

Running a Ferret Race Night



Ferret Racing is one of those novel fundraising ideas that can really add a different dimension to any organisation's fundraising events.

It might not be the best money earner in itself. But it is a great hook around which to base an event where you can get to work with all your other great ideas and unique fundraisers.

How does ferret racing work?

Most corporate and fundraising race events comprise of 5 races (4 heats and a final) with the races run every half hour, to allow betting in between (so takes approximately 3 hours). But we can also include a 'Wooden Spoon' race just before the final where the ferrets that were last in each heat compete to find a 'fastest' winner from that group to add some extra entertainment in (this can be a slow but exciting race, and means that the evening entertainment will be extended).

We provide the race tickets, pipes, fencing, speaker system and ferrets (4 ferrets per heat, with the winners of the first four heats going forward into the final; plus some extra ferrets for people to meet and handle if they wish); and can provide a race compere if required to commentate on the racing. We use clear tubes for all events so those attending can watch the ferrets all the way down the course and back again.

Betting wise, with real cash we suggest £1 per ticket, but clearly people can buy multiple tickets. There are different options available in terms of running the betting:

- 1) double your money (but it is advisable to set a limit on number tickets an individual can buy as there could be more winners than the bets can pay out)
- 2) an equal share of a percentage of the pot at the end of each heat (keeping some aside to go to the charity the client is raising money for or to simply boost the final pot if this is a fun rather than fund raising event)
- 3) a tote (which the client would need to arrange themselves, with red, blue, yellow and green tickets to match the pipes).
- 4) prizes instead of cash winnings (which some clients arrange through sponsorship and local companies giving to the event).

Alternatively at events where the racing is simply for entertainment we can provide “Banque de Fert” play money, so your guests can enjoy the fun of a flutter on the races without having to pay to do so, with a bottle of champagne to go to the person/team who has the most money at the end of the races. This tends to be very popular for team building days and wedding receptions.



Whilst bets are being taken the competing ferrets are paraded around the course for the spectators/guests to see and meet. Then once all bets are taken the ferrets are held in waiting by the handlers until the **ferret master** (compere for the show) provides the 3-2-1 countdown, and then the ferrets are released into the pipes.

The ferrets race along special clear pipes with obstacles such as a bridge, see saw and paddling pool included in the course. The ferrets are then cheered on by the race goers as they progress through the tubes and over the obstacles. At the end of the race course the ferrets have to turn themselves around in the box and make their way back along the course to their handlers. The race is not over until the first ferret has emerged and placed all four feet on the floor.

For the final, where this is a fund raising event, the four finalists are auctioned off in the room by the compere before the race commences.



Logistics

Depending on the time of year, we can provide racing entertainment indoors or outside. Though we do recommend that winter and early spring events are run indoors or under cover for spectator comfort.



For indoor events the space for the course would need to be 10m x 4m, with standing room around the outside for those being entertained. We normally have a minimum of 7 members of STARacers in attendance for race nights, and for an indoor event will need approximately 1 hour to set everything up beforehand.



For outdoor full day events, where we need our marquee as well as the course, we need a flat area of approximately 30m x 15m in size (the course can be run in front of or parallel to the marquee, and we will have our support van parked behind the marquee).

We normally have a minimum of 10 members of STARacers in attendance on the day, and will need approximately 1.5 hours to set everything up beforehand.

Though if the event starts early morning will often set up and camp over the night before if acceptable to the event organisers.

How do you raise money?

Organise a whole evening's entertainment with ferret racing included.

- This works well for social clubs, sports clubs, hotels, pubs and bars where there is plenty of indoors or outside space and plenty of customers / spectators willing to watch the fun. Though can be easily run in a Village or School Hall.
- You charge for entrance to the evening, which includes a supper, such as BBQ, Fish and Chips, Chicken and Chips, Rustic Supper (Ploughmans Lunch), Curry, or full slap up meal.

Note, it is important to have ferret racing as part of an event, e.g. "Fish'n'Chip Supper with Ferret Racing", to comply with UK gambling licence rules (see end of this document for details), rather than a night solely of ferret racing.

- A bar is also a good way to raise money at such events, it also works as a good way to boost bar sales.

Before the race evening

The more money you can raise before the event the less you are relying on race takings on the night

- See if you can encourage local firms/business, families and friends to sponsor each of the 5/6 races for say £15 to £20, and provide a prize for the winning owner in their race (which can save you paying out from the race monies taken). You may for instance land up with John Brown Builders Derby or the Cod Almighty Fishshop Stakes.
- You can also get people to pay £5-£10 to name/"own" the ferrets for each of the four heat races (the final race can include an auction on the night to 'own' the winners of the previous four heats). If this is done before the evening you could then produce some race cards that show the names and owners of each ferret and either include them within the entrance ticket price or charge 10p to £1 for each.

On the night the owner of the winning ferret for each race could receive 50% of the naming pot, so if the owners have paid £10 a ferret, they would receive £20 back and the cause would receive £20, or alternatively a prize if you have managed to find generous donators amongst the community. E.g.

