Development of Ferret Kits from Birth to Sexual Maturity

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- Jills have litters of 1 to 15 kits or more, with an average of 10 in the first litter of a well-nourished jill.
- Kits weigh only 8 to 10 grams at birth (28 grams = 1 oz), and will fit into a teaspoon, but they triple their weight in 10 days if their mother has a plentiful milk supply.
- Newborn kits make a 'cheeping' sound for attention and remain helpless for about 3 weeks. Newborns' skin has a very pungent, bitter odor, probably to discourage predators.
- Kits are born with very fine white hair, and within days are quite furry, with a longer 'mane' on the backs of their necks.
- Kits turn gray at 5 or 6 days of age, except for those that will be albinos or black-eyed whites. White markings can be distinguished, but it is impossible to tell what color the kit will be until it is over 3 weeks old.
- Kits' eyes and ear canals are sealed for more than 4 weeks, but they have their first teeth when only 2 weeks old.
- Well-nourished, healthy kits sleep or nurse most of the time during their first 3 weeks.
- At 3 weeks of age, healthy kits weigh about 100 grams, and start to eat solid food, but they still depend on milk for survival. Jills peak in their lactation at this time, and begin to look very lean if they have a large litter.
- The natural weaning age for ferrets is 5 to 6 weeks. The jill's milk supply begins to dry up, and the kits begin to share their mother's food.
- At 6 weeks of age, the size difference between male and female kits is noticeable. Female kits weigh 200 to 250 grams, and males over 300 grams.
- Kits over 3 weeks of age call for attention by making a sound something like a goose honking. They lose the ability to make this sound when they are about 8 weeks old.
- Female kits reach their full size (600 to 800 grams) by 16 weeks of age, but males continue to grow and gain weight until they are 9 or 10 months old.

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