

The Fuzzy Papers

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS FERRET FRIENDS

SUMMER 1999



Letter from the President

by Karen Purcell, DVM

Well, folks, it has been a very busy spring for MaFF. So far, we've had several successful education events, including Earth Day in Worcester, a Boy Scout Camporee, training animal control officers in ferret care, and the Pet Adoption Days at PetSmart. This isn't even everything!!

I am extremely pleased and proud of our new committee chairs and active members who are showing initiative and energy in presenting ferrets in many different venues to improve public awareness.

I hope to meet many of you at our next MaFF event; hope everyone has

a great time. Also, everyone please remember that we're coming into the warm weather, so when planning to attend the event(s), be sure to include a plan to keep those fuzzies cool!

[Dr. Karen is currently practicing in Cumberland, RI — Ed.] ☐

Update on the Brookline Ferrets Murder Case

by Sharon Burbine, Special Investigations

Previously, we had reported that there was a case pending in Superior Court, Dedham, where James Arthur Melton was on trial for allegedly breaking and entering a Brookline home. While he was inside this home, he allegedly murdered the owners' two pet ferrets.

Because of the nature of the crime, his past criminal record, and the fact that he was on probation at the time of his arrest, Melton had been held in custody throughout this ordeal.

Melton was charged with the following: Breaking and Entering in the Daytime; Larceny of Property of Over \$250.00; two counts of Killing an Ani-

mal, and two counts of Cruelty to Animals. The statutory maximum for Breaking and Entering in the Daytime is 10 years. The statutory maximum for Killing an Animal is 5 years.

The trial started on March 8, 1999. Melton had waived a Bench trial and asked for a jury trial. On March 30th, Melton pled guilty. He was sentenced to 7 years and 1 day for the Breaking and Entering charge, and 4 to 5 years for the killing of the ferrets, to be served concurrently with the Breaking and Entering sentence, plus 5 years of probation to be served after his release. Also, conditions of his probation will include a drug and alcohol abuse evaluation and whatever treat-

ment precipitates. He will also receive a psychological evaluation and receive needed treatment.

In the prosecution of this case, MaFF was instrumental in providing the District Attorney's Office as well as the Brookline Police Detectives with helpful information about ferrets and their behavior. MaFF has always been known for getting out the facts on ferrets, and we are very grateful that we were allowed to help with this case.

MaFF also showed support by organizing a group of volunteers to go to the trial. We thank those volunteers for taking a day out during their work week to attend. ☐

A Happy Ending

by Bernice Urban

On April 8th, we received a call from a woman who had lost her ferret. She got our phone number from the MSPCA. The MSPCA calls us if they have a stray or an unwanted ferret. We, in turn, take the ferret to a shelter that we work with under her license. The owner of the ferret described him as a 3 year old sable male who nips. Knowing that he

was walking the streets in the rain; cold and hungry and looking for his home, I had no hope for this little guy. I advised them to put a carrier outside with food, water, and blankets, and to shake his favorite treats in the hopes that he would come running. I told her to contact the neighbors, MSPCA, and the Animal Control in her area. I called her every day hoping for good news, but there was nothing. We have 11 ferrets (a couple we rescued and kept), and being a ferret lover I was thinking the worst and my heart was breaking for him.

On the 16th, we received a call from the MSPCA telling us that they had found a male ferret who nips! This ferret had wandered into a home and was cornered by a dog. The owner of the dog called the MSPCA and they went and picked up the ferret. The ferret was also found in the very same

area where the woman had lost her ferret. I began to think there was hope after all. I called the woman and told her that the MSPCA had a ferret that sounded like hers. She called the MSPCA and they were about to close for the day, so they would have to wait until the next day to see if this ferret was indeed theirs. On the 17th, we took a ride to the MSPCA and they informed us that the ferret was their lost one. I was so happy! They said the ferret had gotten out of his cage a few times while he was staying at the MSPCA. I came home and called the woman to see how the ferret was doing, and she reports that he is doing well, and doesn't even look like he'd lost any weight. She was happy to have her ferret back where he belongs, and she thanked me for my help. I really didn't do much, but I'm glad this was a happy ending! ☐

The Fuzzy Papers

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For late-breaking news and other information, you can reach us at
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978 / 957 9886
or visit our Web site at:
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Or send E-mail to:
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Earth Day 1999 at Worcester

by Tracey Goodwin

MaFF was represented at the Earth Day festival in Worcester, on April 24th. The event was well attended; we met a lot of people and answered many questions. We were fortunate to have Whitey [the MaFF Ferret] with us, because he drew a lot of attention! Parents and children came to our table for hugs from Whitey and for ferret information. A large amount of MaFF literature was handed out, and a small amount of merchandise (about \$22.00 worth) was sold, but it was well worth the effort to put in an appearance at this event.

