

The Fuzzy Papers

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS FERRET FRIENDS
FALL 1998

THE FALLING LEAVES DANCE AS SO MANY FERRETS...

Letter from the President

by Brian McGovern

I had many discussions with people this quarter about what I should put in this article. Some people suggested that I talk about my leadership style. Others suggested I talk about some of the larger problems that are affecting MaFF. Others suggested I talk about some of the projects I've been working on for the group. Still others suggested that I say with the norm, Many people approached me this quarter to talk about the future of the MaFF.

After almost two weeks of deliberating and procrastinating (Sorry this letter is late, Jan!), I decided to take it all on, and, like it or not, keep writing until I got everything off my mind.

I suppose I should start by talking about my leadership style, as it will provide background for some of the other things I wish to discuss. As a rule of thumb, I view issues as sets of problems and solutions. When an issue or task arises, it is first prioritized. With MaFF, I tend to classify things into "Critical," "Important," "Average," and "FYI" groups. Once an item has been prioritized, I work from critical to FYI, as time permits. If a resource limitation, such as people or manpower, limits my ability to work an issue or a task, I am forced to put it aside, and go on to the next, coming back to it when the

limitation is removed.

Now, I'm sure you're wondering how things get on my list, and how they're prioritized. Actually, getting something on the list is pretty simple. First, someone has to tell me that there is a problem. It doesn't matter if that someone has been a MaFF member who has been around for years, or someone waiting to sign up. However, if no one ever tells me there is a problem somewhere, I can promise you, it'll never get solved.

Priority is a little more tricky.



*This issue is dedicated
in loving memory of
Slinky the Ferret*

One of the benefits to our organization is that its members and leaders all come from different backgrounds, and therefore can provide different points of view on issues. The back side of that coin is that it also means different people will have different priorities on particular issues. One will easily agree that a shelter operator will want to have a higher priority on a shelter funding issue than someone in the Events Group who is trying to get a frolic budget approved.

Here is where it gets tricky. Where do you spend your time? Frolics are good money makers for the organization, yet shelters are a crucial part of MaFF's mission. At the same time, if you're not making the money, you won't have it to give to the shelters... Given a fixed time where you can't help them both, you have to make a call. What do you do?

Me? Simple answer. I consult with the other board members, and relevant group directors to try to get a consensus. Rarely, so far, has a stalemate of priorities lasted long.

So, now a task is on the list of things to do, and has a priority. The next step is to see if the task can be delegated to a more appropriate person. The organization has been structured with a tiered approach,

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with each layer down from the top becoming more and more specialized. For instance, to go back to our shelter funding issue, I'd try to hand it off to Sharon Burbine, Acting Shelter Group Director, and the Shelter Group. Sharon can then work with the shelter(s) in question to try to work up a plan to solve the problem. Once they have a plan, final approval can usually be granted by the board of directors within twenty four hours, or less if it's of higher priority. That becomes one less issue to deal with

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Our mailing address is:
PO Box 3123
Wakefield, MA 01880

We can be reached via Email at:
info@maferrets.org

For late-breaking news
and other information, you can reach us at
The MaFF Hotline:
978 / 957 9886
or visit our Web site at:
<http://www.maferrets.org>

Managing Editor and Layout: Jan Fleury
Copy Editor: Lee McKee

Contributing Editors:
Brian McGovern
Karen Purcell, DVM
Linda Thompson
Mason Weinrich

Contributions to this publication are
invited and encouraged.
Send articles or ideas for articles to the
MaFF office address above, or to Jan Fleury
at jfleury@maferrets.org

If you have questions about ferrets and their
health or behavior, please send your
questions to:
Karen Purcell, DVM
Abbott Animal Hospital
21 East Mountain Street
Worcester, MA 01606
Tel: 508 / 853 3350
Or send E-mail to:
drkaren@world.std.com

at the board level.

Now, what if the task can't be delegated? Or what if the person who it's been delegated to has higher priorities? Well, there are two options: A) pass the task along to someone else who can handle it, or, B) if there is no one, the task sits on our list of things to do until we get around to it.

