

# The Fuzzy Papers

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS FERRET FRIENDS  
FALL 2000



## MaFF Volunteers Shine in Free Car Wash

by Dianne Wood

**"FREE?! Did you say FREE? How can you make any money with a FREE car wash?"**

But make money we did, amidst a deluge from three hose nozzles and gobs of soap suds flying white and foamy in all directions, the first annual MaFF Free Car Wash really cleaned up! On Saturday, August 19th, thanks to the "tireless" efforts of seven MaFF volunteers, the treasury "automagically" gained over \$1,675.00!

The plan was sparked by an idea shared at a MaFF monthly meeting, describing a similar project which had been a successful fundraiser for a small private school. Former MaFF Treasurer Richard Brown offered to "check his connections" at Sam's Club, Natick, and we soon got a green light from the management to use their parking lot [and their outdoor spigot, running for the entire day!] for our Deals on Wheels operation.

Blue skies and sunny weather provided a "convertible-top down" kind of day for the pit crew, as they gathered before 10AM, Dunkin' Donuts coffee cups in hand, to put together the car wash assembly line. In all, seven die hard members of MaFF geared up for the bucket brigade, including Treasurer Bill Williamson, Clerk Sandy Ferreira, Volunteer Coordinator Jill Northrup, MaFF President Jan Fleury, Educated Ferret President Dianne Wood, and MaFF members Chris Carda and Patricia Rubin.

But despite the bold signs which emblazoned with the MaFF banner proclaiming a "FREE CAR WASH," it soon became obvious that people needed a more personal invitation to avail themselves of our service. "It's FREE ... honest! No gimmicks!" I announced over and over again to Sam's Club customers as they were arriving at the parking lot,



MaFF Volunteers washed cars at Sam's Club, Natick, for seven hours, nonstop.

entering or leaving the store, or packing their cases of warehouse commodities into their trucks and hatchbacks. "Free car wash?" one pleasant senior citizen asked, "Isn't that nice. How much does it cost?"

With the rapid fire delivery of a used care salesperson, I soon learned that my pitch had to accelerate from 0 to 60 in about 2.5 seconds in order to capture the attention of the skeptical patrons. "We already collected contributions as pledges," I breathlessly ex-

plained, "so now we need to wash as many cars as we can today to get the money. It's for the ferrets and rescue shelters, and we really need your help. Right around the corner of the building, no waiting ... it's FREE!" This appeal seemed to downshift their resistance at least to neutral, as cars and vans began queuing up for the wet



and wild ride.

For seven hours a bumper-to-bumper stream of vehicles (including mini-vans, two-seater sport models, jeeps, pickups, and I think even a couple of stray motor homes looking for the Interstate) paraded past our team of dripping wet but energetic scrubbers. Rinsers and washers descended upon vehicle after vehicle, sometimes with a sponge in each hand, in the day-long, nonstop effort. Most of the time there were three cars at once in

*(Continued on Next Page)*

## Letter from the President

by Jan Fleury

**T**HERE are so many tasks undone, so many issues left on the table, that it's difficult to even begin to describe them. One thing we all need to understand is that the work gets left undone so long as there are no hands to take it up. In an all-volunteer and volunteer-run organization, that's the way it is. If you've been *thinking* of devoting some time to the MaFF, now is the time to step forward and raise

your hand. At our monthly meetings, some of the same items keep cropping up, month after month, mostly these are chairperson-less committees, with work to do, but no one to do it. Jill Northrup is our volunteer coordinator, and it is her task to contact MaFF members from time to time when the call goes out for volunteers-needed. If you'll recall at our Spring Frolic, Jill was at a table and ready and waiting to talk to anyone about the volunteer positions that needed filling, or the odd small task that needed just one volunteer for just a couple of

hours. As I recall, NO ONE approached that table. Where are you all? Are you hiding ferret-like under large pieces of furniture?? If so, it's time for us to coax you out from under there. What will it take? Anyone know the human-being equivalent of Ferretone?! If so, I'd like the recipe. Soon it will be the holiday season, and then perhaps your sense of giving will arise in your hearts. If so, respond to it and give of yourselves and your time. You will benefit, ferrets will benefit, everyone will win. Speaking of giving: we are working on the next phase of MaFF's 'Named Funds,' and that will take some time. But don't let that stop you from writing a check to MaFF today! —jf □

### The Fuzzy Papers

Is a publication of the  
Massachusetts Ferret Friends, Inc.  
(MaFF)

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:  
781 / 224 1098  
or visit our Web site at:  
www.maferrets.org

Managing Editor and Layout: Jan Fleury  
Copy Editor: Karen Purcell, DVM

Contributing Editors:  
Dianne Wood  
Jan Fleury  
Karen Purcell, DVM  
Tracey Goodwin  
Bernice Urban  
Jo Fowler  
Barbaralee Baron

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, their  
health or behavior, please send them to:  
Karen Purcell, DVM  
PO Box 66, Uxbridge, MA 01569  
Or via E-mail to:  
drkaren@world.std.com



#### (Car Wash, Continued)

various stages of the wet-down/scrub-up/rinse-off cycle. Overheard in transit: "Is this one ready for rinsing?" "I need more detergent in my bucket," "Did you soap down this side yet?" "Hey, we got 5 bucks from that Honda Civic!" "Did anyone flip the numbers? This next one is number 46..." "Please pull forward, sir, your tires are crimping the hose."

By 5 PM, the exhausted but intrepid crew were wearily shutting off their hoses when a hopeful looking straggler rounded the bend, wondering if we were "still doing the free car wash?" We restarted our engines for one final victory lap, and as someone flipped the number counter to 131, the driver flashed an appreciative smile. Her gratitude drove home for us what a "free car wash" in service for the ferrets was all about.

