

## Treating Ferrets With Insulinoma

### **What is the recommended treatment for a ferret with insulinoma?**

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**Q:** I have an approximately 5-year-old ferret (he was rescued, so his exact age is iffy). He never had a seizure but was acting "off," and a fasting blood test showed his blood sugar in the 50s. The veterinarian put him on 2.5 mg of prednisone (divided into two doses a day). She is reluctant to do surgery, as she has not personally seen any real change in the medication needed to treat him. This was about five months ago, and my ferret is again beginning to act "off." On his recent physical exam, the vet said outside of a slightly enlarged spleen he seems to be in good condition.

Will surgery be of any benefit for my little guy? Do I just need to look for a more specialized ferret veterinarian (the closest vet on the exotic pet certification site is approximately six hours away)? Are there any other new protocols/medicines available now for insulinoma? He is an absolutely great little guy and has been an amazing local ferret ambassador.

**A:** These are great questions. Most ferret veterinarians believe that surgery to remove part of the pancreas is beneficial to the quality of life of a ferret with insulinoma. Most ferrets after surgery still need some medication, but almost all will require a smaller amount.

Insulinoma disease is due to a malignant cancer. This means that in time it spreads and ultimately causes the death of the ferret. The theory is that surgery slows down the spread of the cancer by removing parts of the pancreas, therefore removing some of the cancer load on that organ.

The best answer for you is to get a second opinion on your ferret. Unfortunately, if the closest doctor that can help you is more than six hours away, then that is not a good option. I say that because even if you went to this doctor and he or she advocated surgery for your ferret and it was done, would you travel six hours each way every time your ferret needs to see that doctor? If you cannot find a doctor nearby, perhaps you can speak with your current veterinarian and ask her to consult with an online group to decide if surgery for your little guy might be helpful.