

essential characters, they may with safety be pronounced two distinct species. The ferret has a longer and thinner body, a narrower head, and a sharper snout than the polecat. It has not the same sagacity in providing its subsistence, and unless taken care of and nourished in the house, it cannot even exist, at least in our climates, for those which have been lost in the burrows of rabbits have never multiplied, but most probably perished by the severity of the winter. The ferret also, like other domestic animals, varies in colour, and is as common in hot countries as the polecat is scarce. The female is conspicuously smaller than the male; and when in season, Gesner says, she has even been known to die if her desires were not gratified. They are reared in casks or chests, where it is usual to furnish them with beds of flax. They sleep almost perpetually, but no sooner are they awake than they eagerly seek for food, which consists of bran, bread, milk, &c. The females bring forth twice a year, and go six weeks with their young. Some of them eat their young almost as soon as they are brought forth, are immediately in season again, and then have three litters in the year, each of which consists of from five to nine.