Bone tired and soaked to the skin, we reviewed the day's statistics: 131 squeaky-clean driving machines had been waved on, windshield wipers flipping (for an average of roughly one car every 3 minutes!); 131 pieces of MaFF literature had been distributed; several supportive employees from Sam's Club had spent parts of

their shift wielding sponges or spraying hoses while their enthusiastic manager proudly snapped pictures of our good will "Dream Team." We fondly recalled the many patrons who happily thrust \$1 to \$5 bills into the soggy and wrinkled hands of the water-logged workers unsolicited donations for MaFF.

Then, when all the pledges and "tips" were tallied, Sam's Club presented us with their own version of the Indianapolis 500 in the form of a "matching contribution" of \$500!! They must be ferret owners—at least in spirit! Talk about a checkered flag! Many thanks to Mr. John Nordquist, Membership & Marketing / Sales Team Leader at Sam's Club, Natick, and the many employees, some of whom actually came out and rolled up their sleeves to help wash (!), but also who mentioned the wash and encouraged patrons to look into it as they made their way through the checkout line with their purchases.

A special "Grand Prize" of \$50 in gift certificates to PetSmart was awarded to Jill Northrup as the member who garnered the largest number of pledges. □



## ASK DR. KAREN

by Karen Purcell, DVM

### A Question from a Fellow Veterinarian

Dear Dr. Karen,

I was wondering if anyone out there has a recipe for a ferret diet for a ferret who won't eat ferret or cat food. All he will eat is chicken baby food. He is an 8 year old who had some very severe dental disease and tooth abscesses. he stopped eating his regular food, and the owner could only get him to eat chicken baby food.

We performed a dental with extractions (removed all his upper premolars/molars) and he has been doing very well. Except now he will not eat anything but the chicken baby food. It's been three weeks or so since the dental work. The owner has tried many different cat and ferret foods, but he refuses to eat them. She tried to force him by leaving it out as the only food available, and he became weak and lethargic from not eating — and then was fine after the baby food was returned to him.

My question is this: If we cannot find a suitable food that he will eat, what supplements do I need to add to the chicken baby food to make it an okay diet for him long term?

Signed,

— Another Ferret Vet

Dear Doctor,

You can try grinding the dry food into powder and mixing it with the baby food to reintroduce it. Then, rub the mixture on the ferret's gums 1-2 times daily. Most new foods can be introduced to ferrets this way. Only the most stubborn ferrets won't accept this mixed food, and for those fuzzies, I mix in Ferretone, Ferretvite, or

Nutral to increase palatability. You could also try one of the many "duck soup" recipes available. You can find a listing of recipes on the Ferret Central website: [www.ferretcentral.org](http://www.ferretcentral.org).

Sincerely,

— Dr. Karen

### Questions Regarding a Ferret with Insulinoma

Dear Dr. Karen,

I just sent an email about Coco's supplementing feeding.... Coco just had a seizure and we are a bit unsure what to do during the seizure. We put some Nutrical on her gums, but she seems "out of it" still. We have some questions: How long do seizures last? Should we try to feed her after she comes out of her seizure? We haven't given her the Prednisone this morning yet. Will she still have seizures even while on the Prednisone? She is eating on her own, but we will make sure to give her "Duck Soup" supplement in the morning and bedtime. Is 3 cc of supplement at each feeding enough? Also, she really dislikes and fights taking the Prednisone. Instead of scruffing her and forcing down the medicine, we were thinking of mixing it with some Ferretone and letting her lick it off the spoon. Any problem with mixing Prednisone with Ferretone?

Signed,

— Coco's Parents

Dear Parents-of-Coco,

To answer your questions in order: Seizures shouldn't last more than 30 seconds, but they seem very long while you are watching. She can be "out of it" for up to an hour after a sei-

zure. As for feeding her after the seizure: Yes—get some good protein into her, like baby food (even if she doesn't like it). Regarding having seizures even while on the Prednisone: This should not happen, but it takes a while for the Prednisone to completely regulate the sugars. Prednisone should be given with food, but a small amount is sufficient. If she doesn't like the "Duck Soup," try warmed baby food or a/d alone. The supplement to the diet is to add protein in conjunction with the medication. But of course, stressing her with the feeding isn't helpful. I find that if you rub a small amount of the "Duck Soup" on the gums 2-3 times a day, they get used to the taste and will eat it readily within a week. As long as she is eating on her own, 3 cc of supplement at each feeding is enough, though 6 cc would be better. In the hospital, for ferrets who are not eating on their own, we often feed 15-20 cc 3 to 4 times daily. On mixing Prednisone with Ferretone: No problem at all. I also give it in vanilla frozen yogurt!.

Sincerely,

—Dr. Karen

### A Severe Vaccine Reaction

Dear Dr. Karen,

Last week our 3 year old Molly had an anaphylactic reaction 10 minutes after her shot. She turned bright red, vomited, and pooped. She had trouble breathing and had fluid in her lungs. Our vet treated her with epinephrine, oxygen, dexamethasone, Benadryl, and Lasix. She stabilized, but a few hours later vomited and pooped blood. Then the vet gave her Tagamet and some long-acting antibiotic.

