

The Fuzzy Papers

NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS FERRET FRIENDS
SUMMER 2000



Spring Frolic Fun!

WE thank the Western Chapter for making this year's one of the best Spring Frolics ever! Thanks also to all our vendors and shelter operators: Ferret Association of Connecticut, Ferret Association of Rhode Island, Ferret Kingdom, Ferret Madness, Ferret Services of Freedom, Ferret Treasure Box, Ferret Wise Rescue & Rehabilitation Shelter, 4 Li'l Paws, Luv of Ferrets Shelter & Rescue, the New Hampshire Ferret Owners Coalition, and The Educated Ferret Agency. The Frolic earned us a total of \$1220.94 towards MaFF's missions, and we thank everyone who participated in all of the games and raffles!



The Cup-Tip and Un-Potting the Flower were very popular contests . . . after all, what fuzzy doesn't know these tricks??



Longest Tail was a close contest this year!



This year's Tube Race Winner, and the new MaFF Mascot for the year 2000 is Donna Spirito's sweet little fuzzy, Sparky.



Tube Race contestants line up, with fuzzies "on their marks" . . . and the winner is . . .

SPECIAL thanks also to The Ferret Company for donating cards for our raffle, Rex and Nelsa Slaughter, and to Al and Cyndi Farr for donating food sold to benefit MaFF and its missions, and to Debbie Honeysett for Frolic publicity. MaFF especially

wishes to thank the members of The Educated Ferret Agency, the Western Massachusetts chapter of MaFF, and all of the MaFF volunteers who worked on this event for their tremendous effort, generosity, and dedication in organizing this event and donating their time to help benefit MaFF and its missions. □

Letter from the President

by Jan Fleury

THIS one's going to be short-and-sweet. I'll use my corner of this newsletter (no ferrety puns, please!) to:

Once again thank the Western Massachusetts chapter of MaFF for their great success in bringing us the Spring Frolic this year.

Tell everyone we're gearing up for our first-ever Car-Washathon (see flyers and pledge forms enclosed with

this issue), and to encourage everyone to participate. There's going to be a Special Grand Prize for the person who gets the largest number of pledges, so copy those forms, get out there and chase down pledges ferret-style and you could be our winner! Stay tuned and check the website for further details.

Encourage everyone to make donations to MaFF by writing a check today and sending it to PO Box 3123, Wakefield, MA 01880. We are working on developing a full description of each of the MaFF funds, so that you

can specify which fund you want your donation to go into when you send it in by writing the fund name on the memo portion of the check. I know I'd promised a sidebar in this issue about the "Named Funds," but unfortunately as we go to press, that information is not fully developed and I don't want it to hold up the printing and mailing of this issue. If you have specific questions about MaFF Named Funds, call me at 508 / 478 2750 or send me an email at jfleury@maferrets.org ... There'll be more on this soon, including posting the information to the web site. I'll close with this simple rejoinder: Pet a ferret once in the morning and nothing bad can happen to you all day. —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:
Barbaralee Baron
Michael Dutton, DVM
Jan Fleury
Sharon Orser
Karen Purcell, DVM

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
Relief Veterinarian
PO Box 66, Uxbridge, MA 01569
Or via E-mail to:
drkaren@world.std.com

Do You Hide Your Fuzzies When the Landlord Comes to Call??

by Jan Fleury

SOME of us remember the "bad old days" when it was not okay to have a ferret at all in Massachusetts. And even though those days are gone, ferret parents still have plenty of challenges as we seek to share our lives with fuzzies. Along these lines, recently a very interesting inquiry came in to us via the MaFF website. Someone was looking for information on ferret-friendly apartment-finding!

As an ex-renter who was "caught" with a ferret in the apartment and given 60 days to get out (result was my husband and I went out and bought our first home, which we'd been saving for, but were not exactly 100% ready to purchase!) I must confess this topic is close to home (no pun intended!).

And so it occurred to your ever-curious *Fuzzy Papers* editor that it might be useful to send out an inquiry about finding homes for the HUMANS who count furchildren among their household inhabitants. What happens when you need to find an apartment, but you have one or more fuzzies??

So, if YOU know of ferret-friendly rental situations, we'd appreciate hearing from you, and perhaps we might compile a list of places people can look for a new home for themselves AND their furries! If you are a realtor, or know a realtor or property management person, perhaps this would be an interesting question to pose. If you or they would like to write us an article on the topic, so much the better!