Obviously, I do not like option B, but the realities are these: MaFF is an organization of around 100 members the last time I checked. And as of the last survey of group directors, MaFF requires approximately 30-40 volunteers working between two and four hours per week to meet 100% of the expectations placed on it by volunteers and external entities. Right now, we have well less than half of that number, and of the volunteers we do have, their effectiveness is diminished because they're being overworked, and pulled in so many directions. To give a solid picture, a monthly meeting should be comprised of no fewer than 11 people, including the Board itself (3 people), and directors for each of the following groups: Technology, Publications, Events, Fundraising, Public Relations, Education, Shelter, and Special Interests (includes Legal and Medical), plus any members interested in participating and helping to direct the organization and its goals. In reality, the average board meeting has 8 to 10 people present, of which two or three are group directors, and some people do double duty.

Why such a bad turnout? Well, a number of the positions are empty. Also, sometimes life interferes, and people just can't make the meetings (they are volunteers, after all, and none of us get paid for doing our work). Lastly, we have a poor turnout of "regular members." When MaFF says that they're 100% volunteer-run, we mean it, and last time I checked, there wasn't a used volunteer store that we could run down to, and pick up another set of hands cheap. If something needs to get done, the

best the board can do is look to the membership for someone to step up to the bat and take it on.

So, where do we go from here? Firstly, if you have an issue, let the right people know. Call the Hotline, contact me directly (email: mcgovern@maferrets.org, phone: 978 / 590 4225, US mail: PO Box 3123, Wakefield, MA, 01880), or (better yet) show up at a board meeting (7 PM, 2nd Tuesday of each month, Owen O'Leary's restaurant, Hampton Inn, Speen Street, Natick — there is always open discussion at the end of the meeting to bring up new business). Contrary to apparently popular belief, I really don't bite [honest, folks: only the occasional chewing or scratching occurs — Ed.], but if you don't think you can approach me, talk to Jan Fleury (Clerk), Janet O'Brien (Treasurer), or any of the group directors, and then make sure to stay on them to talk to me. We'll work the issues based on available manpower and priority.

We currently have some neat things going on. For starters we're really trying to push PR, and get the word out on Shelter adoptions, along with our group's name. Our Public Service Announcement has been completed (thanks to Bud Jackson of Jackson Communications) and professionally recorded (thanks to the studios of WMRC Radio, 1490 AM), and our next press release is readying completion. Both need to be distributed as widely as possible. Also, we have some frolics in the works, and I'm sure Jill Northrup would love a few extra hands. Pet store visits have stopped, due to a lack of volunteers... Care to take a Saturday every other month, and teach what you know about ferrets to others? Remember, MaFF is a volunteer-run, volunteer-driven organization. It will go only where YOU take it.

— Sincerely,
Brian McGovern, MaFF President



The Measure of Our Devotion . . .

by Mason Weinrich

Editor's Note — This issue of The Fuzzy Papers is dedicated to a special little ferret named Slinky who had been a friend and spokesferret since the "bad old days" before ferrets were legal. Mason Weinrich, Slinky's Dad, was also there in the early days, helping us by showing up at meetings and speaking for us to the "authorities." The day we appeared before the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Mason was our speaker. We knew that Slinky had not been well, and then we received the news that he had passed away on August 13th. Mason's note to us about Slinky speaks so eloquently of the love we share for our ferrets that I asked his permission to publish it here, and he has also agreed to our honoring Slinky by dedicating this issue to him. I have nothing further to say that can add anything to what follows, except that it expresses the measure of our devotion to these loving, gentle creatures.

This is the hardest message I have ever had to write. Tonight after a 3-month battle since he was diagnosed with lymphoma, Slinky was euthanized at Salem Animal Hospital in Salem, NH. I know that he was happy right up until he died — minutes before, he was licking a "Slinky Soda" (a tiny bit of flat diet Coke and a lot of water in a soda bottle cap, his favorite treat, and Linatone). However, over the past few days he had really lost control of his bowels and, in the past 36 hours, really lost most of his back leg use.

Before I ramble for a bit, I will say that every life is graced by one or more special presences. A very special loved one is one such presence; a really special pet is another. To me, raised with pets my whole life, a very special pet is a true gift. I can say that in my life I have never been graced with the presence of one so special, and I doubt I ever will again. There will be lots of other pets — ferrets, cats, and who knows what else — but I would be surprised if there will ever be another one like Slinky.