We took her home on a regimen of Carafate, Tagamet, Amoxicillin, and Benadryl. We had to force feed her. Then, she started sneezing a lot: 5 to 10 times in a row. She had a small amount of blood come out of her nose. She is showing no signs of an

(Continued on Next Page)

## The Fuzzy Papers

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

**For the Winter 2000 Issue**  
Thursday, November 16, 2000

**For the Spring 2001 Issue**  
Friday, February 16, 2001

**For the Summer 2001 Issue**  
Wednesday, May 16, 2001

Snailmail your submissions to:  
MaFF / *The Fuzzy Papers*  
PO Box 3123  
Wakefield, MA 01880  
Or email to:  
jfleury@maferrets.org

### 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 above,  
or via e-mail to Jan Fleury at  
jfleury@maferrets.org

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

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

*(Ask Dr. Karen, Continued)*

*ulcer now. No pain, and no blood. We stopped the Benadryl after 2 days, Carafate after 4 days, Tagamet after 2 days. She is still on Amoxicillin and now also iron. We give both with food. She drinks and pees on her own. She is having better bowel movements because we force her to eat. They are a little dark, but I am pretty sure that's because of the iron. She is tired, but strong. She fights us with the food. She does not grind her teeth or smack her lips like I have seen with ulcers. She is still sneezing. A humidifier is no help—seems to make it worse!*

*We last saw our vet on Tuesday. She was encouraged. She is part-time, so we can't see her again until next Tuesday. At one point she mentioned a possibility of kidney damage that might have occurred as a result of the bad reaction. On Tuesday her urine was within the normal range.*

*On Friday we left her alone because we to work. She went a long time without food (7 or 8 hours). I bought a different brand, and she ate about 5 pieces and I was encouraged, but now she won't eat it. Are we forcing too much? Now we are only giving 6 ccs every 4 to 5 hours (we were doing 10 to 12 ccs). We are at a loss. And we don't want to lose our baby because of a shot that was supposed to*

*protect her! Have you ever seen this before? Any suggestions?*

*Signed,  
— Molly's Mom*

Dear Molly's Mom,  
Yes, I have seen this many times, though the severity of this case is quite unusual. Usually there is no kidney damage, but there can be long-term intestinal difficulties. Blood work for kidney function is a good idea once she is back on her feet. Don't try to change foods when she is sick: stick to what she is used to and will accept. On the quantity of feedings, I recommend at least 30 ccs a day, however many feedings it takes, but definitely also leave the kibble available. To tell if she is eating, count the number of kibble left in the bowl, then count again when you return. And finally: obviously no more vaccines for this furkid— at least not distemper. Unfortunately, reactions are pretty common. Did your vet call United Vaccine to report it? They may have more insight into future problems, as most vets report these. All vaccine reactions should be reported to the manufacturer and the USDA.

Sincerely,  
—Dr. Karen

## Four Ferrets

by Tracey Goodwin

**F**OUR ferrets. That has always been my "ideal" number. There is enough time in the day to play with, care for, and give individual attention to four ferrets. I know many ferret owners do a wonderful job caring for many more ferrets (and other furchildren as well), but I thought for sure four was my limit. No ferret math here.

I had become friends with Janice DeJesus at Gimmee Shelter in Wareham, MA, when I adopted a very

special ferret, Scully, from her in November of 1998. Scully came to Jan with a long scar across his abdomen, and no will to live. He was found outside, barely able to use his hind legs. He stressed terribly at the shelter, and stopped eating. Janice nursed him through it all, but was not sure if because of his background, he would ever be adopted. I didn't care what his background was, I was in love. At the time we didn't know just how "special" Scully was, but a few months

after he came home with me, he was diagnosed with possible Insulinoma, and had to have surgery. I was not at all prepared to deal with the daily routine of Duck Soup, dispensing medicines, and constant monitoring of a ferret with an illness, but we finally settled in. Janice was there to council me through it all.

We lost our first ferret, Bailey, in December, and our household was not the same. The other ferrets were constantly looking for their brother, and I was looking for four fur faces. We would adopt another ferret in time, after some of the pain had healed.

In May, I went to visit Jan, to help her with some shelter chores. One of the best parts of helping at the shelter is being able to play with all the ferrets. I did not go there that day with the intention of even "looking" for another ferret, but a beautiful black sable named Mr. Dirk Diggler stole my heart. Dirk was one of the ferrets who were saved from the most horrible conditions imaginable by Kim at Kista Ferrets in New Jersey. He traveled from the shelter in New Jersey, to FerretWise in New Hampshire, and finally to Janice in Wareham. Janice calls Dirk an "emotional" ferret: he is very vocal, and is frightened of most other ferrets. After some discussion, Dirk came home with me, even though we were not sure if he would ever integrate with my group. Now, we were back to the ideal number of four ferrets once again.

I visited the shelter several times during Dirk's adoption, and every visit included playtime with the other ferrets. What touches me most about these ferrets is the story each one has, and oftentimes the illnesses or injuries they are suffering from. This makes a certain percentage of the ferrets unadoptable, but Jan and the other shelter Moms never turn them away. It does my heart good to spend time with these special ferrets; to let them know that there are people who will love and care for them.

Janice had a pair of ferrets at the shelter who presented a unique challenge. One of the ferrets, Skylar, is perfectly "normal" and healthy, but his cagemate Wyatt has very limited use of his hindquarters, most likely from having been stepped on or crushed. Jan explained that a special needs ferret like Wyatt would probably spend the rest of his life at the shelter unless there was someone who was willing to love a disabled ferret. Skylar was very adoptable, but Jan would not split them up.

A day in the life of caring for Wyatt consists of multiple changing of linens in the cage and cleaning his hind end because he is incontinent, frequent exercise to help build his strength, and applying ointment to the sores on his stomach because he drags it on the ground. This is in addition to the normal ferret care for these and all the other ferrets in the shelter, and then there is medication and force feedings to be done for the other ill or stressed ferrets. How does a shelter Mom do this every day, I wonder.

After visiting with Skylar and Wyatt several times, I began to think about what it would be like to have them come home with me. Initially, I told myself, it would be too much work; I didn't have enough time. But if Janice could deal with this every day and still work full time, well then I too could give a little more of my free time to help out these special boys. They deserve to have a loving home despite the fact that one is handicapped. It would also ease the burden on the shelter slightly.

My ideal number of four ferrets was increased to six. Janice warned me that this would be a lot of extra work, and she was right. So now we

get up a little earlier each morning, clean cages twice a day, and go to bed a little later each night. We now have six furry little faces to greet us each morning, six ferrets willing to give kisses, six ferrets willing to bounce and play. There is a lot more laundry to do each day, but also more ferrets to cuddle with.