Send your responses to MaFF Rental Survey, PO Box 3123, Wakefield, MA, or to info@maferrets.org. Many Thanks!



ASK DR. KAREN

by Karen Purcell, DVM

Some Questions from the MaFF Website

Dear Dr. Karen,

I have a ferret that I purchased about 5 months ago and I don't know his exact age. He bites and I can't trust him with my children. I don't know what to do with him any more. I have tried to find a home for him, but no one wants him because he bites. I have 4 ferrets altogether and he is the only one that actually bites, and he is not play-biting. I can't even stick my hand in the cage without him trying to nip me. I can't even let him loose because he won't let me pick him up when he is out of the cage. I was wondering if you could give me some advise on what I should do with him?

Signed,

— Mangled in Mendon

Dear Mangled,

This ferret was obviously never taught proper manners as a kit. He is biting

out of fear and ignorance, and will take a good deal of work to break of the habit. First, I would try using bitter apple on your hands whenever you handle him. Second, never give him a chance to bite, if possible. For example, to remove him from the cage, use a small hand towel to wrap around him. He can attack the towel, but he should not be able to reach you. Hold him firmly by the scruff, and reprimand him with a firm 'no' when he tries to bite. Offer him Ferretone or Laxatone on your finger – encouraging him to lick rather than bite. Always use a firm and loud 'ouch' whenever bitten, this is exactly what another ferret would do if play became too rough. Never use your hands as a plaything – always use a towel or toy. Do not strike him for biting, which will not teach him. Positive reinforcement is much more successful. It takes time and patience to correct a biter, but it can be done. The shelter Moms cer-

tainly do it all the time, but we all would prefer that this problem find a solution in a home, not at a shelter.

Sincerely,

— Dr. Karen

Dear Dr. Karen,

I wonder if you can help me. I have a 2 year old ferret that has diarrhea and is acting listless. It has been going on for about 2 months, and I am getting concerned. He eats well, but he is not the bouncy lively pet he was. Any idea what he might be dealing with? Can you recommend a vet in southeastern Massachusetts who specializes in or is very capable with ferret care?

Signed,

— Wondering in Holbrook

Dear Wondering,

Not to sound harsh, but you should have been concerned before this. How long do you have diarrhea before you worry? Check out the MaFF website for our list of known ferret veterinarians – this animal needs proper medical care, not an email diagnosis.

Sincerely,

—Dr. Karen



An Adoption Story

by Karen Purcell, DVM

THIS past spring, my sister Elaine, a teacher at an elementary school in NY, called me regarding a ferret adoption. Apparently, two of her students had suffered a house fire in the fall, and their ferrets had died. The children were devastated. Once the family had recovered and found a new residence, the teachers at the school decided to find some new pets for them. Hence, my sister's phone call. Could I arrange an adoption? Was it possible to find a cage

and the appropriate necessities for a ferret to go with it? I found out that the children were old enough to care for a ferret (older than 5 years) and the parents were very responsible as to proper nutrition and veterinary care with the previous pets.

So, I called Donna Spirito at the Educated Ferret. Did she have anyone that fit this family? We had to be careful, as the family could not be interviewed beforehand. Donna had a wonderful pair of ferrets that were more than suited for this family. Roxy and Ruby were a friendly pair of cuties, and fit the bill perfectly. Donna also had some refurbished cages. The

teachers' group was willing to pay for adoption and cage. So, after multiple phone calls to get the timing just right, I headed back to NY one Friday morning, stopped at the Educated Ferret to load ferrets, cage, and donated hammocks into the van, and off we went. Of course, I then ran into traffic and arrived late, but the ferrets were safely delivered to their new Dad in the parking lot of the school, and snuck home to be a surprise for the children after classes got out. My sister was happy to call me with the news that the entire family was delighted with their new pets, and everything was going well. □

The Fuzzy Papers

Deadlines for Submissions to
Upcoming Issues of
The Fuzzy Papers

For the Fall 2000 Issue
Wednesday, August 16, 2000

For the Winter 2000 Issue
Thursday, November 16, 2000

For the Spring 2001 Issue
Friday, February 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 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 prints or
transparencies, must have
permission of those depicted,
and can be in either color
or black & white.

