

Parasites

Information for the Ferret Owner

Like many of our other pets, ferrets do get a variety of parasites. Fortunately since most ferrets are primarily indoor pets, we do not see a high incidence of these.

The following is a listing of common parasites and their symptoms.

Ear mites – this is caused by a little mite, which causes ear inflammation and infection. It can be common in young ferrets and can spread to other ferrets easily in the same household. Not all cases of ear inflammation is ear mites though, most are bacterial or yeast infections. An ear swab examined under the microscope can show the cause of the inflammation.

Scabies – this is an itchy skin condition that causes hair loss and reddened skin. Scabies can be very hard to diagnose since the mites are few in numbers and burrow into the skin. This is also a potential human health hazard!

Heartworm – this is a mosquito transmitted spaghetti-like worm that lives in the heart and lungs of the ferret. There is a preventive medication (like dogs and cats). Unless the ferret is outdoors a significant portion of the time, we do not routinely recommend using the preventive medication.

Roundworms – this is an intestinal worm that causes diarrhea. It is easily checked for on a stool sample examination. It is also easily treated. There is a small risk of human infection with this worm.

Hookworms – Like roundworms, this is easily checked for and treated. It is also a potential human health hazard.

What about ringworm? **Ringworm** is not a worm at all, but a skin yeast infection. It has the name ringworm because the skin changes in people include a raised, reddened circular area. In olden times this looked like a coiled worm under the skin, hence the name ringworm.



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