

## Blanket-Chewing Ferret

### What can stop a ferret from chewing on blankets?

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Posted: February 1, 2009, 5 a.m. EST

**Q:** I have a 4-month-old, sable ferret named Zorro. He chews on blankets. I'm afraid he will get a blockage. I let him outside his cage several times a day, with watchful eyes and ears. Will he outgrow this behavior? I've read that chewing could be a symptom of health problems. I got him at 8 weeks old, and he was very small. He has been doing this all along. Is there something I can do to prevent the chewing, other than spraying bitter apple on every blanket I own?

**A:** Fabric chewing can lead to a multitude of problems, including gastrointestinal blockages and tooth problems (fabric wears down a ferret's teeth unnaturally). Chewing fabric can be a symptom of a health problem, so taking your ferret to the veterinarian to have him checked out is in order.

It is also possible that your ferret's fabric chewing is a symptom of a behavioral issue related to stress or boredom. It is great that he is able to get out to play several times a day, but you didn't describe the inside of his cage. A ferret's cage should be as big as you can afford and should be filled with ferrety things to do inside. This includes hammocks, nest boxes, and some basic ferret enrichment items.

Bob Church is an authority on ferret enrichment, so check out anything written by him to help you come up with great ideas (see past issues of *Ferrets* magazine in print or online).

Sometimes stress can cause a ferret to chew fabric. To minimize stress, make sure your ferret has places to hide and his cage is in a location that helps him feel safe and secure. Also, make sure he has limited access to light once it is dark outside and that he eats a high-quality ferret diet.