Thanks to Jill Northrup, Dr. Karen Purcell, and Lisa Wagner for volunteering for this event, and to Donna Spirito for letting us borrow the costume she created for Whitey.

ASK DR. KAREN

by Karen Purcell, DVM

[For this issue, Dr. Karen has written us a special article on veterinary second opinions. — Ed.]

Second Opinions

Your fuzzy is sick, and you are not sure which of several problems are involved. Your veterinarian has made several suggestions, but you are still confused. What do you do?

In human medicine, second opinions, especially with specialists, are

considered a common and necessary occurrence. The same should be true with our pets. If you are seeking a second opinion, ask your primary veterinarian for assistance. For example, in the case of an eye problem, your vet may suggest a local veterinary ophthalmologist. Often, he or she can provide a referral letter with directions. At

the very least, you should have copies of all medical records, test results, and x-rays. Remember that x-rays and records are under the legal ownership of the veterinary hospital, so you may need to set up the return of the x-rays after review by your second opinion vet.

Most veterinarians will be happy to discuss the case with a colleague, especially a specialist with advanced training in the area concerned such as surgery, dermatology, etc. The important issue should be the ferret's health, and the best treatment available for the presenting problem. You should always feel free to consult another veterinarian, or even a third one, until you feel comfortable with the care and treatment provided. □

MaFF Representatives Present Ferret Seminar to Animal Control Officers

by Ronnie DiComo

On April 21st, Wolfie, Rex, Harry and Prince Charming helped MaFF representatives Sharon Burbine and Ronnie DiComo give a presentation on ferrets to the Massachusetts Animal Control Officers Training Academy

Among the topics covered were: the history of the ferret, information about rabies and what to do with a found ferret. In addition, officers were briefed on how to keep a ferret at their ACO facility, what to feed (and NOT feed) the ferret(s), the signs of various illnesses, basic ferret behavior and care, and pointers on encounters: ferrets and other animals, and ferrets and children. Sharon and Ronnie also informed the officers about how to handle biting incidents. They also dispelled some of the more common mis-

conceptions such as the notion that ferrets are not domestic (!), and the officers were given the real facts on ferrets as a rabies threat (infinitesimal), and what it means when a ferret bounces up and down in an erratic manner (which we all know is perfectly normal, but) which the ACOs need to know does NOT mean that the animal is in distress, or suffering from rabies or some other disease.

In addition, the ACOs were instructed on the history of the law in Massachusetts regarding ferrets, and the present laws were also discussed.

The ACOs were very receptive to the hour and a half class. They asked good questions and each officer was given a folder full of information and references.

This presentation is given annu-

ally by Sharon (a former ACO herself and graduate of the Academy!) and has been presented for three years in a row now. Ronnie has joined Sharon in giving the presentation for the past two years.

The fuzzies all had a good time, were on their best behavior, and they were very tired at the end of the day. □

ADVERTISE IN THE FUZZY PAPERS!

Run YOUR display ads or flyers!

Call the MaFF Hotline at 978 / 957 9886 for sizes, rates, and details.

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 e-mail 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 Fall 1999 Issue:
Monday, August 16th, 1999

For the Winter 1999 Issue:
Thursday, November 16, 1999

For the Spring 2000 Issue:
Wednesday, February 16, 2000

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

'Princess Leah'

by Bernice Urban

Princess Leah came to us from the Gimmee Shelter Ferret Rescue in Wareham. She was a biter and we knew no one would want her. She would not only bite, but bite down and drag her teeth across your skin, causing bleeding. Still, from the moment my fiancée held her, I knew that she would be ours to keep.

