

translucent tooth would indicate a ferret of around six years or older.

Ferrets are nearsighted, and can only see in shades of grey, although it is thought that some can see some blues and reds.

Ferrets have an excellent sense of smell.

Ferrets are carnivores (meat eaters)

Ferrets can not survive out in the wild.

It is thought that ferrets have been domesticated for over 2500 years.

Vaccinations

Ferrets require only two vaccinations, both of which are extremely important for the life of your ferret. Ferrets require **Fervac-D or Purevax** for canine distemper. This shot is required at least twice, three weeks apart, for a young ferret or a ferret with unknown vaccination history, then once a year every year afterwards for the life of the ferret. Canine distemper is extremely contagious. Keeping your ferret indoors is no protection against this deadly disease. If you so much as come into contact with an infected animal, or even where one has been, you can take it home on your clothing to your ferret. Vaccination is the only protection, there is no cure. Canine distemper has a 100% fatality rate.

Ferrets also require **Imrab-3** for rabies. Ferrets are unlikely to come into contact with rabies, and even if they do, have only slim chance of shedding it in their saliva. There has never been a case in the history of the United States of a ferret passing rabies onto a human. However, if your ferret is not vaccinated, and he bites or nips someone, he can and will be killed and tested. A vaccinated ferret will most likely just be quarantined for several days or weeks.

Ferrets occasionally have reactions to vaccinations.

These are rare, but can be life threatening. Just because your ferret has never had a reaction does not mean he will never have one. It is a good idea to stay at the vets office for 15-20 minutes after a vaccination to be on the safe side. It is also a good idea to separate your ferrets canine distemper shot and your ferrets rabies shot by three weeks. If your ferret exhibits any kind of strange behavior after a reaction, such as vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, or anything out of the ordinary, get the ferret back to the vet immediately. Very rarely, ferrets have had reactions a few days after a vaccination.

Symptoms to Look Out For

Lethargy (lack of energy)

Vomiting

Diarrhea lasting more than a day

Hind end weakness (Drunken walk)

Drooling

Hair loss

Unusual bumps or tumors

Swollen vulva in females

Urinary blockages in males

Unusual behavior

Swollen gums or feet pads

Pale, almost white gums

Yellowing of the skin or eyes

Green, slimy stools

Dark tarry stools

Lack of stools

Lack of appetite

Rough fur, or very short whiskers

Swollen or painful abdomen

Loose skin and dull eyes

Seizures

Overheating

Lumps on body or feet

Common diseases

Common cold and Flu

Ferrets are the only animal in the world that catch the same cold and flu that humans do. Symptoms can be a runny nose, sneezing, lethargy, and decreased appetite. Just like in humans, this will usually pass on its own, although in serious cases, amoxicillin is usually prescribed to help any secondary infections.

Helicobacter Mustelae Infection (Gastric Ulcers)

Gastric ulcers are commonly seen in ferrets that have been under stress. Most ferrets have the bacteria that causes gastric ulcers already in their system, so a blood test usually does not show much. However, it is only harmful if it flares up, which can be caused by stress such as a new ferret, a change in environment, a change in owners, or an illness. Gastric ulcers are easily treated, but without treatment, are fatal.

Symptoms include, loss of appetite, bloody, or dark tarry stools, grinding of teeth, and in extreme cases, gagging and pawing at the mouth. Treatment is usually either Flagyl, Amoxicillin, and Pepto Bismol daily for six weeks, or Biaxin, Amoxicillin, and Pepto Bismol daily for two weeks. The latter treatment is much faster, and is usually better received by the ferret.

Epizotic Catarral Enteritis (ECE)

Also known as the green slime disease, ECE is a very contagious virus, that as of yet, has no preventative, and no cure. Symptoms of ECE include, dark green slimy diarrhea, loss of appetite, lethargy, birdseed like stools, and is extremely contagious. If you have ECE, every

ferret in your household will come down with it. ECE is not usually fatal, except in older ferrets, especially those with other diseases. ECE attacks the digestive system, and is thought to cause permanent damage. Young ferrets, under a year, may only have symptoms for a day or two. Older ferrets may have symptoms anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. In these cases, the ferret will need to be force fed in order to survive. Duck soup is usually a good place to start.

The ferret may also need pedialyte, or even subcutaneous fluids, and an antibiotic for secondary infections. Interferon is a cat drug thought to help ferrets with ECE. Once a ferret has been exposed to ECE, they can be carriers of the virus for up to a year without showing any symptoms.

Insulinoma

Insulinoma is a cancer of the pancreatic beta (insulin producing cells). The tumors produce an excessive amount of insulin, which drives the blood sugar (glucose) into the body at too rapid of a rate. Symptoms include, staring blankly into space, drooling, lethargy, hind end weakness (drunken walk), little appetite. Insulinoma will eventually progress to death if not treated. Treatment consists of surgery to remove the tumors, which may or may not help, or medically with Prednisone and/or Proglycem, which will not cure the cancer, but will slow down the growth, and treat the symptoms. Insulinoma is the opposite of diabetes, which is extremely rare in ferrets, although not unheard of.

Adrenal Tumors

Adenomas and Adenocarcinomas are becoming more and more frequent in ferrets over the age of three.

Adenomas are adrenal tumors that are benign, adenocarcinomas are malignant. There are three different kinds, left side, right side, and bilateral. Most tumors are left sided, some right sided, and a few bilateral. Symptoms include hair loss, swollen vulva in a spayed female, urinary blockages in a male (can be life threatening), ferrets acting like they are in heat (overly friendly to other ferrets). Very rarely does it affect energy until the final stages. In fact, some ferrets seem to have even more energy in the beginning stages of the disease. Treatment consists of surgery to remove the affected adrenal gland, which can be very difficult if it is right sided or bilateral due to the vena cava. Medical alternatives include Lysodren (a.k.a Mitotane), Ovaban, or Lupron. The most effective is Lupron, but regardless of which one is used, they will only take care of the symptoms, the tumor will continue to grow. Without treatment, ferrets will have maybe 6-18 months after onset of symptoms, with treatment, 12 months to a full life.