Is caring for a special needs ferret a lot of work? Yes. It is. But the reward is knowing your have made a small difference in just one ferret's life; that he is content when he snuggles in a warm, clean blanket; that he is happy when he does his backwards weasel waltz; that he knows he is loved when he puts his head on your shoulder and goes to sleep. What a reward that is.

If you have a little extra time each day, and a little extra love in your heart, please consider adopting or fostering one of the special needs ferrets who are at a shelter just waiting for a second chance. Not only will you make a difference in that ferret's life,



*Wyatt, from Gimme Shelter Ferret Rescue, now has a loving family and home to call his own. Is this sweet little boy ferret worth the extra effort for his special care? You \*BET\*.*

but you will make it possible for another ferret to enter the shelter.

I wouldn't change the "special needs" of any of my ferrets for anything, because that IS what makes them each special to me. □

## Rusty, Dusty . . . and Rascal

by Bernice Urban



### Rusty

**O**N July 22nd, we took our sweet little Rusty to the vet because he was having problems going to the bathroom. He would try and try, but just couldn't go. I thought it might have been some sort of blockage, or a hairball. I didn't expect the worst (not that a blockage can't be serious).

While the vet examined Rusty, I saw a strange look on his face. I knew then that it was serious, but I didn't expect that my little boy wouldn't be coming home with us any more. While our vet was speaking to us, it sounded more and more hopeless. Rusty had a tumor (which I felt and it was very big). He also had an enlarged bladder. He was dehydrated and very weak. Our vet said he could try to help, but that Rusty was in critical condition. His temperature was below normal, and he probably wouldn't survive surgery.

After that, to be honest, I wasn't listening to any more our vet was saying. I held Rusty the whole time, crying, and gave him lots of kisses as my tears fell on him. We decided to let Rusty go and free him of his pain. I

whispered "I love you" to him and handed him to my fiancée and left to go sit in the car. Our vet asked us if we wanted to be with him while he takes his last breath (he didn't say it in those words). I said no. I want to remember Rusty as he was alive.

My baby was only 2 1/2 years old, and he was our youngest of 11 ferrets. I will always remember how Rusty took our clothes that were on the floor and ran under the bed with them. I will remember how he was determined to open the drawer in the back of our bed, and how he succeeded every time. I call Rusty my "little fraidy cat" because every little noise he heard, he would take off running. He was afraid of everything, but in the end I was afraid to let him go. Our home is not the same without Rusty. We miss him so much, and we will always love him. He will always and forever be in our hearts.



### Dusty

We received Dusty from the MSPCA a couple of years ago. We could tell he was an older ferret because even though he played, we wasn't as active as a kit would be. On August 4th, my fiancée took our lovable Dusty to the vet because he was having trouble breathing and he didn't want to play at all. I had to work, but I seriously thought my little baby would be com-

ing home and that I would be seeing him again. If I thought or knew otherwise, I would have taken off of work to be with Dusty until the end.

My fiancée was taking a long time coming home from the vet and I was getting a bad feeling about this, so I called our vet and he said "It doesn't look good" and that Dusty's lungs were filling up with blood and that something was wrong with his heart. He told me what it was in "vet terms" but I don't remember what it's called to be honest, at that moment I really wasn't listening. He said it's the same thing that dogs get and that 50% of the time, the dogs don't survive, and because ferrets have such little hearts, my poor little Dusty probably wouldn't make it. Our vet said that as we speak, he had already given him the shot to end his pain. I told our vet to tell Dusty that I love him.

When my fiancée came to my job, I left work with Dusty in my car, drove him home, unwrapped him and held him for about 10 minutes. I needed to say good-bye to him but I didn't want to let my little baby go. As I was holding him, I thought

(or imagined) Dusty sighing, make some noise and his eyes were slightly opened. That night, we buried Dusty with his brother Rusty who left us not even two weeks before Dusty. Dusty was my lovable ferret. He would let you hold him and cuddle with him. I just wish I could have been there for my sweet little boy until the very end and I have to live with that for the rest of my life. My fiancée was with him and told Dusty that I love him. We

## Massachusetts Ferret Friends — Fall 2000

miss not having Dusty here with us, but I hope he's having fun with his brother. We miss Dusty so much, and we will always love him. He will always and forever be in our hearts.



### Rascal

We received Rascal from a ferret shelter. She was a biter. Rascal was 4 1/2 years old and a deaf ferret. At the time, we had 10 ferrets. We decided to take Rascal in because we knew it would be hard to adopt her because of her biting, and we didn't want her to live her life in a ferret shelter. Rascal had an enlarged spleen and was going back to the vet for a re-checkup and a possible removal of the spleen.

On September 22nd, we lost Rascal. That night, she was out of her cage playing like normal, and having a great time. When I went to bed about one hour after putting Rascal back in her cage, I heard a strange noise coming from one of the cages. I looked in her cage first (she didn't get along with our other ferrets, so she was in her own cage and she had her own playtime). She was hanging halfway off of her hammock. Her tail was fluffed, her mouth was slightly open, and she was acting like she wanted to vomit. She was just lying there. Her gums were white. I called the vet and while talking to him, Rascal was no longer breathing and she was gone. I picked her up and held her and told her that I love her, and I will miss her. It was so hard watching her die and

knowing there was nothing we could do to help her at that moment.

We think she might have jumped off the bed while playing and ruptured her spleen, because while holding her, I looked at her belly and noticed it was blue, which was probably blood. Rascal was our third ferret we lost since July. I will always remember how she loved to take our socks that were on the floor and hide them under or behind the bed. She would run after my feet, wanting to play, and I would run on the bed so she wouldn't get me. Once I got on the bed, I would play with her. It was funny the way she would chase me and I would run from her. When I got off the bed, she saw my socks that were on my feet and she would chase them again.