We brought her home to meet our other 10 ferrets, and we changed her name to Rascal. The fact is, Rascal is deaf [*This can often be the root cause for ferrets who persist in biting, as they can be startled because of the deafness. Once the situation is recognized, you can learn new techniques for approaching your ferret that will minimize or completely eliminate the biting behavior.* — Ed.] She does not get along with our other ferrets. We knew it was going to be tough to get her to stop biting, but we wanted to

give it a try. We didn't use bitter apple or thump her nose (which I don't think is any way to train a ferret). We scruffed her when she tried to bite, but most of all, we showed her that we love her and she knew we were going to take good care of her.

It took a while, but now she gives kisses to my fiancée. I still won't put my face near her mouth. At times, she still goes after our feet, but what ferret doesn't? Just the other day, my fiancée let her out to play and I didn't know it. She came up to my feet and didn't do anything, not even a little nip!

Rascal has come a long way, and we don't know what we would do without her. Just because a ferret bites does not mean that they cannot be trained not to. All they need is understanding, patience, caring, and most of all, they need our love. □

MaFF at the Natick Flea Market: Success for 2nd Year in a Row

by Jill Northrup

Once again MaFF volunteers made contributions to and attended to help out at our table at the Natick Flea Market. And once again it was a great success!

Approximately \$160 was earned for the Shelter Fund. In addition, we passed out literature to many people interested in ferrets! We were even visited by a young man and his two new ferrets!

I would like to thank the following people for generously donating their time and/or possessions to this year's Flea Market:

Jo and Ed Fowler
Amy and Jim Robbin
Sandy Ferreira
Kristine Kelley
Sharon Burbine

Richard Brown
Brian and Tina McGovern
Melinda Nelson-Hurst
Elaine Northrup
THANK YOU, ALL!

Some Shelter Reports

by Sandy Ferreira, MaFF Clerk

This issue, we have reports in from two MaFF shelters: Luv of Ferrets and The Educated Ferret:

Luv of Ferrets

As of the first of April, Luv of Ferrets had 6 ferrets in house, and no fosters out. Six ferrets were taken in during April, and 5 were adopted out during the same month. One of the ferrets was returned to its owner. By the end of the month, there were 5 ferrets in the shelter altogether.

At the start of May, there were 5 ferrets, and a total of 6 were accepted into the shelter, but only 3 adopted during the month. As of the end of May, there were 2 ferrets out in foster care and a total of 8 ferrets available at the shelter looking for new mommies and daddies.

The Educated Ferret

From April 1st through May 1st, there was an average total of 19 ferrets in the shelter, two of whom are permanent residents. As of early June, there were 12 adoptable ferrets, 4 in the process of rehabilitation, and 3 sick or injured. Six of the ferrets needed vaccinations, one was being sponsored, 4 were in need of sponsors, and one was in foster care. During April, five ferrets were adopted out to their new homes and a total of 8 were taken into the shelter.

The Educated Ferret also has a "Wish List" of the following items (but call ahead to find out current status): Petromalt, a Filing Cabinet, and Totally Ferret food. ☐



Donna Spirito of The Educated Ferret with Callie, club mascot at the Spring Frolic.

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.

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 mark1d1609@aol.com



Ferrety Craftiness by Humans - Can You Help?

by Melinda Nelson-Hurst

Hello, fellow MaFF members and ferret lovers! My name is Melinda Nelson-Hurst and I have one cat, two ferrets and one husband living with me. This is my first time writing for The Fuzzy Papers, and I am writing because I want to introduce my newest craft project to you. I am currently making plaster picture frames (similar to the one you see in the picture below) for my friends and family members. I hope to develop a ferret design for my frames and sell them to help raise money for MaFF. I have looked everywhere for

molds, stencils, and stamps. I have found a good ferret paw stamp, but more detailed stamps do not work well with my paints and I have had almost no luck in finding any molds or stencils. I hope that some of you reading this know how to make or where to buy a ferret-shaped mold and/or stencil similar to the mold I used for the black and white cat you see on this frame in the picture.

If you do know of such a thing, please leave a message for me (Melinda) on the MaFF Hotline at 978 / 957 9886. THANK YOU! ☐



Kitty picture frame above. Can YOU help with Ferrety ones?



Don't forget to keep your ferrets cool and with lots of extra fresh, clean water when the weather's hot!

A Quick President's Note...

"This Just In"

Comments on the Spring Frolic and what we learned...