Slinky came into my life in October 1993, when he was about 8 weeks old. He was a MF male sable, and usually weighed about 2.4 – 2.6 lbs. He was unusual in being a very gentle, thoughtful, and extremely smart ferret — there was nothing which escaped



his ever present mind. He never failed to amaze me in how quickly he learned so many things and, while being a playful ferret, was so easy going and aware of what was going on around him (both in the physical and "karma" sense of the word). In his life he was on TV as a ferret rep when ferrets were legalized in Massachusetts, had an article published about him in *Modern Ferret* ["Slinky: Portrait of a Special Ferret," page 60, issue #16 – Ed.J, and missed being the first official MaFF mascot by not scooting out of a tube seconds before the eventual winner. He always came to the call of his name right from kithood.

Slinky's favorite thing in the world was soda. He loved the smell of soda, but couldn't stand the bubbles. So he adapted to soda bottle caps,

which smelled like soda, and felt good on his teeth when he chewed the sides of the cap. My house is filled with bottle caps, each of which have the sides chewed on very heavily. In his last months we discovered a new treat: mix a small part of flat soda with lots of water in a large soda cap, and we have a treat which he would come running for.

Slink was diagnosed with lymphoma in late May, although I knew there was something wrong as far back as January. He was put on Prednisone after his diagnosis, and had 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ more happy months with me and his buddy Pogo. He leaves Pogo as an only ferret, but Pogo will get a new adopted buddy next week from the Luv of Ferrets Shelter — a big playful male named Henry.

I held Slinky while he got his shot tonight — one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but part of my responsibility as his owner. On the car ride up he was in my lap the whole time — about halfway up, he put his head on my arm and left it there for the rest of the ride. It just tore my heart apart (and continues to as I write this through the tears). I brought Slinky's body home to show to Pogo, and he was then buried in my backyard. He was buried in his favorite flannel pillowcase that he used for sleeping, along with his favorite toys, bottle caps, and a sealed bag with a copy of *Modern Ferret* #16, five photos of him, and a tribute to him. Over the weekend, flowers will be planted next to his little grave.

I don't know if there is a Rainbow Bridge or not — but if there is, I can't wait to see my Slinky there. I know a not-so-little piece of him went there tonight.

Please give your fuzzys and other pets an extra special hug for Slinky, and give his little soul a moment's prayer or thought.

In Peace —

Mason, Pogo, and Leila the Cat (and even she is a little subdued tonight). ■

The Fuzzy Papers

**WRITERS! PHOTOGRAPHERS!
SUBMISSIONS
SOUGHT!**

Submissions to this publication in the form of articles, letters, or photographs, are invited and encouraged. Please feel free to send your submissions to the MaFF address below, or via e-mail to Jan Fleury at jfleury@maferrets.org

Articles or letters can be neatly handwritten, or typed, or submitted via email or on 3.5" IBM formatted diskette as plain ASCII Text (no word processor-specific formats, please).

Photos can be reflective or transparent, must have permission of those depicted, and can be in either color or black & white.

**Deadlines for Submissions to
Upcoming Issues of
*The Fuzzy Papers***

For the Winter 1998 Issue:
Monday, November 16th, 1998

For the Spring 1999 Issue:
Tuesday, February 16th, 1999

For the Summer 1999 Issue:
Sunday, May 16th, 1999

You may send your submissions to:
MaFF / *The Fuzzy Papers*
PO Box 3123
Wakefield, MA 01880

Meet Snowy, Our Lovely 1998 MaFF Mascot

*by Linda Thompson
(as told to her by Snowy)*

H! My name is Snowy, and I am a one year old female albino. My new family calls me 'Princess' most of the time though, 'cause I think I am so special. I say my new family because I am adopted. I was left by my previous owner at the Frisky Ferret Shelter. My new Mom saw me there one day and it was love at first sight! We bonded instantly! Dad melted right away too and agreed I should stay with them.

The trouble started when my Mom introduced me to my four new brothers and my two new sisters. Well, they needed to know who the new boss of this business was going to be. The first two days I was there I played it cool. I napped most of the time with Mom. By the third day I decided it was time to make my move! I cleaned every ear I could find, clean or dirty, it didn't matter. I squealed at everyone for any reason to get Mom's attention. I laughed as she scolded the others for pickin' on the new gal.

After a few days of this behavior, Mom asked for advice on the ferret board. They told her I was scared and trying to take control of the others so they would not pick on me. Gees! I was having such a good time, too. Now it was my turn to be scolded. After the tables had turned it wasn't so much fun being a bully. I learned to

behave and get along with everyone. I even got another new brother and sister and was nice to them too . . . most of the time.