We held Rascal, played with her, and showed her that we loved her. She felt comfortable with us, so she didn't bite as much. She would give my fiancée a kiss, but I wasn't brave enough to put my face up to her mouth. I remember one time when Rascal was hiding under the bed, I was giving the other cage fresh water, and Rascal came from under the bed and bit my hand, but not hard. She just wanted to play. She was a little sneak. We miss not having Rascal here in our home. We miss her so much and we will always love her. She will always and forever be in our hearts. □



### *Dedicated to Rusty, Dusty, and Rascal*

I understand it was your time to go  
After you left us, I felt so low  
I didn't want to eat or sleep  
It hit me so hard, it hit me so deep.

You made me laugh  
When you kissed my face  
You made me cry  
When I had to say good-bye.

You three meant so much to me  
Your hopping and jumping, I no longer see  
Rusty, Dusty and Rascal were their names  
I don't think I'll ever feel the same.

To see your face and hear you play  
You were so happy and were always that way  
Until the end, when you had to go  
I was so helpless, I was so low.

To see you in pain and nothing we could do  
It hurt me so much, I felt so blue  
My three little babies have gone away  
I hope to see them again some day.

## **A Report on the Ferrets 2000 Symposium**

*by Karen Purcell, DVM*

**L**ISA Wagner and I traveled to the Ferrets 2000 Symposium together. We arrived Thursday, after innumerable airport snafus (they lost our luggage on a direct flight!), and settled into the Novotel in Mississauga, Canada. The hotel was connected to a nearby office building with restaurants. After Lisa vetoed sushi, our hunt for food took us to Dick's Bar and Grill. Though the official "Meet and Greet" wasn't scheduled until 8:30 PM, a large table was filled with many notables, including Bill Gruber, Bob Church, Randy Belair, our lovely hostess, and more continued to trickle in as we ordered from the very put-upon waitress. This began a non-stop, four day talkfest, grudgingly interrupted for sleep, food, and the actual lectures. So many ferret owners, shelter operators, experts, etc., just cannot stay in one place without talking ferrets. I'm sure we ruined the appetites of the poor folk seated around us as all topics were fair game. Due to the loud music and smoke at the bar, I became hoarse the first night, and a week later am still trying to get my voice back.

After the first of several late nights, the entire crowd piled on a school bus for the hour trip to the Toronto Zoo. The Zoo gave us an excellent presentation on the history and current status of the Black-Footed Ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) breeding program. As of this year, over 1300 Black-Footed ferrets have been released back into the wild, and at most sites are surviving and reproducing on their own. So far, this has been one of the most successful breeding programs in the Species Survival Program, aiding 195 endangered species through captive breeding programs at zoos throughout the world.

After the presentation and some excellent pizza, the group scattered to check out the Zoo's exhibits.

Of course, the first place we all ended up was the Black-Footed Ferret exhibit! The little guy was sleeping, but everyone took pictures anyway. Then we watched the otters being fed. After that, we (Lisa Wagner, Ronnie DiComo, Bob Church, and myself) wandered about, seeing polar bears, komodo dragons, and the wild Bob Church (Oh!.. Wait! he wasn't an exhibit!) being followed by an Australian bird in the Australasia House. After much wandering among hundreds of Canadian school children, we headed out. Of course, we had to stop at the gift shop, but no ferret-inspired mementoes could be found, to our dismay.

The bus back to the hotel left at 3 PM with many tired visitors (see the FML pictures from Sam Young for proof). After a much-needed nap, a group led by Randy and her boyfriend Dave took us to an excellent authentic Chinese restaurant near the hotel. The crowd included Phyllis and Bev from MaFF, Bob Church, Linda Iroff, Sam Young, and several others. The good was great, though some folks weren't thrilled about the shredded duck and fish maw soup, or the crispy squid! We followed our dinner with a walk around the Square One mall, to lose some of those dinner calories. This led to numerous comments to Lisa regarding her tendency to collect shoes (and a very nice pair she found, too!) An evening at the bar followed (just more ferret talk, of course).

The symposium started Saturday at 9 AM with a breakfast buffet. Most of us were hitting the caffeine pretty hard, as morning is not a good time — especially for our Master of Ceremonies, Bill Gruber, who had been up until 4 AM putting out the FML (Ferret Mailing List).

Dr. Tom Willard, the nutritionist behind Totally Ferret, was the first speaker. He gave an excellent presen-

tation on the type and quality of the ingredients in Totally Ferret, and gave comparisons with other foods.

Gary Holowicki followed with some comments on the safety of our food supply in the United States, and the story of how he became so involved in alternative therapies when his brother developed leukemia. His story was very moving.

Bob Church then discussed the origins of our ferret friends, with developmental information as well as useful tips for providing intellectual stimulation via toys and obstacle courses.

We then had another wonderful buffet meal (I think the hotel was out to get us fat — they had 5 desserts on that table!) After lunch, Dr. Bruce Williams spoke for 3 hours on various important topics involving ferrets, including basic test results, surgical techniques, ECE, Heliobacter, ADV (the next ferret epidemic), insulinoma, lymphoma, etc. Luckily, he is good-natured, so he didn't mind my interruptions with clinical data from my practice. This took us straight into dinner, with gift presentations to the speakers, and a Man of the Year award to Bill Gruber from the FML. After dinner, we continued the conversation and some hijinks in the bar.

Sunday dawned too early for some of us, with another buffet breakfast during which Chris Mathis of the Pacific Ferret Shelter Network reviewed the fine points of responsible ferret breeding. Troy Lynn Eckart followed up with a very thorough discussion of rabies.

The symposium ended with questions from the audience for the speakers, and I was invited to join in as well. Then it was off to the airport, and home again.