At the Board of Directors meeting on June 8th, just two days after our wonderful Frolic hosted by our Western Chapter, a number of problems were discussed and hopefully resolved for future MaFF events.

I would certainly appreciate comments from the membership on the following decisions (letters to the Editor always welcome):

On Frolic Entry Fees:

Free for MaFF Members, Children Under 14, and Ferrets! \$2 discount for affiliated group member entry, such as Western Chapter Members. \$5 for the general public, and possibly a family group price? And: every ferret who arrives gets one free game entry!

I hope this encourages everyone to attend our Frolics in the future. Remember, the Halloween Frolic will be on Sunday, October 24th, 1999!

-Dr. Karen

The Adventures of MacLeod MacFerret

Episode 1: A Human of My Very Own

by Barbaralee Baron

[Gentle Readers: This is the very first episode in a new series of adventures written by Barbaralee Baron, and which she has kindly agreed to serialize in our very own Fuzzy Papers! Get set for some Ferrety-Literary fun! — Ed.]

I don't remember much of my time before I came to the pet shop. The people here were nice to all of us. They put the five of us in this big cage with ramps to run up and down on, and a hammock to curl up in and sleep, and all the food we could eat. Then one day a lady came into the shop. We were all sleeping in a big heap in this pan. Albie, the black eyed white, was across my neck when I heard her voice. I woke up and wanted to check her out. She picked me up and cuddled me. She had this neat leather sack called a purse that I kept trying to chew on. I liked leather. I thought to myself that if she liked me, maybe she would take me home. You see, I wanted a human of my very own. After a while she handed me back to the shop person and left. I sighed and went back to sleep.

A short time later I was awakened again. The lady came back and was taking me home. "Oh boy!" I thought, "now I have a human to

own." She held me in her arms while we drove in this big box called a car. I liked looking out the window. I didn't know the world was so big.

She also introduced me to another member of the household, named Taz, who tried to eat me at first, but learned later that I was to be her new playmate, not lunch. You see, Taz is a Dalmation, and as dogs go, they have big bodies with small brains. I soon had her trained as I trained my human. My human learned to let me out of my room when she was home, and to take me everywhere she went. I especially liked going for walks in the park. I always found the duck pond fascinating, but my human would never let me go in. The closest I ever got to going swimming was when I got my bath, which let me tell you is not pleasant. Don't humans know that ferrets would rather lick water off humans than themselves? I did, however, tolerate this because I love my human. □

Next Time: MacLeod Goes to the Park

MaFF Spring Frolic, A Brief Report

by Barbaralee Baron

Just in case you missed it, the Spring Frolic was held on June 6th at the Knights of Columbus hall in Chicopee, MA. We had a wonderful response at the games. The "Unpot the Flower" contest, "Widest Dirt Fountain," "Tip Over the Garbage Pail," and "First Ferret In the Pool" contests were all loads of FUN! Radio station WAQY Rock 102 lent us their Fire Engine (!) and played our Public Service Announcement daily until the day of the Frolic (many, MANY thanks!)

Even though we had a small support from the eastern part of the state, the frolic went off pretty well! The cheesecake auction took in \$124 with the winner being Judy — and it was a close decision (tasty one, too!) □

Announcing: Ferreting 101

by Lisa Wagner

Remember the day? You probably even remember the weather and the goings-on of the day. There were so many proud moments... The first smile, the first feeding, the first War Dance.

But nothing — I mean nothing — made you more proud than that first poopy that actually made it into the litter box!

You remember the moment: a fannie positioned high in the corner with a firm front-leg stance, bellows pumping for all they are worth, and then the infamous butt-drag. You were so proud and thought "my baby is finally trained!" . . . Little did you know there was so much more to learn about ferrets.

We now have a solution: Ferreting 101. The classes are designed to help make owners and potential owners aware of ferret needs. This will start sometime in September. We will review:

- Nail Clipping
- Ear Cleaning
- Vaccinations
- Caring for a Sick Ferret
- Signs of an Ill Ferret
- Bathing
- Diseases
- Issues of Concern
- Ferret Behavior
- Ferret-Proofing

The classes will be held once a month, location to be determined. Volunteers are needed. Please call the MaFF Hotline at 978 / 957 9886 and leave a message for Ferreting 101 if you are interested in helping out.

***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 978 / 957 9886 for a contribution form.*

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