Mom and Dad took four of us to the MaFF Spring Frolic in May. It was the first for all of us. Boy am I glad they chose me! We had a ball playing games and mingling with all the other fuzzies. I never saw so many new friends all in one spot. The best part of the day was, of course, when I won the tube race. I am now the MaFF mascot for 1998. I am so happy! Thanks everyone!



ADVERTISE IN THE FUZZY PAPERS!

*Yes, that's right!
We are looking to include
display advertisements in
this newsletter for
ferret lovers.*

If you would like to run a display ad or insert a flyer in a future issue of The Fuzzy Papers, please call the MaFF Hotline at 978 / 957 9886, or Jan Fleury at 508 / 478 2750, or send Email to clerk@maferrets.org for ad sizes, rates, and details.

ASK DR. KAREN

by Karen Purcell, DVM

DEAR DR. KAREN,
We have been getting a lot of questions lately about two very serious ferret illnesses: ECE and Distemper. Can you tell us something about each of these?

Signed,
— Worried

DEAR WORRIED,
I have written two brief discussions of these illnesses for you, and they appear on this page.

Sincerely,
— Dr. Karen

About ECE

Epizootic Catarrhal Enteritis (ECE) is a relatively new disease first noted in 1994 among ferrets in the show circuit. It is a viral infection causing destruction of the lining of the intestines, similar to parvovirus in the dog. The actual organism is unknown. It is highly contagious, spread by fecal-oral contact and can be carried on clothing and skin. Strict sanitation must be followed to prevent spread of this disease to uninfected animals. The incubation period is 2-3 days after exposure. Severity of the disease depends on the age and condition of the host.

Clinical signs of illness include: vomiting (in approximately 80% of affected animals), lethargy and anorexia. Diarrhea can range from mucous laden green stools to black tarry puddles. In severely affected animals, profuse vomiting, diarrhea, dehydra-

tion and listlessness can lead to death within 48 hours. All affected patients should be isolated with strict sanitation protocols.

Other diseases with similar clinical signs include: proliferative colitis, *Helicobacter* gastritis and eosinophilic gastroenteritis. Diagnosis is usually by ruling out other diseases, as few affected animals can tolerate intestinal biopsy. A detailed history including contact with other ferrets and outbreak in all ferrets in the household is very indicative. Blood work usually shows an increased white blood cell count and elevated liver enzymes. Diagnostic blood work and fecal examination will also reveal concurrent disease that might delay recovery.

This disease has a high level of contagion (approaching 100%) but a low mortality (2-3% with proper care). Treatment depends on the condition of the ferret. Those under three years of age may have a few days of green slimy diarrhea and do not require treatment as long as they are eating, drinking and urinating normally. If anorexia develops, tempt the patient with poultry-based baby food (Gerber Second Stages or Earth's Best are popular), a/d (Hill's) or 'duck soup.' Oral liquids such as Pedialyte can treat dehydration or subcutaneous lactated Ringer's solution can be used.

Your veterinarian should determine the use of antibiotics and stomach protectants. Older ferrets, especially those with underlying disease, require aggressive supportive care and regular monitoring for anemia and bleeding ulcers. An incubator will help maintain body temperature.

Some older recovered ferrets are showing significant weight loss 3 weeks after the course of the disease. This may be a problem with absorption in the damaged intestines. Increasing fat content of the diet seems to help; though dairy products should be avoided if diarrhea is present. Corticosteroids may aid in this situation.

It is important to remember that recovered animals are carriers of ECE for at least 6 months, and should not be allowed contact with other ferrets. ■

About Distemper

Ferrets are highly susceptible to canine distemper. Early canine distemper can be confused with an upper respiratory infection or gastroenteritis. The incubation period is 7 to 21 days, and the initial sign is a green discharge from the eyes and conjunctivitis, often with squinting and pawing at the eyes. The conjunctivitis is unresponsive to treatment, and the patient will become lethargic, depressed, and gradually lose its appetite. Coughing, vomiting and diarrhea may follow.

Within 24 to 72 hours of the onset of signs, swelling followed by crusting of the skin will appear on the lips, chin, around the nose, around the anus, and between the back legs. The footpads will become thickened and hard. Signs of brain damage include: a twisted neck, incoordination, twitching eyes, blindness and seizures. The patient may live for several days to more than a week, but the disease is untreatable. A diagnosis can be based on clinical signs.

