

Does Ferret's Tumor Require Surgery?

A prostate tumor, possibly caused by adrenal gland disease, is causing illness in a ferret.

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Q: Our male ferret, Nitro, is 5½ and was just treated for his diarrhea and showed improvement. He lost his appetite again, so we returned him to the vet who found a prostate tumor impinging on the urethra. She mentioned this could be a sign of adrenal gland disease even though he hasn't lost hair or shown any other signs of having it. Is surgery the only option for him?

A: Many male ferrets with prostate enlargement secondary to adrenal gland disease do not show evidence of hair loss or any other signs of adrenal gland disease. You are lucky to have a doctor who knows her medicine. She is exactly correct, this is likely due to early adrenal gland disease.

Surgical removal of the diseased adrenal gland(s) is the best treatment for this disease and should shrink the prostate back to normal size. Medication may help decrease the size of the prostate but how long the medication might work is unknown. In an older ferret like your 5½ year-old, if you can control the affects of the adrenal gland for about a year or two, you have done a great job. But if the medication stops working after six months, your now 6 year old ferret will face major surgery. Such surgery at that age is not something to look forward to!