

Three Ferret Cases Involving Chordoma, Lymphoma and Adrenal Gland Disease

Find out what happened with three ferret cases that involved a chordoma, lymphoma and adrenal gland disease.

By Jerry Murray, DVM

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Photo Courtesy Jerry Murray, DVM
Chordomas are a common ailment in ferrets.

Summer is here, and parts of the country are experiencing the heat of the summer. Oddly enough, July has been mild down here in Dallas. Anyway I'll cover three recent ferret cases in this column.

The first case was a chordoma on the tip of a ferret's tail. Chordomas are an uncommon tumor in most animals, but they are common in ferrets. Most chordomas appear at the tip of the tail, but sometimes they can occur in the bones (vertebrae) of the spinal column, especially in the neck. The chordomas on the tip of the tail are easy to see and to diagnose. Treatment is to simply amputate the tail. Amputating the tail is usually an easy surgery to perform. The ferret will look just fine with the short tail. In very rare cases a chordoma can occur in the neck after a chordoma has been removed from the tail. Unfortunately, chordomas in the neck are eventually fatal. [Click image to enlarge](#)

Photo Courtesy Jerry Murray, DVM
Lymphoma is another common ailment in ferrets.

The second case was an older ferret with an enlarged lymph node under his jaw. Enlarged lymph nodes can be from cancer (lymphoma), infections and chronic inflammation. Unfortunately lymphoma is very common in ferrets. Surgery was done to remove the lymph node, and it was sent out to a pathologist. It did come back as lymphoma (a malignant cancer), and special testing was done to determine that it was a T-cell lymphoma (the worst form of lymphoma). He was started on oral chemotherapy with pred and Cytoxan. So far he is doing well. [Click image to enlarge](#)

Photo Courtesy Jerry Murray, DVM
Male ferrets can suffer prostate and bladder infections as a complication of adrenal gland disease.

The third case is a male ferret with adrenal gland disease. He also had an enlarged prostate with a bad bacterial infection. This is a serious and potentially fatal complication from adrenal gland disease. He was unable to urinate due to the thick urine (from the infection and prostatic disease) and the enlarged prostate clamping down on his urethra (the narrow tube that empties the bladder). A urinary catheter was sutured in place, and his bladder emptied and flushed. He was also started on an antibiotic for the prostate and bladder infection. In addition he was given a melatonin implant and a high dose of Lupron to treat the adrenal gland disease and the enlarged prostate. Fortunately he responded nicely to treatment, but he will need continuous treatment of the adrenal gland disease to prevent future problems. In cases that do not respond, additional prostate medications such as Proscar, Avodart and Flomax can be used to treat the enlarged prostate, but only under a veterinarian's care.

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