This symposium was very well done. Actually, I would have liked to have it spread over another day, to al-



low some time for sightseeing, as Toronto is a beautiful city, from what I could see from short walks and bus trips. All in all, an excellent learning experience, and a really wonderful opportunity to discuss ferrets with people of all ranges of knowledge. □

### **Boston Pet Expo a Success!**

*by Tracey Goodwin*

**O**NCE again the Boston Pet Expo proved to be one of the biggest events of the year for MaFF. This year's Expo was held September 23rd and 24th, and MaFF had a prime spot right by the front entrance, so our MaFF volunteers were able to educate hundreds of people right as they came in the doors. We met tons of ferret people, sold a lot of merchandise, and so far there has been at least one adoption as a result of this event.

Special thanks go to our wonderful volunteers: Sandy Ferreira, Jill Northrup, Amy Robbin, Kristine Kelley, Lisaann Darmody, Richard Brown, Mark Rosenstein, Jody Renouf, Jay Laird, Janice DeJesus, Joan DeJesus, Trudy Wallach, Cheryl Thompson, Sharon Orser, Dr. Karen Purcell, and of course all of the wonderful ferrets.

MaFF could not be present at these events which do so much to educate the public if it weren't for all of these wonderful people. Please consider volunteering your time at the next event to help MaFF fulfill our mission of shelter, education, and outreach.

*Ferrets ... If you've  
got one, wouldn't two  
be twice as nice?*



*This is Murphy, ferret of MaFF's Membership Chairperson, Tracey Goodwin and family. Murphy is seen here assisting with the office chores of keeping the MaFF membership list up to date and providing the mailing labels for things like this newsletter. Figured you'd all like to see some of the "behind the scenes" unsung heroes of MaFF's efforts. Murphy was just taking a break from looking up the records of those who did not renew their memberships. His other specialty (besides being way too cute for words) is supervising the printer as it prints out the mailing labels.*

### **Foundling Ferret Tyler Wins Big, BIG, Trophy!**

SWEET little shelter ferret Tyler won a trophy at the Ferret Festival in Merrimack, NH on September 16th.

He was entered in the Shelter Class and won the trophy (above right) that's so very much bigger than he is!

Tyler came to the Luv of Ferrets Shelter and Rescue in Tewksbury, MA, operated by Jo and Ed Fowler. He had been transported to the shelter by volunteer Jill Northrup. Tyler had been found wandering in a section of Boston. We're sure Tyler will have lots of fun sniffing his Very Big Trophy. Just goes to prove that lovely ferrets can and should be adopted. Contact a MaFF shelter today to find out if there's a lovely ferret waiting there to call you "Mommy" or "Daddy"!



### MaFF Member and Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

**T**HE following is an excerpt from the written policy of MaFF Member Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities, written in 1998:

“First, a few words about your participation in the operation of a nonprofit organization. We realize that, just like ferrets, not all people get along with one another without conflict, and that personal differences can occur between MaFF Members and Volunteers. We do ask, however, that you as a Member of MaFF and as a Volunteer make every effort to resolve personal differences in a civil, calm, and equitable manner. Remember that we are all here to help the ferrets, and that disagreements or conflicts allowed to escalate out of hand can jeopardize what is in reality our common mission: to benefit ferrets.

Please do not allow personal conflicts to interfere with your relationship to MaFF as an organization, or to the other Members of this organization, or your duties as a MaFF Volunteer. Simply stated, the rules of common courtesy apply to your interactions with Members of MaFF just as they apply to your daily personal and professional life in the rest of the world. If you find that an interpersonal conflict has begun to interfere with your status as a Member, or your work as a MaFF Volunteer, we ask that you first make a civil and good faith effort to resolve the conflict directly with that person. If this is not possible, we encourage Volunteers to ask to be reassigned to another task in which they will be comfortable serving, and we ask Members to bring their grievance to the very next scheduled Board meeting if necessary.

When it comes right down to it, your membership in MaFF and your activity as a Volunteer should be both

a benefit to all ferrets, AND fun for you! MaFF depends entirely on our Members and our Volunteer force to help us realize our mission and accomplish our goals. Without our Members and Volunteers, this organization would be unable to function. For this reason, MaFF is extremely grateful to all our Members and Volunteers. It is very important to us that your service be a positive experience for you.

When serving as a MaFF Volunteer, the MaFF Member or Volunteer has the following responsibilities:

We ask you to remember that a MaFF Volunteer is an ambassador for the organization, and as such is perceived as a spokesperson for MaFF, and a source of information on MaFF policies and opinions.

Although each and every MaFF Volunteer is acting to some degree as a representative of MaFF, we do not insist that you adhere strictly to all MaFF stated opinions in those cases where there is room for disagreement, but we do ask that you make an effort to know and understand MaFF's positions, and that in those cases where your personal opinion is at variance with MaFF's, you preface your comments accordingly without disparaging MaFF. An example: Let's say you are helping us by staffing the MaFF table at an event, and a member of the public asks a ferret care question such as “How often should I clean my ferret's ears?” In the MaFF booklet titled *Your Ferret, A Lifetime's Commitment of Care*, ear-cleaning is discussed, and a frequency of cleaning is suggested. But if you —personally— clean your ferret's ears only infrequently, you might reply as in the following example: “Well, personally, I clean my ferret's ears only once every couple of months, and they seem to be alright with that. We talk about ear cleaning in our booklet, and there are other opinions on this. We recommend that you learn more about it and then use your own best judgement, and that you ask your veterinarian if you're unsure.”

This response acknowledges your

own opinion, identifies it as your own, but also refers the asker to MaFF opinion as well as other sources of information, all in a non-judgemental way.

All MaFF Volunteers are asked:

■ To read and understand this statement of Member Rights and Responsibilities and to decline participation as a MaFF Volunteer if they find they are unable or unwilling to abide by the responsibilities described here.