Ferrets A, E, I, O, U . . . and

by Sharon Orser

[Editor's Note: Sharon tells us she may shortly be posting some of her work on a web site, so stay tuned!]

MY partner and I currently have 12 of the little fuzzies. We started out with one, just like everyone else does, and we had a great many discussions as to what would be the perfect name. We finally decided on Oscar. And then, just like everyone else, we thought he needed a buddy, so we went and got Elmo.

Hmmm.... Now my partner is a teacher, and so decided that we should get enough ferrets to use up the A, E, I, O, and U. I reluctantly went along, so over the following couple of months we got Indy, Abner, and Uri. Perfect little family: just the right size, right? Wrong! My partner says to me one day "What about 'sometimes Y'?" Well, off we went to the pet store and home we came with Yogi! And that was that for a few months.

Then one day we were browsing around a pet store in Bangor, Maine, and we saw a group of baby ferrets in a cage lying in shavings, which we all know is a definite "no-no"! So one little girl who was so tiny and not very healthy looking stole our hearts and we just had to get her. She is now one of the tubbiest little fuzzies I've ever seen! We call her Taz — well, trust me — it fit her when she was little! So much for the A, E, I, O, U and Y business.

The same day we were again browsing and I beheld the most adorable little face ever and immediately fell in love, and lo and behold, now we have Olive! That was it for nearly a year. But then we got a very sad e-mail asking for a home for two older ferrets who were being terribly neglected, confined to a cage for months on end, and we had to help... so enter Bonnie (7) and Clyde (6)! They are loving their new home and all the attention!

A few weeks later, fate would

have it that we got the privilege of rescuing three more fuzzies who were being kept in an outdoor cage. Snowy, Gizmo, and Bandit — we are still trying to find out how old they are from their previous owner. They are dealing with depression, and have nightmares quite often. Bandit will be sleeping and be pawing at the air ... we can only imagine what he must have experienced during his previous years. But we are showing them lots of love, and doling out the hugs and treats and spoiling them with an abundance of toys! They are playing more and coming to be held and cuddled more often.

On a sadder note, we just lost one of our first little ones. He was just a year old. We noticed he'd started to lose weight and we took him to the vet, not once but four times within a month or so, and we were told he was having an allergic reaction. He went from 2.7 to 1.7 pounds and we eventually lost him to what the vet had decided was bone cancer, which would have been treatable, if they had caught it in time. Abner is still sadly missed, and always will be.

A word of caution to all of you: please do not give up when you know there is something wrong with one of your little fuzzies. Be persistent with your vet until you are satisfied that your concerns are taken seriously. ☐



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Weare Animal Hospital Conducting Insulinoma Study

by Michael Dutton, DVM, DABVP

A common disease of the older ferret is a type of cancer called insulinoma. In this disease, small benign tumors develop in the pancreas of the ferret that over-secrete insulin. This over-secretion causes life-threatening low blood sugar. Currently, there is no cure for insulinoma. And the current therapy of surgery and other medications to raise blood sugar, on average, only extends life one and a half years.

Because of how the disease progresses in ferrets, chemotherapy and its ability to get all the microscopic tumors appears to be a preferred way of dealing with insulinoma. Research is limited in chemotherapy for ferret insulinoma. Investigational trials using human based chemotherapy have proved unsuccessful to date. Drugs used for human insulinoma cancers have caused acute kidney failure in the few cases where it has been tried in ferrets.

Recently, a drug called doxorubicin has been shown to be of some benefit for humans with malignant insulinomas. This is the same drug that has been used extensively in ferrets for other cancers and has a wide margin of safety. Articles that discuss insulinomas remark how this drug should be investigated for ferret insulinoma, but to date no trial has been done.

We at Weare Animal Hospital want to undertake such a trial to determine the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of doxorubicin, and we are asking for ferret volunteers. As I mentioned above, this drug has a wide margin of safety in ferrets and has been used for years.

What the trial entails is five visits. An initial visit to gather baseline blood work values, and then four visits at three-week intervals for the intrave-

nous injection of doxorubicin, and recheck monitor of blood sugar levels. The recheck visit will require anesthesia to ensure we inject the drug into the vein. The visits should be approximately 30 minutes in length.

