

COMMON FERRET DISEASES

Adrenal Gland Disease

A common disease affecting middle age to older ferrets

Symptoms

1. Hair loss (usually involves the tail and/or the pelvic region - may involve the entire back half of the ferret)
2. Swollen vulva in females (mucus discharge usually present)
3. Straining to or unable to urinate in males (**EMERGENCY CONDITION !!!**)
4. Weight loss
5. Pot-belly appearance
6. Scratching a lot (pruritus)



Treatment

1. Surgical removal of the diseased adrenal gland is the most common and most effective treatment at present
2. Hormone therapy with a new human drug (LUPRON) has been utilized with success over the last 2 years

INSULINOMA - A very common disease affecting middle age and older ferrets. This condition results from tumor cells within the pancreas secreting excess amounts of insulin, thereby creating a glucose deficiency in the patient.

Symptoms

1. Gradual onset of weakness
2. Decreased ability to rouse from sleep
3. Excess salivation
4. Unexplained weight loss
5. Acute episodes of collapse that may progress to seizures

Recommended Treatment

1. The preferred treatment involves abdominal exploratory surgery to examine the pancreas for evidence of tumor/cancerous nodules and remove the cancerous tissue. Medical therapy is usually administered for the remainder of the ferrets life to maintain proper glucose levels in the face of new cancerous cells invading parts of the pancreas left after surgery.
2. Medical therapy may be utilized as the sole therapy when economics prevent both surgical and medical therapy as the combined treatment of choice. The 2 drugs recommended for therapy are Prednisolone (to increase glucose production by the patient) and Proglycem (an insulin blocking drug)

LYMPHOMA - Among the most common neoplasms (tumors) in ferrets

Symptoms

1. Anorexia
2. Weight Loss
3. Acute Weakness / Lethargy
4. Dyspnea (difficulty breathing)
5. Coughing
6. Swollen lymph nodes (Back of rear legs or under the neck)



Recommended Treatment

1. Chemotherapy (depending on the condition of the patient and the extent of the organs affected)
2. Surgical removal of the swollen lymph nodes (removing the spleen may be of help in individual cases)
3. Use of glucocorticoids (steroids - one of the agents used in the chemotherapy treatment regimen)

HEARTWORM DISEASE - Affects all ages. Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes. Affects both inside and outside ferrets



Symptoms

1. Weight loss
2. Dyspnea (difficulty breathing)
3. Increased eosinophil counts (as noted on a Complete Blood Count - CBC)

Diagnosis

1. Presumptive diagnosis can be obtained from lab data (increased eosinophil count), physical exam and presence of enlarged heart or fluid in the chest on XRAY
2. Confirmation involves identifying heartworms on cardiac ultrasound

Recommended Treatment

1. Only one drug has been used with continued success (IMMITICIDE)

Prevention

1. Dr. Rich prefers diluted IVERMECTIN liquid given orally once a month