

Battling Ferret Grief

Is it possible to reduce grief for the remaining ferret of a bonded pair after one dies?

By Ailigh Vanderbush

Posted: October 31, 2008, 11 a.m. EDT

Q: My 6-year-old female ferret, Daisy, passed away on Friday. She went in for surgery on Wednesday for adrenal gland disease (gland removal), a biopsy of her liver and to check her intestines for blockage. A necropsy revealed that she had cancer throughout her body and tumors on her lungs. She was not strong enough to endure the surgery, which we did not know.

I am worried that her brother may fall ill because she passed away. My ferrets were very close and have been together ever since they were born. We bought a baby ferret (kit) to keep Buster company, but they have not bonded yet. I know it will take time. The veterinarian suggested giving Buster extra attention and TLC. Buster does not like a lot of attention. He likes to be out and about, but not held very much. Do you have suggestions on what I can do?

A: In this situation, I would keep things for Buster very comfortable and familiar. If he isn't used to the extra attention and does not enjoy it, then interact with him like you always have in the past, maybe just a little more often. I believe your ferret will miss having Daisy around, but should begin to interact and bond with the kit.

Buster is older than the kit, so he may not be as interested in playing or as eager to interact. This is especially true if the kit is full of energy and Buster is looking to relax and stay calm. Take Buster and the new ferret out to play and to wander around. If they are used to being on a leash, take them for walks together.

Give it time. Buster may take a little longer than you would like to warm up to the new ferret, but the energy and interaction will certainly keep him active.