

BLACK-FOOTED FERRET UPDATE^{TWS}

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A minimum of 26 black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) kits from 12 litters were born in the wild during 1997 on the UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge, north-central Montana. The confirmed spring breeding population was 23 (11 males, 12 females). Twenty captive-reared ferrets were released during October, 1997 to augment this growing population and was the fourth year of reintroductions. These ferrets were released among a subset of residents to investigate how ferret density may impact movements, distribution and survival. Resident and newly released ferrets were monitored with telemetry from September through mid-ovember, 1997 on treatment and control areas. Ferret density on the treatment area was 3.5 times that of the control area. No significant differences in survival were detected between or within areas before or after captive-reared ferret releases. Investigations of the ultimate capacity of the UL Bend area to support ferrets are continuing along with efforts to determine when this population will become self-sustaining and be capable of producing wildborn kits for translocation to other sites.