Euthanasia is recommended. Prevention is by proper vaccination with an approved canine distemper vaccine (Fervac). ■

**ADOPT
YOUR NEXT FERRET**

**CONTACT A
FERRET SHELTER
IN MASSACHUSETTS**

Next time you're thinking about it, or if you're asked about the best way to get a ferret, we hope you'll remember the adoption option!

If you have access to the Internet, visit the MaFF Website at www.maferrets.org where you will find information about each of the ferrets available for adoption from the shelters listed below.

All the shelters can benefit from your kind donations of goods, dollars, or your volunteer time.

Call a shelter today to find out how you can help.

Frisky Ferret Shelter

Lorraine Denicourt
978 / 664 5006
North Reading, MA
E-mail at FurCritic@aol.com

Luv of Ferrets Shelter & Rescue

Jo Fowler
978 / 851 7781
Tewksbury, MA
E-mail at Weldj@aol.com

The Educated Ferret Agency

Donna Spirito
413 / 538 7108
South Hadley, MA

Gimme Shelter Ferret Rescue

Jan and Mark DeJesus
508 / 291 1850
Wareham, MA
E-mail at markld1609@aol.com



The MaFF Want Ads

We need YOU to volunteer for the following positions!

MaFF At-Large

Contact: Jan Fleury, Clerk at 508 / 478 2750 or clerk@maferrets.org
Volunteers for On-Call Hotline Coverage

Shelter Group

Contact: Sharon Burbine, Acting Director at 781 / 246 1504 or sburbine@aol.com
Group Director or Director and Co-Director
Volunteers to Help Draft Group Policies and Guidelines
Liaison to the Events and Fundraising Group
Secretary for the Frisky Ferret Shelter

Events and Fundraising Group

Contact: Jill Northrup, Events Group Director at 508 / 647 1842
Group Clerk
Buyer
Group Liaison
Volunteer Coordinator
Corporate Relations

Education Group

Contact: Tina McGovern, Education Group Director at 978 / 957 1148
Group Clerk
Pet Store Volunteers(10)
PR Manager

Membership Group

Contact: Jan Fleury, Clerk, at 508 / 478 2750 or clerk@maferrets.org
Membership Director
Database Administrator
Membership Correspondence Coordinator(2)
Volunteer Coordinator(2)

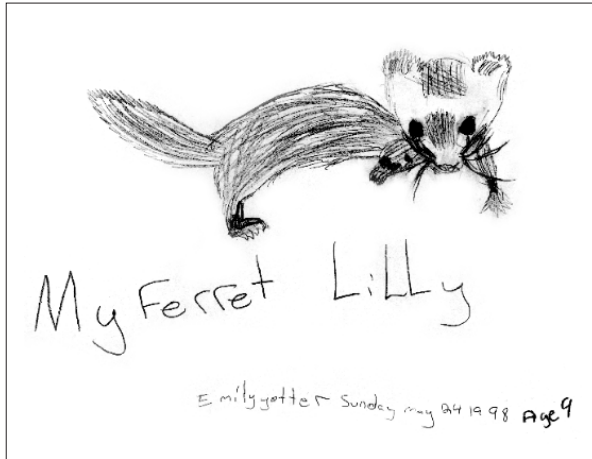
Publications Group

Contact: Jan Fleury, Clerk, at 508 / 478 2750 or clerk@maferrets.org
Publications Director
Writer(3)
Copy Editor
Proof Reader(4)
Publications Reviewer(4)
Vendor Liaison/Fulfillment
Layout and Design
Mailing Coordinator
MaFF Mailing Party Hosts (8)
Assignment Reporter(4)
Assignment Photographer(2)
Investigative Reporter

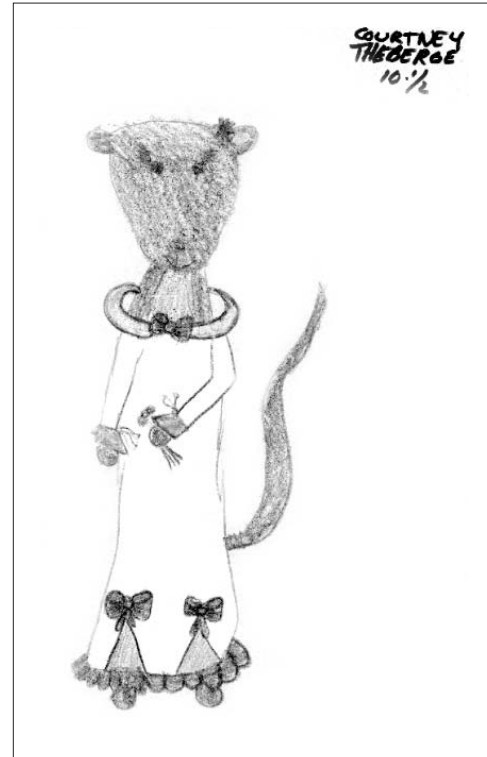
Technology Group

Contact: Brian McGovern, Group Director at 978 / 957 1148 or president@maferrets.org
Web Writer(4)
Web Software Developer(2)
Software Engineer(4)