■ To make a good faith effort to understand the MaFF mission and to act in accordance with that mission.

■ To make a good faith effort to understand their tasks and responsibilities assigned to them as a Volunteer, and to feel free to ask questions ... at any time in order to gain clarification of those tasks and responsibilities.

■ To at all times act in a civil and responsible manner when discharging their responsibilities as a MaFF Volunteer and when interacting with other MaFF Members. This includes not acting in any way which reflects poorly on the reputation or image of MaFF, or which violates our mission or jeopardizes our legal standing as a nonprofit organization. If at all possible, and depending on the breadth of their responsibilities, it is suggested that MaFF Volunteers read and understand the MaFF Mission Statement, and if necessary, the MaFF Bylaws.

■ To read and acquaint themselves with appropriate sections of MaFF written Policies and Procedures which may be available and apply to the area or group for which they are volunteering.

■ To participate in any training sessions and/or meetings requested of them as preparation for the performance of their tasks.

■ To educate themselves to the best of their ability on aspects of ferret care and health, and to make every effort not to impart information about ferret care or health which is factually inaccurate, or about which they are uncertain. In circumstances where the Volunteer is uncertain how to answer a question, we strongly suggest that the Volunteer readily admit that they do

not have the answer, and refer the questioner to recognized sources of information rather than to “venture a guess” as to the answer.

■ Not to present themselves as a representative of MaFF at a level of authority that exceeds their actual office or assigned task as a Member or Volunteer.

■ To be punctual when they are asked to assist us by attending meetings or participating in events.

■ To be accountable for their commitments to appear and/or assist at MaFF events in which they have promised to participate, and to inform their associates, fellow Volunteers, or MaFF Committee Chairperson if it should happen that they are unable to appear as scheduled for a meeting or an event on behalf of MaFF.

■ Never to use the MaFF name or logo, or any MaFF official means of communication (this includes all MaFF stationery, any use of MaFF-associated e-mail addresses, or any postings to the MaFF website) in any way so as to reflect adversely on MaFF’s reputation, image, or legal standing as a nonprofit organization. Take any questions of MaFF representation directly to the Committee Chairperson or the Board of Directors.

■ To alert the Board, or appropriate MaFF officer or Committee Chairperson if they should discover problems with MaFF policy, or difficulties among Volunteers which cause them to be unable to participate or to discharge their duties as MaFF Volunteers.

■ To refer all questions or problems involving MaFF policies or procedures to the appropriate MaFF officer or Committee Chairperson for resolution rather than taking action “on behalf of MaFF” in areas which are more appropriately the domain of the Board of Directors.” □



## The Adventures of MacLeod MacFerret

### Episode 6: MacLeod Goes Surfing

by Barbaralee Baron

**B**EING the adventurous and daring ferret that I am, I could not resist begging Mom to take me with her when I heard her talk about going surfing... whatever that is.

Arriving at the beach, I instantly wiggled and squirmed to be put down. The ground felt funny. Kind of like my potty, but not as scratchy. This was what Mom called “sand.” It was cool under my paws, and kind of squishy in some spots. The, right before me was this huge pond called “The Atlantic Ocean.” Mom let me walk right up to The Atlantic Ocean. It smelled funny and tasted salty.

Most fun of all, this water was also playing a game of “Catch Me if You Can!” It would roll up to me, then slide back. Sometimes it had this white bubbly stuff on it called “foam.” As Mom rubbed a long flat board with wax, I had a look around. There were these funny looking birds scampering up and down the beach. They were bigger than the birds in the park, and a lot noisier. I found out later that they are called “Sea Gulls.”

Soon I was scooped up and placed on the board which floated on top of the water. We paddled out a ways, skimming over the big bumps in the water that were called “waves.” As we got further out, Mom turned the board around and we rode the wave back to shore! It was exciting having the water spraying in my face. At one point, I stood up like Mom, and hanged ten! Most of the time I hanged

20 and kept all paws on the board.

During our last trips out, I saw this strange shape popping out of the water and spraying water through a hole in its head! It came right up to where we were floating! It was awfully BIG! Mom called it a “dolphin.” The dolphin came right up to me!

“You’re a strange looking creature,” it said in a singsong voice.

“I’m not a creature, I’m a ferret,” I replied.

“What’s a ferret?” it asked.

“I’m a ferret. The name is MacLeod, and who and what are you?”

“I’m a dolphin. My name is Aquarius. It’s nice to meet you.”

“What’s that hole in your head?”

“It’s how I breathe. It’s called a ‘blow hole.’”

“Oh, I see. This is my first time to The Atlantic Ocean.”

“How do you like it?” Aquarius asked.

“It’s fun. I hope I get to come surfing again.”

“It was nice meeting you. Here comes another wave. Bye!” And with that, he dove under the water.

We rode the wave back to the shore. Then Mom picked me up and headed for the car. I looked back over her shoulder at the water and sighed. Surfing was fun, but very wet. □

**Next Time**  
**Episode 7: MacLeod**  
**Visits Sea World**

We need YOU to step forward and become a MaFF Committee Chairperson.

#### FUNDRAISING

This position needs a dynamic and energetic (ideally a duo!!) person or persons to take on this VERY IMPORTANT heart-of-the-operation committee.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS

Are you good at Press Releases, and do you have excellent people-diplomatic skills and great corporate connections? We’re YOUR CAUSE!!!

***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 send email to  
info@maferrets.org, or call us at 781 / 224 1098 for a contribution form.*

Please indicate one of the following —  New Membership  Renewal

name \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

telephone (            ) \_\_\_\_\_

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 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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

**BONUS Issue!  
Four pages longer!  
than ever before!**

TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR MAILING LABEL for the expiration date of your membership!  
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 224 / 224 1098,  
or sending e-mail to member@maferrets.org. DO IT TODAY!

