

Zoonoses

Information for the Ferret Owner

Zoonoses is defined as diseases transmissible between animals and people and visa versa. For the most part, this article will deal with diseases from ferrets to people. This list is not meant to include all diseases, just the more common ones.

Viruses

Rabies is probably the best known zoonoses. Fortunatley, it is very difficult for ferrets to contract rabies and even more difficult for ferrets to pass it on to a person. The virus must pass through the saliva and there has been only one case to my knowledge where the virus has been found in the ferret's saliva.

Parainfluenza is a viral infection also. Our concern is a person with a 'cold' caused by parainfluenza passes it on to your ferret. For this reason, keep people who have cold or flu symptoms away from your pet.

Intestinal Worms

This is probably the largest public health concern. A variety of intestinal parasites such as roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, and giardia can be transmitted to people from contact with ferret feces. The people most likely to contract these diseases are children, senior citizens or people with compromised immune systems.

The best way to deal with intestinal worms is by prevention. Ferrets should have an annual stool sample examination and if any intestinal worms are noted, the ferrets should be treated appropriately.

Since intestinal worms do not always appear on a single stool sample, they should be tested yearly.

Bacterial

Most bacteria that ferrets get can be passed onto people. For the most part, a person's normally functioning immune system should keep the person from developing disease. Bacteria that are potentially contagious are leptospirosis, salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis, and tuberculosis

Fungal

Ringworm is a skin disease caused the fungus *Microsporum* or *Trichophyton*. Although uncommon in ferrets, it can be easily passed to people by direct contact with the affected skin.

Conclusion

Good hygiene such as washing your hands after handling your ferret and properly disposing of stool will minimize a person from contracting most diseases that are potentially carried by ferrets.

Resources

<http://www.weareanimalhospital.com/healthinfo.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasiticpathways/animals.htm>

<http://omni.ucsb.edu/connect/acc/policy.html>



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