



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: ALL PET SHOPS, DOG POUNDS, ANIMAL SHELTERS, RESEARCH DEALERS, AND RESEARCH FACILITIES LICENSED BY THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (MDA)**

**DATE: MARCH 18, 2005**

House Bill 4495, commonly known as "the ferret bill," became law on December 22, 1994. This law is now officially known as Public Act 358 of 1994. While this law is quite specific in some areas, other areas are vague, related to other state laws and regulations, or not addressed. We receive many telephone calls each day about the law. The following information should answer most of the questions that you might have.

Private ownership of ferrets is uncomplicated. Rabies vaccination (by a licensed veterinarian) is required for any ferret over 12 weeks of age (Sec. 2.(1)). Only one product is licensed for use in ferrets at this time, that being Imrab<sup>R</sup> by Rhone Merieux. Revaccination is required annually, and proof of current vaccination must be provided if requested by an animal control officer, police officer, or representative of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (Sec. 2.(4)). Other state permits or state licenses are not required, although local zoning regulations may add additional restrictions or prohibitions. Regardless of rabies vaccination status, any bites, scratches, or abrasions caused to a person by a ferret, or introduction of ferret saliva or infectious material to wounds or mucous membranes of people must be reported to county public health officials within 48 hours (Sec. 2.(2)).

Ferrets imported into Michigan must be accompanied by an original approved interstate health certificate or certificate of veterinary inspection (Sec. 5.(1)), and ferrets younger than six weeks of age must be accompanied by their natural mother (Sec. 5.(2)). Those older than six weeks must be vaccinated against distemper and documented as such on the health certificate by record of the date and type of vaccine. Imported ferrets older than 12 weeks must also have a current rabies vaccination as described above.

Sale of ferrets by Michigan breeders is regulated either by this law or by the USDA (in the case of breeders owning five or more breeding ferrets (Interpretation of Sec. 1.(9))). The intent of the law is to limit breeding of ferrets to either hobby breeders or USDA licensed breeders. Persons wishing to breed and sell ferrets under P.A. 358 of 1994 must comply with provisions for feeding, housing, housekeeping, and husbandry as related in Section 3.

Sale, exchange, or transfer of ferrets by non breeders within Michigan may require a pet shop, animal shelter, or dog pound license through the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Animal Industry Division. Pet stores, wholesalers, brokers, and those buying and reselling ferrets need a Michigan pet shop license even if already licensed by USDA. People housing stray or owner-surrendered ferrets (usually while finding them a new home) need a Michigan animal shelter or dog pound registration. This is not stated in the ferret law, but is based on P.A. 287 of 1969, as amended) Pet Shops, Animal Shelters and Dog Pounds) that defines and regulates non rodent, non livestock mammals. As such regulated animals, ferrets sold through licensed pet stores must be accompanied by a valid pet shop health certificate identical to those used for puppies and kittens. Pet stores may not sell ferrets before eight weeks of age, the same age at which puppies and kittens may be sold. Pet shops, animal shelters, and dog pounds must maintain records of incoming and outgoing ferrets for two years.

In conjunction with Act 287, ferret housing and husbandry at a licensed pet shop, dog pound, and animal shelter facilities falls under Regulation 151. This regulation describes minimum standards for care. (While not stated in the law, we recommend that stray ferrets be held as described in P.A. 224, of 1969 for dogs and cats; i.e., an unidentified stray must be held for four days from the date of acquisition. An animal with a collar, tattoo, or other indication of ownership must be held for seven days.) Ferrets involved in bite incidents must be handled in accordance with department of public health recommendations.

Finally, all ferrets sold or transferred within Michigan must be sold or transferred with a ferret health advisory sheet provided by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. This includes ferrets sold at pet shops; ferrets sold by hobby breeders, USDA breeders, and private citizens; and ferrets adopted from animal shelters and god pounds. This can be found at [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/MDA\\_FerretHealthAdvisorySheet\\_31881\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/MDA_FerretHealthAdvisorySheet_31881_7.pdf) .

If you have further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Animal Industry Division at (517) 373-1077.