

# Feral ferret

*Mustela furo*

Invasive: High impact

## Species profile

- Habitat:** Terrestrial.
- Distribution in Ireland:** Widespread in most parts of the country.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Mustelidae.
- Reproduction:** One litter of about 6-7 young, gestation usually takes 40-43 days.

## Identifying features

- Size:** Males can range in size from 350-432mm.
- Weight:** Males can range from 711 – 1816g in weight, females generally weigh less.
- Colour:** Can be albino, generally a “washed out” brown and cream colour.
- Throat patch:** Ferrets often have a distinctive cream coloured throat patch.



Young ferret showing distinctive chin and throat patch - Shutterstock



Feral ferret, showing its long body and familiar colouring - Shutterstock



## Feral ferret

### Threats

Can predate ground nesting birds and other small rodents which would impact upon native biodiversity.

May compete with other native species for food and resources.

### Similar species

**Summer:** Summer coat is shed in October.

**Winter:** Winter coat is shed in April.

### Similar species

Due to size, shape and colouring, feral ferrets may be confused at a glance with pine marten (*Martes martes*) or the Irish stoat (*Mustela erminea subsp. hibernica*) or the invasive American mink (*Neovision vision*). Both the pine marten and the Irish stoat also have distinctive throat patches. The pine marten is protected under article 17 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).



Feral Ferret showing washed out brown-cream colouring - Shutterstock

## Invasive: High impact



American mink are most often found in or near water and can swim very well - Shutterstock



The Irish stoat could be confused for a feral ferret especially in low light (M. Brown) Copyright NPWS



Pine marten could be confused with American mink but have a distinctive buff coloured throat patch (E. W. Delaney)

