

## Polecat Identification.

Polecats are becoming more common in our area, but positive identification can be tricky due to their high similarity with domestic ferrets that have either been bred to look like polecats, or have escaped and hybridised. The following pictures of polecats highlight the key characteristics and identifying features used to distinguish them from polecat-ferrets or hybrids.



Photo by Mark Hows.

The bandit face band contrasts strongly with the dark face fur. The cheek patches do not reach the brown nose. There is no white throat patch and all the paws are dark.



Photo by Matthew Bosworth.

The facial band is less distinct but still present on this polecat in its lighter summer pelt. The white around the muzzle still does not extend quite to the nose.

| Feature       | Polecat  | Polecat-ferret   |
|---------------|--|--|
| <b>Nose</b>   | Brown.   | Pink or pinky-brown.   |
| <b>Face</b>   | Dark fur always extends to the nose. Typical "bandit" features of pale cheek patches and frontal band contrast strongly with the dark face mask.                             | Dark fur does not extend to nose. Pale cheek patches and frontal band can be extensive over face and contrast poorly, if at all, with the face mask. There may be additional white facial markings present.  |
| <b>Throat</b> | Generally no pale throat patch, or if present, less than 5cm long.   | White throat patch is longer than 5cm.   |
| <b>Paws</b>   | Dark fur on paws.  | May have one or more white paws.   |
| <b>Body</b>   | Two tone fur where dark guard hairs cover buff coloured underfur. The effect is a dark body (though this may be paler due to seasonal variation), with no white guard hairs. | Body is paler than the wild polecat (though this may be paler or darker with seasonal variation and maturity). May well have white guard hairs scattered over body, particularly over hindquarters and tail. |



Photo by Mark Hows.

The Bandit face is distinct. Only dark guard hairs cover the body (even though the creamy underfur shows on the flanks) there is no presence of any white hairs.

The body fur is completely dark, with no white hairs. There is no throat patch and all the paws are dark.



Photo by Vince Lea.