Race	Red	Yellow	Blue	Green	
1	John Brown Builders Derby	'Fursty' Ferret owned by Jane Brown	'Smith's' Ferret owned by John Smith	'Speedy' owned by Andy Knap	'Excell' owned by Brian Sells
2	Cod Almighty Fishshop Stakes				
3					
4					
5					

On the race evening/night

- **Race & Ferret Sponsorship**

If you haven't done so already, then you can still encourage people to pay to name and 'own' a ferret at the start of each race.

- **Race goers will be able to place a bet.**

- At a lot of the events we attend we provide a simple £1 bet double your money system – but bear in mind this could, if a lot of race goers place bets on the same ferret and it wins, result in race losses as well as wins for the cause, so we always recommend putting a betting limit on this type of betting system.

- Alternatively, you could run your own totaliser (you will need to arrange and man this during the evening) -

Spectators choose their ferret and pay a fixed amount i.e. £1. They receive a coloured ticket to show who they backed.

The total money placed on each race is added up. A percentage, usually 30% - 50% or a fixed amount per race goes to the charity / good cause.

With a normal totaliser the remainder is shared equally between anyone holding a winning ticket.

- Alternatively, or as well, all winning tickets through the course of the event go into one big draw at the end for a major prize such as a weekend break, TV or similar. The more winning tickets you have to go into the draw the higher your chance of winning the main prize.
- For those wanting Ferret Racing simply for entertainment rather than money raising, we can also provide monopoly money to enable race goers to have a flutter without making a dent in their pockets.

JUST LET US KNOW IN ADVANCE WHAT TYPE OF BETTING YOU ARE LOOKING TO DO

- **Live auction of the ferrets in the last race**

If you have sold all the owners for all the races make the last race of the evening the Auction Race. Sell the chance to be an 'Owner' for each ferret to the highest bidders (or you could just set a fixed price). The winning owner of the winning ferret in the race receives 50% of the monies raised during the auction, your charity fund keeps the rest, or you can offer a special prize such as a bottle of champagne (see if a local wine store/supermarket will donate it for the cause).

- **For entertainment and fund raising during the evening you could arrange**

- **A Raffle and/or Tombola** – ask local businesses to donate and/or family/friends to provide unwanted gifts
- **Guess the name of the teddy** – simply requires a large sheet of paper (A3 or A2) with squares marked out all over, and names of teddy bears written in each box. The race goes then pay 20p-£1 to choose the name they think is the teddy's and write their name in that square (only 1 person per square). At the end of supper the winner can be announced, who wins the teddy.

Another take on this is guess the name of the ferret, where we can supply a photo of a ferret, you then do the same as for the teddy with a list of names, and the winner gets a percentage of the takings from the Guess The Ferret game (or a prize such as box of chocolates).

- **Quick Reverse Bingo** – Each person who takes part is sold 5 Bingo cards for £5 in total. Everyone with cards then stand up while bingo numbers are called out. If one of the numbers on their card is called, they must tear up the card, when all 5 cards have been torn up they sit down. The prize could be 25% or 50% of the total bingo takings (whatever percentage you decide) When there are 3 people still standing you can ask if they would like to share the prize, if they don't then it continues down to last 2 standing, when again this can be asked, and if they still haven't agreed to share down to last man standing.

NOTE do run through when it gets to a handful still standing the numbers that have been read out already to make sure that no one is still standing who shouldn't be.

- **Tea & Home Baked Cake Stall / Sweet, Crisps & Soft Drinks Stall** – work very well at school events, especially alongside a BBQ.
- **Guess the weight of the Cake** – get someone to bake and donate a cake, weigh before the event, then allow people to pay to guess the weight of the cake, record the guesses then at the end of the evening determine who has won. The winner who guesses the nearest weight, wins the cake.
- **Guess the number of sweets in the jar** – fill a clear plastic jar with a mixture of sweets of all shapes and sizes, then allow people to pay to guess the number of sweets in the jar, record the guesses then at the end of the evening determine who has won. The winner who guesses the nearest weight, wins the sweets.

Are race nights legal?

As with any type of Race Night, you should ensure your event falls within the conditions of the Lotteries and amusements act 1976 (Amusements with Prizes) for which no Licence is required.

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/FactSheetRaceNights.pdf>

Whilst we are not able to provide Legal Advice the following is our own interpretation:

- You include another attraction. E.g. Supper, Bar, Disco, Raffle etc.
- It should be run as a "Fish and Chip Supper and Race Night", rather than a Race Night with Fish and Chips!.
- Raffles being held as part of an event do not need a licence so long as the tickets are sold at the event itself, are sold for no more than £1 each, and no cash prizes are offered.
- Proceeds go to your club or charitable cause not private gain.
- Advertising is restricted to your own members and premises, and if the event is in aid of a charity then the name of the charity and charity number appear on all posters and tickets for that event.

The main rule seems to be it must be a game of Luck not Skill!

Which with ferret racing luck plays a big part.

If you would like to book us for your event please contact Claire on 01189690435 or 07990 977074 or email info@starescue.org.uk