Lymphosarcoma

Lymphosarcoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system. Somewhat similar to lymphoma in humans, diagnosis can be made using a combination of CBC, biopsy of lymph or popliteal nodes, thoracic fluid and/or bone marrow aspirate and cytology. Symptoms can include an enlarged spleen, lumps or masses on the body, wasting and lethargy. Treatment consists of a chemotherapy protocol, including prednisone, vincristine, cytoxin, which may cause remission, but has only a 70% success rate, Alkeran, which may or may not help, or Prednisone alone, which will treat the symptoms, but not the disease.

Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy and/or Congestive Heart Failure is when the heart muscle begins to weaken, and cannot pump all of the blood normally. As the blood begins to back up, it fills the area around the heart, and gradually, the lungs. Very similar to what occurs in humans, cardiomyopathy is a debilitating disease in which the symptoms can be treated, but the disease will run its course. Symptoms can include a persistent cough, lack of energy, and difficulty breathing. Diagnosis can be made by EKG, or x-ray. Treatment consists of diuretics such as Lasix, which will help keep the fluid down. Stress can be fatal to a ferret with CMP, keep things as normal and steady as possible.

Medicines

Giving medicines to a sick ferret can at times be quite a challenge. When giving a pill form, the easiest way is to open the ferrets mouth, pop the pill in the back of the throat, close the ferrets mouth, and massage the throat to encourage swallowing. The other way is to disguise it in food or treats. When giving a liquid form, a 1cc syringe without a needle is probably the easiest way. At first, let the ferret taste it, once in a rare while they may actually like it. If this is not the case, scruff the ferret, and slowly release the syringe in the side of the mouth. In cases where the ferret absolutely detests the taste, wrap the ferret securely in a towel, scruff, and release the syringe slowly in the side of the mouth. Try to follow this with a treat, to get the taste of the medicine out of the ferret's mouth. If a subcutaneous medicine (giving a shot) is required, the easiest way is to scruff the ferret, and shoot the medicine into the scruff. If you use a brand new needle, not one that has drawn medicine out of a rubber stopper, it will go in much much easier.

Basic Treatments

Following are some over the counter remedies you can use to help a sick or ailing ferret, just remember, there is no substitute for veterinary care.

Triaminic - for colds, give .2ccs once or twice daily, or as directed by a vet.

Benadryl - for allergies and allergic reactions, give .25ccs once daily or as directed by a vet.

Pepto Bismol - for upset stomachs, give .25 ccs twice daily, or as directed by a vet.

Pepcid A/C - for upset stomachs, make up solution by grinding up 1 10mg pill and mixing with 10ccs of water, mix very well, give .25 ccs once or twice daily or as directed by a vet.

Baby aspirin - give only in extreme cases, and under the supervision of a vet, can cause gastric bleeding and other problems, if directed, give 1/4 tablet of baby aspirin once daily.

Ensure or Sustacal - works well as a liquid food replacement that can be given by oral syringe until the ferret starts eating on their own again. A minimum of 20ccs total daily is necessary to stay alive, up to 50ccs can be given as long as it is spread out over the day. Ensure should not be given to ferrets with insulinoma.

Chicken baby food can also be mixed in with Ensure or just mixed with water and given by oral syringe.

Do not under any circumstances ever give Tylenol or Ibuprofen, they are toxic to ferrets. Any other over the counter remedies, please check with your veterinarian first.

Please remember that there is no substitute for veterinary care, if you experience anything out of the ordinary, please see a veterinarian. This pamphlet in no way covers all medical aspects of ferret care, if you have any more questions, please contact your vet, your local shelter operator, or the contact information below. There is also a wealth of information available on the Internet. A good place to start is <http://www.ferretcentral.org>. This brochure was created by Shelley Knudsen.

For more information please contact:

Metropolitan NY/NJ Ferret Welfare Society, Inc.

1091 Sunnyview Road
Mountainside NJ 07092
e-mail: Admin@metroferret.com
Web: www.metroferret.com

Ferret Medical Info



Ferrets, or *Mustela putorius furo*, are rapidly becoming the third most popular pet in the United States. However, many vets are still not very familiar with them, although the numbers are rising. Because of that, and because many people prefer not to spend the money on a vet visit until it can sometimes be too late, here are a few things to look for, and a few home remedies that can sometimes help. This brochure does not in any way take the place of a vet, however, and if you suspect something is wrong, please go see a vet. Whether they have ferret experience or not, they do have four+ years of extensive training on animals in general, and numerous years of experience.

Basic Ferret Facts and Standards

Ferrets live an average of 7-9 years, with lifespan depending on heredity, attention and care, diet, and exercise.

A healthy female ferret will weigh anywhere from 1-3lbs, and a healthy male ferret will weigh anywhere from 2-5lbs.

A well fed, well bred healthy ferret will have soft, silky fur, and long whiskers.

The normal rectal temperature is 100-103 F (37.8-39.4 C)

The normal heart rate is 216-250 bpm.

The normal respirations are 33-36 per minute.
Normal fasting glucose (at least 4hrs) is between 65-164.

Ferrets usually reach full adult size by the age of six months.

Ferret age is usually determined by the upper canines, a solid bright white tooth would indicate a ferret a year or younger, a yellow completely