



# Black-footed Ferret

## *Mustela nigripes*

**Description:** The black-footed ferret is a small, ferocious member of the weasel family. Very different from its relative the domestic ferret, it has a long, thin body and a wide head with strong jaws. They have short legs with large front paws and claws developed for digging.

**Habitat:** Black-footed ferrets prefer prairie grasslands populated by prairie dogs. They depend exclusively on prairie dog burrows for shelter.

**Range:** Historical range: much of western North America's prairie grasslands, extending from Canada to Mexico. As of 2015, BFFs have been reintroduced in the wild at 24 sites across 8 states, Canada, and Mexico.

**Life Span:** 1-3 years in the wild, 4-9 years in captivity



**Natural Diet:** Black-footed ferrets almost exclusively hunt prairie dogs in the wild. Prairie dogs make up more than 90% of their diet.

**Zoo Diet:** Domestic rats

**Behavior:** With the exception of breeding season and females caring for their kits, black-footed ferrets are solitary animals. They are nocturnal and fossorial (live mostly underground) predators.

**Reproduction:** Black-footed ferrets mate in spring, usually in March or April. The average litter size is 3-4 kits, although they can have anywhere from 1-10 kits. The kits develop their markings around 21 days of age and they begin to come above ground about 70 days of age.

**Conservation Status:** Endangered

