

Ferret Gastritis

Information for the Ferret Owner

Gastritis is one of the most common illnesses found in the domestic ferret.

Basic Information

Gastritis is an inflammation of the stomach lining. In the ferret, one of the primary causes of gastritis is stress. Stress can be brought on by a change in the environment, moving, abrupt change in diet, or by adding a new ferret. Gastritis can also be caused by a bacterial infection. Left untreated, bleeding stomach ulcers can form, resulting in anemia, severe dehydration, and death.

Signs/Symptoms

A ferret with gastritis will have a loss of appetite, become lethargic, and will have constant diarrhea. Vomiting may also be present. The animal may also be pawing at its mouth and may be grinding its teeth. If ulcers are present the feces will appear black and tarry.

Treatment

Treatment of ferret gastritis will primarily involve nursing care.

- An ulcer management medication called sucralfate will need to be administered one half-hour prior to hand feedings.
- Amoxicillin antibiotics will need to be administered to control any secondary bacterial infections.
- Pink bismuth (i.e., Pepto-Bismol) may need to be given daily.
- The ferret will need to be hand fed approximately every two (2) hours with special food (see the force feeding handout). Give small amounts to start and slowly increase. However, the ferret's regular food and water should be available at all times.

If treatment is successful, the ferret should show signs of improvement within four weeks.

Because gastritis can be a very debilitating disease, the best cure is prevention. Always ease your ferret into a new environment, keep as many of its familiar things with it as possible such as toys, knapsacks, hammocks, etc. When changing your ferret's food, always mix the new with the old, slowly increasing the amount of new food and decreasing the amount of old food over a period of two weeks. When you bring home a new ferret or any other animal, it is recommended to quarantine the new animal for two to four weeks, then slowly introduce them to one another and always keep an eye on them.



Exotic and Bird Clinic of New Hampshire
91 North Stark Highway
Weare, New Hampshire
(603) 529 - 4999