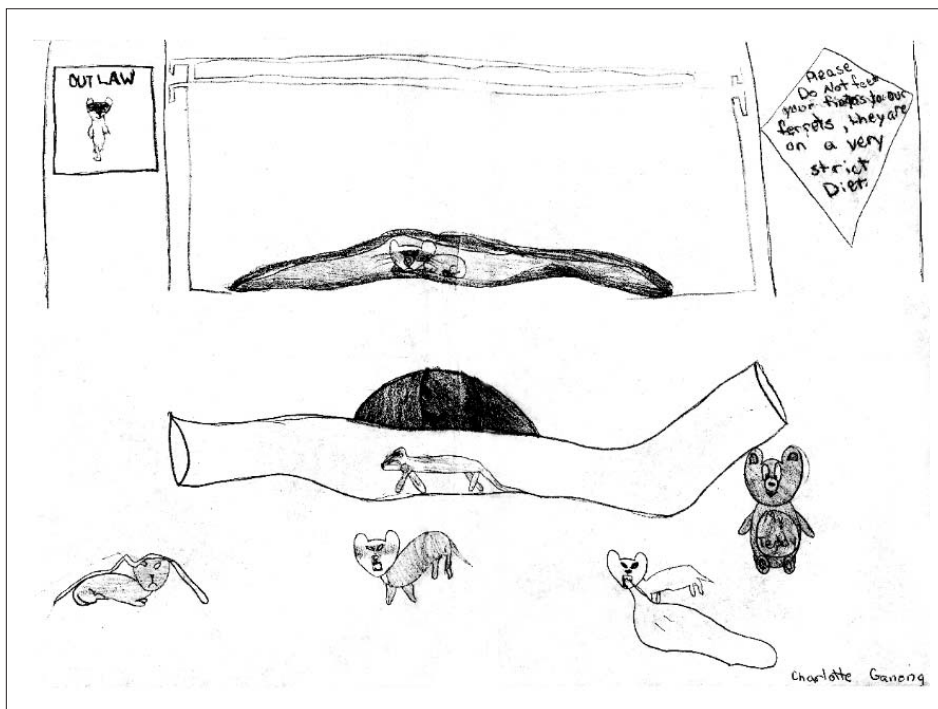
AWARD-WINNING CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS FROM THE SPRING FROLIC!



My Ferret Lilly
by Emily Yetter, Age 9



Ferret in a Pretty Dress
by Courtney Theberge, Age 10 1/2



**Please Do Not Feed
Your Fingers to Our
Ferrets, They Are on
a Very Strict Diet**
by Charlotte Ganon, Age 9

***There's No Time Like
the Present . . . Join the MaFF NOW!***

If you're not already a contributor to the MaFF, or if you'd like to renew your membership, you can do so by filling out this coupon and sending it in, or write or call our office for a contribution form.

Please indicate one of the following — New Membership Renewal

name _____

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Level of Support — Friend (Individual) \$25 Family \$35 Sponsor \$50

total enclosed \$ _____

Your contribution is valid for one year from date of issue and includes a MaFF card, a subscription to the MaFF newsletter, *The Fuzzy Papers*, and special offers on ferret-related items from other interested businesses and organizations. Massachusetts Ferret Friends, Inc. is a nonprofit organization.

Please send this coupon, along with your contribution as a check or money order to: Massachusetts Ferret Friends, Inc., PO Box 3123, Wakefield, MA 01880

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Be sure to renew your membership before your expiration date so you won't miss even a single issue of *The Fuzzy Papers*! If you need a renewal form, use the coupon on this page, or contact the Membership Group by calling the MaFF Hotline at 978 / 957 9886, or sending e-mail to member@maferrets.org. DO IT TODAY!

Massachusetts Ferret Friends, Inc.
PO Box 3123
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(a nonprofit organization)