If your ferret responds positively, we will continue the blood sugar rechecks monthly for six months. If your ferret does not respond, a decision will be made on whether to discontinue the doxorubicin and pursue the current therapy of surgery, steroids, and diazoxide.

The goal is to follow ten ferrets and their results. The cost of the above study will be approximately \$550 per ferret. Currently we are soliciting funds to offset costs of this study. Any donations are greatly appreciated and can be made to the Weare Animal Hospital. Please attach a note or memo that this is for the "Ferret Sugar Study."

To make the study statistically valid, we are looking for ferrets whose ONLY problem is an insulinoma. Concurrent diseases such as heart problems, gastro-intestinal disease, or adrenal disease disqualifies your ferret from this study.

We will try to group the ferrets in the study to receive the doxorubicin on the same day. This will help lower our costs also.

If you feel your ferret is a candidate, please telephone the Weare Animal Hospital at 603 / 529 4999. You are responsible for the costs of the first visit that includes an examination, a blood sugar level, and a chest x-ray. This visit costs \$74 for the above. If your ferret is an acceptable candidate, they will be enrolled in the study. There will be some paperwork for you to fill out along with a commitment to make all necessary follow-up appointments.

□

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

Gimmee Shelter Ferret Rescue

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



Medical Treatment for Adrenal Disease

by Karen Purcell, DVM

[We are seeing encouraging results in our shelters with Lupron. Those who would like to make donations to our shelters to help fund purchases of doses of Lupron are welcome to do so. MaFF is still discussing whether we will come out in support of this drug as a treatment recognized by us "officially." Until that time, MaFF is providing a forum for this discussion, and we welcome Dr. Karen Purcell's article here about Lupron as well as the other medical therapies for Adrenal Disease. — Ed.]

ADRENAL-associated endocrinopathy, more commonly known as adrenal disease, is a common problem in ferrets. It is usually seen in ferrets 2 years of age or older and of either sex. The most common presenting clinical sign is hair loss, usually starting at the hind end and progressing forward on the body. The history may reveal that the ferret had a previous episode of hair loss and then regrew the hair spontaneously. There is commonly mild to severe itching. Intense itching without hair loss can also occur. Atrophy of the abdominal and hind limb musculature can occur, leading to hind limb weakness and a pot-bellied appearance. Lethargy may be noted, most often seen as increased sleeping habits. Both males and females may have an increase in body odor as if they were still reproductively intact. Approximately 50% of spayed females present with vulvar enlargement with or without a mucoid discharge. Males may become aggressive and display mounting behavior. Additionally, males can present with signs of urinary tract disease or acute urinary obstruction due to prostatic enlargement or paraurethral cysts. Normal ferret adrenal glands are not easily palpated. On physical examination of a ferret with adrenal disease, one or both of the adrenals may be palpably enlarged.

The best treatment for adrenal disease is surgical removal of the affected gland(s). In the event that the ferret is unable to withstand surgery due to age or other pre-existing medi-

cal conditions, then medical therapy is an option. All the current therapies in use are experimental, but have shown some success.

LUPRON

Leuprolide acetate-4 (Lupron) is an experimental medical treatment for ferrets with inoperable adrenal disease. In adrenal disease, androgenic hormones such as estrogen and testosterone are produced in dangerous quantities that impair the health of the ferret. Lupron acts to suppress the production of these hormones, and inhibits the growth of hormone-dependent tumors. This results in a reduction in the size of the prostate in males, a decrease in the vulva in females, and hair regrowth in affected ferrets.

ARIMIDEX AND CASODEX

These drugs can effectively block and inhibit the production of the hormones which are elevated in this disease, but they do not decrease the size of the adrenal tumor or hyperplasia. Since these drugs are used as a palliative treatment they should be used at the lowest possible dose effective to reverse the clinical signs. As information on these drugs is scarce, changes to the protocol may occur from time to time. Although these drugs can be effective individually, Casodex and Arimidex should not be used together, as the precursor hormones may build up and the clinical signs may get worse.

CASODEX

This is an oral drug available as a 50 mg tablet. It is given daily. This drug inhibits testosterone. It appears just as effective as Lupron to reverse straining to urinate, aggression and return-to-male sexual behavior. Most ferrets start to become more active and play more within 1-2 weeks. This drug can be effective for males and females (it just depends upon which hormone the tumor is producing). It should not be handled by pregnant women. Most pharmacies should be able to compound it into a liquid (including the compounding pharmacy above). Do not use this drug with Arimidex.

