



Boxes of geckos and corn snakes are displayed in a pet shop at the Lanling Flower & Bird Market in Shanghai. — Lu Feiran

Niche pets can be so cute, but your home environment may kill them



Amy Ma's pet Australian green tree frog

Lu Feiran

Deng Yingya became fascinated by angora ferrets after seeing them in online videos, so she bought one from a pet shop in Putuo District and named it Kai Kai.

Bred at a Scandinavian facility, the mammal has a face similar to that of a hamster and is 30-50 centimeters long. Owners praise the animals as “clean as cats and friendly as dogs.” With training, ferrets can even learn to do a few tricks.

“I have raised both cats and dogs, and yes, my lovely Kai Kai is as cute as expected,” the marketing specialist said of her new pet.

The angora is a relatively new breed of ferret, in existence for about three decades.

Deng bought her ferret from a shop at the Lanling Flower & Bird Market — the largest venue selling pets and ornamental plants in Shanghai.

The shop, operated by Ding Ning, is never as busy as nearby vendors selling kittens, puppies, koi fish and beetles, but it does have a stable clientele.

Young customers don't blink at the prices. A ferret costs 2,000 yuan (US\$300) on average, equivalent to the price of a British Shorthair cat or a Corgi puppy. With the new pet comes a pedigree certificate and a guidebook of how to raise ferrets.

“The angora ferret is a relatively new type of pet in a fiercely competitive market,” said Ding. “Some of my customers have gone on to become vendors in their own right.”

The rising popularity of such niche

pets is mostly down social networking, where netizens upload videos of their pet ferrets, snakes and even foxes on video-sharing websites such as Bilibili and Douyin, and lifestyle platforms like Xiaohongshu.

On Bilibili, it's common to see videos of angora ferrets, which attract millions of views, while on Xiaohongshu, successful niche-pet bloggers can garner hundreds of thousands of followers.

However, what looks cute on a screen may not be an ideal pet once it's arrived in your home.

A banker who goes under the online name of Birmingham shared his sad tale of owning a sugar glider, a species of Australian marsupial.

Birmingham said he first saw sugar gliders on Xiaohongshu. The small possum has a fluffy body, long tail and big