

Ferrets And Parvo

Is parvovirus a concern for ferret owners?

By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP

Posted: August 29, 2008, 6 p.m. EDT

Q: Can ferrets get parvo like a dog can?

A: Ferrets can contract parvovirus, but it is not the same strain as what dogs can get. The parvo that affects dogs is common in the canine community, and thousands of dogs a year develop this disease. In most cases, if treated properly, dogs can survive a bout of parvovirus. In dogs, parvovirus mainly causes severe diarrhea with the loss of fluids, electrolytes and other nutrients. Usually, once a dog gets over their disease, it does not recur. It is also preventable with a vaccine. For this reason, most dogs should never develop parvovirus infection.

Ferrets are very different in this regard. The parvovirus of ferrets is called Aleutian disease virus (ADV) of mink. There is no vaccine for it in ferrets. It is a very uncommon disease in most ferret populations. Once a ferret has this disease, there is no cure for it. Some ferrets can live their entire life with this disease, albeit, with signs of chronic illness. Some ferrets may succumb to this disease early in its stages.

Ferrets and dogs do not share their parvovirus strains. Therefore, vaccination does not protect ferrets and the tests used to diagnosis these diseases differ between the species.