ARIMIDEX

This drug blocks the enzyme which converts testosterone to estrogen. It is available as a 1 mg tablet. It is given daily. It appears less effective than Lupron or Casodex, but can be effective for some ferrets with this disease. It should not be handled by pregnant women. Do not use this drug with Casodex.

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Weiss CA, Scott MV. *Clinical aspects and surgical treatment of hyperadrenocorticism in the domestic ferret: 94 cases (1994-1996)*. *JAAHA* 1997 Nov-Dec; 33(6):487-493.

Also, personal email communications with Cathy Johnson-Delany DVM and Charles Weiss DVM, who are currently doing research with these medications. □

Calling All Volunteers!

MaFF NEEDS Foster Parents for our shelters. Contact a MaFF shelter today (see page 5 for the shelter list). MaFF NEEDS volunteers to take turns monitoring our Hotline messages.

MaFF Committee Chairpersons

**S T I L L
N E E D E D ! !**

We are in dire need of volunteers to step forward and become MaFF Chairpersons for the following Committees:

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.

Could it be YOU, or you and a good pal you enjoy working with?

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Here is another key spot we need filled right away.

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

If you are interested, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Jill Northrup, by calling the MaFF Hotline and leaving a message, or by sending us email from the MaFF web site.

The Adventures of MacLeod MacFerret

Episode 5: Silver Springs

by Barbaralee Baron

LIVING in Florida is definitely different from living in New England. For one thing, it doesn't get real cold here. Oh, they have the occasional frost, but by noontime it's warm. I do miss the snow though. It was fun to tunnel through. The beaches here are interesting. They have things called crabs that live in the sand ... but I'll save that for another story.

Today, Mom is taking me to a place called "Silver Springs." It's where they filmed those old Tarzan movies. I wonder if he'll be there with Cheetah. Maybe I can swing from his treehouse?

Silver Springs is home to a variety of different animals. They have Florida Panthers, lots of fish, strange looking birds called Egrets, and Blue Herons, and turtles, and alligators. Our first stop when we walked through the gate was the Jungle River ride. It took us up this big river, and there were animals on both banks. Zebra, antelopes, gazelles, ostriches, and this long-neck, spotted creature called a giraffe. As I looked over the side of the boat, Mom was holding me tightly so I wouldn't fall overboard into the water! I saw lots of fish and turtles. Our next ride turned out to be my favorite. It was called the Glass Bottom Boat ride. It was neat to look into the bottom of the water and not get wet. While traveling up the river on this ride, the tour guide pointed out these long creatures on the shores

called 'gators. I didn't think they were so scary. Until I saw one up close at our next stop.

The Creature Feature show was interesting. The first part was an educational show on animal behavior. Cats and dogs doing tricks. Man, even I can sit up and beg when there's food in front of me! The next show was on these things called alligators. We sat in the front row, and I got a real close look at one. He could have me for lunch! He also needed to see a dentist. Too many teeth to count, and big ones, too! I wonder who brushes them. There was this one 'gator who was white. He came right over to the glass ... I mean nose to nose (!) ... and said hello. Turned out this 'gator's name was Abbey. She is a white alligator born in Louisiana, in a place called the Bayou. She had blue eyes! She told me all about living at Silver Springs and the funny humans that came to look at her. But she was sad and wanted to get back home to the Bayou. I told her I just moved here from up north. The show was ending and we said goodbye, but I promised to come back and visit her real soon. She seemed very nice. I bet I could talk Mom into letting Abbey come and live with us. She could stay in the swimming pool. What do 'gators eat, anyway? I hope not ferrets. ☐

*Next Time
Episode 6: MacLeod
Goes Surfing!*

ALERT: FOOD DISH RECALL

A black and white decorated food dish carried by Petco (and also possibly by other pet supply stores) is reported to contain high levels of lead, which could be dangerous to your pet. If you have purchased a dish like this in the past 2 years at a Petco, they ask that you return it and they will give you a new one. The dish is white with black trim, and has black figures of a rabbit and a ferret going around the outside of the dish. If you have a dish like this, get rid of it!

Massachusetts Ferret Friends — Summer 2000

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

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!

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