Massachusetts Ferret Friends, Inc.  
PO Box 3123  
Wakefield, MA 01880  
(a nonprofit organization)



# MaFF BULLETIN / ALERT

*This message is the third in our series of MaFF Bulletin / Alerts.  
These Bulletins will only be issued in cases of particular need for urgency.*

## **FERRET ALEUTIAN DISEASE (ADV)**

The purpose of this bulletin / alert is to notify you of the incidence of Ferret Aleutian Disease, also known as ADV. The information below is taken directly from a press release issued earlier this year. See the end of this article for other resources you can turn to for information about Aleutian Disease. Aleutian mink disease virus or ADV is a parvovirus that infects mink, ferrets, raccoons, skinks and possibly other Mustelidae. It is in the family Parvoviridae, subfamily Parvovirinae, genus Parvovirus. Parvoviruses are widespread in nature. ADV causes an infectious disease, known as Aleutians disease, and is shed for many months. ADV is a hardy virus that can live outside of the body for an extremely long period of time.

### ***PRESS RELEASE***

January 28, 2000 -- Crownsville, MD and North Brunswick, NJ

The American Ferret Association (AFA) and the League of Independent Ferret Enthusiasts (LIFE) announced today a joint campaign against Aleutians Disease Virus (ADV), a parvovirus which affects ferrets, mink and several other species. There is no cure, and the disease is generally terminal in affected ferrets.

ADV can be shed by an infected ferret even when there is no clinical symptomology. It can be passed during breeding and birth, as well as through feces and bodily fluids. The symptoms may include weight loss, lethargy, and hindquarter weakness. There is often a cough exhibited by infected animals. Blood tests will generally indicate a high protein level. Additionally, there is a high incidence of stillbirth and miscarriage in breeding jills that are infected.

There are confirmed epizootic type outbreaks of ADV in Eastern PA and Southern TX, and reported outbreaks in New Zealand and the UK. The outbreaks in Texas and Pennsylvania have been confirmed by necropsy and pathology reports on ferrets which succumbed to the illness.

Many of the outbreaks can be directly tied to "hobby" type breeders, particularly those who are breeding ferrets imported from Canada, New Zealand and England. Strong evidence suggests that many of the infected ferrets were bred in Minnesota, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The AFA and LIFE have taken action on several fronts in order to stem the potential for epizootic incidence. The targeted issues are quarantine of ADV infected animals; education of the public; and development of a more efficient diagnostic tool and a vaccine.

A group of ferrets has been quarantined in San Antonio, TX at the San Antonio Ferret Enthusiasts - Ferret SAFE House. A second group of infected ferrets was turned over by a Pennsylvania breeder to the Fuzztek North Ferret Shelter in New Milford, NJ. These ferrets are in permanent quarantine in facilities where proper sanitary precautions are being taken to prevent any further spread of the disease. In addition, the Fuzztek North Ferret Shelter has closed its doors to all but ADV positive ferrets, and will accept referrals of ferrets with proof of ADV positive status for permanent housing and care from other recognized shelters.

There is currently only one available ADV test in the United States. United Vaccine performs a counter-electrophoresis (CEP) laboratory test, which tests for antibodies in the blood. The same test is performed in the UK by Harlan UK LTD. Ferrets that have been exposed to ADV will likely test positive, even if they are not carriers and will never show symptoms of the disease. The CEP test seems to have a potentially high incidence of false positives, and the test is not conclusive of clinical disease. Additionally, it can take up to six months post-exposure for the CEP diagnostic to be conclusive. In order for a vaccine to be developed, a more accurate test is needed. It is estimated that development of the test and subsequent vaccine will cost \$100,000.

Dr. Karen Rosenthal, formerly associated with the Animal Medical Center in New York City, and currently a research veterinarian at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine, has expressed deep interest in a research study for the purpose of developing a new test and subsequent vaccine.

***Continued on Other Side***

In order to facilitate the ongoing care of the quarantined groups of ferrets, and the clinical testing and development, AFA and LIFE are spearheading a fundraising drive. An appeal is being made to the public, as well as private endowments and ferret related industries for their generous support in these endeavors.

Donations can be made as follows:

Tax Deductible donations towards clinical research and development of a more effective test and vaccine:

Pamela Slack, DVM Memorial Ferret  
Medical Research Grant Fund  
c/o The American Ferret Association  
Post Office Box 255  
Crownsville, MD 21032-0255  
ATTN: ALEUTIAN DISEASE FUND

Donations to Fuzztek North Shelter for the ongoing care of permanently quarantined ferrets may be sent directly to either of the following:

The Ferret Store  
PO Box 2346  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18703-2346  
1-888-833-7738  
ATTN: Fuzztek Ferret Fund

Ridgefield Park Animal Hospital  
215 Main St.  
Ridgefield Park, NJ 07660  
201-814-0095  
ATTN: Fuzztek Ferret Fund

For further information, please see  
[www.ferrethaven.org/aleutian.html](http://www.ferrethaven.org/aleutian.html)  
or call 1-888-FERRET-1, or e-mail [lifeferret@aol.com](mailto:lifeferret@aol.com)

See also the American Ferret Association, Inc. web site  
[www.ferret.org](http://www.ferret.org)

and, of course, Ferret Central  
[www.ferretcentral.org](http://www.ferretcentral.org)

### **FYI . . .**

Although MaFF requires proof of current vaccination against rabies and distemper for all ferret attendees at our events (see the PLEASE TAKE NOTE box we include with every event flyer we publish), we do not yet require any proof of ADV status for ferret attendees. We want all our members to be aware, however, of the potential for infection with ADV and the means by which the disease is spread. Please visit the web sites we have listed above, or call the listed telephone numbers if you wish to obtain further information about the current situation with ADV.