

Gerbil Eye Infection

A gerbil has a swollen eye and is losing hair from around the area.

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Q: We are gerbil sitting for my daughter's teacher. When we brought Scooter home, I noticed his eye appeared swollen or half-shut. Not being familiar with this animal species, I thought maybe that was just his eye. Then a few days later, I noticed that he was losing the hair around that eye. It is now a few days later and he appears to be constantly scratching at that eye making it and his nose bleed. Any ideas what could be causing this or what I can do to help him?

A: This sounds like a problem typical in gerbils. When a gerbil has an eye infection or any sort of eye irritation, there can be discharge around the eye. This discharge can "stick" to the fur around the eye. When the gerbil tries to clean off the discharge, it rubs hair at the same time and the hair comes out of the follicles. It seems like the gerbil is losing hair but really it is pulling hair out because it is trying to clean off the discharge. Also, the discharge can be reddish and appear like blood. This can also drain into the nose from the tear duct and appear to be blood coming out of the nose. The best thing to do is to find out why the eye is irritated and treat that.