in the State. We request your assistance by providing us with information about ferret ownership in your state.

Attached is a four-page questionnaire that addresses many of the issues we feel are important in our assessment. We would appreciate knowing your state's laws and regulations, your agency's management approaches related to ownership and use of ferrets, and your environmental considerations.

Also, we would appreciate your providing us with copies of related reports or other material that you feel might help us in our evaluation.

All state wildlife agencies in the Nation are receiving this. We will prepare a summary report of responses and will provide a copy to every state wildlife agency.

Please return the completed questionnaire by November 15, 1996. The questionnaire and any supplemental material should be mailed to California Department of Fish and Game, Mr. Terry M. Mansfield, Chief Wildlife Management Division, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California 95811. If you have questions, please contact Mr. Ron Jurek, Wildlife Biologist, at the same address or by telephone at (916) 654-4267.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,  
Terry M. Mansfield, Chief

DOMESTIC FERRET QUESTIONNAIRE — STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES  
OCTOBER 1996

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Contact(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency and unit responding: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

LEGAL AUTHORITY: Which entity(ies) has authority for setting state regulations regarding the importation and possession of domestic ferrets in your state?

- Legislature
- Wildlife commission
- Wildlife/natural resources department
- Agriculture department
- Health department
- None
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

PERMITS: Which entity has authority for issuing permits to possess domestic ferrets for the following activities?

	Import- ation	Sport Hunting	Farm Pest Control	Lab animal	Pet	Breeding
State wildlife commission						
State wildlife/natural resources agency						
State agriculture agency						
State health agency						
Local governments						
Other entity: _____						
Activity is prohibited statewide						

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you aware of any local government agencies that have adopted ordinances prohibiting ownership of ferrets?

Does your state wildlife agency have authority to enforce ferret laws and regulations for:

- Importation    Yes   No                      Hunting        Yes   No
- Possession    Yes   No                      Breeding      Yes   No

Do you have state regulations that clearly prohibit the release of ferrets from captivity? Yes\* No  
 (\* If yes, please attach a copy of the regulation)

**HISTORY**

When did your State wildlife agency receive authority to regulate importation or possession of domestic ferrets?  
Year \_\_\_\_\_, or [ ] Never.

Domestic ferret importation and possession:

- have never been prohibited by the state
- are prohibited, except under special conditions [please describe in comments below]  
[By which agency? \_\_\_\_\_]
- were legalized in the year \_\_\_\_\_, by means of

- state legislation
- wildlife commission action,
- wildlife agency action,
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**CLASSIFICATION:**

How are ferrets classified under your state regulations? [mark which ones apply]:

- Nongame
- Furbearer
- Wild animal\*
- Domestic animal\*
- Exotic\*
- Prohibited, except under permit
- Restricted
- other \_\_\_\_\_

\*If marked, please quote definition, if any: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NOMENCLATURE:**

Please indicate which of these terms are used in your state regulations?

- European polecat
- polecat
- English ferret
- domestic ferret
- ferret
- fitch
- polecat / ferret hybrid
- Other related terms:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Estimated Number of Legally Possessed Ferrets:** TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Pets \_\_\_\_\_ Lab animals \_\_\_\_\_  
Breeding stock \_\_\_\_\_ Hunting ferrets \_\_\_\_\_

**WILD STATUS:**

Do you have evidence of the following?

Cases of stray individuals in urban areas None Rare Sporadic Common Frequent  
Free-living individuals documented as surviving more than a few days in the wild Yes\* No  
Breeding suspected in the wild now Yes No, or in the past Yes No  
Breeding individuals documented in the wild now Yes\* No, or in the past Yes\* No  
(\* If possible, please enclose documentation.)

An established breeding population of domestic ferrets in your state:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> definitely does not exist                           | <input type="checkbox"/> definitely existed but definitely no longer exists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> probably does not exist                             | <input type="checkbox"/> definitely existed but current status is unknown   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> would not likely exist                              | <input type="checkbox"/> definitely exists                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> has been reported, but not confirmed<br>as existing | <input type="checkbox"/> cannot be determined without special survey        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> probably exists                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> would not be a serious concern                     |

What effort has your state wildlife agency made to assess status of ferrets in the wild:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None, not considered to be important | <input type="checkbox"/> None, desirable but not feasible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little effort                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate effort                  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Intense effort                   |

How is this effort made?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunistically document          | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoroughly check out all reports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Routinely check during area studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Special sampling                 |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Concerted surveys                |

If an individual domestic ferret were discovered on your State wildlife lands, what control action would be taken by your staff?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live trap and take to shelter<br>(presumed lost pet) | <input type="checkbox"/> Take by any means              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live trap and euthanasia                             | <input type="checkbox"/> No action would be taken       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Local area management decision |

What action would state agencies take upon discovery of an established breeding population of ferrets?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attempt eradication | <input type="checkbox"/> No action would be taken | <input type="checkbox"/> Local area management decision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____        |   |   |

What facilities handle lost or abandoned ferrets?:

- |  | Under permit only        | No permit needed         |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> private ferret shelters             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> humane society shelters             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wildlife rehabilitation centers     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> state wildlife agency facilities    |                          |                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> state agriculture agency facilities |                          |                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> state health agency facilities      |                          |                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other _____                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**CAPTIVE BREEDING:**

Activity	Not restricted	Not allowed	Under state permit	Under local permit
Breeding of domestic ferrets for pet trade				
Breeding ferrets to supply laboratories				
Breeding for fur market				
Breeding for hunting				
Importation or possession of European polecats or breeding purposes				
Importation or possession of hybrids (polecat/ferret) for breeding purposes				

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

If your state wildlife agency regulates breeding of ferrets, please answer the following (or send pertinent information):

Number of permits: \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Fee structure: \_\_\_\_\_

Restrictions, limits: \_\_\_\_\_

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS** (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

If your agency actively regulates ownership of ferrets (e.g., by permit), how useful is this in meeting environmental and other concerns of your State? \_\_\_\_\_

Was an environmental impact report, or equivalent, or a written evaluation prepared for legalizing ferret ownership in your state? **Yes\* No Not needed Not applicable**  
(\* Please attach a copy)

**Return to Mr. Terry Mansfield, Chief, Wildlife Management Div., California  
Department of Fish and Game, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, CA 95811**

**(Appendix B is not available in this Internet version)**

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- B-2. Authority for Setting State Regulations Regarding Importation and Possession
- B-3. State Wildlife Agency Authority to Enforce Ferret Laws and Regulations
- B-4. Agency Authority for Issuing Permits to Possess Ferrets
- B-5. How Ferrets are Classified Under State Regulations and What Terminology is Used
- B-6. Estimated Number of Legally Possessed Ferrets
- B-7. Stray Ferrets, Individuals Surviving in Wild, Breeding Suspected or Documented
- B-8. Assessing Establishment in the Wild, Control Actions, Environmental Concerns
- B-9. Facilities Which Handle Lost or Abandoned Ferrets
- B-10. Captive Breeding Activities
- B-11. Breeding Permits; Usefulness of (Ownership) Regulation

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