

A Ferret Coughs And Sneezes

What would cause a ferret to cough and sneeze almost constantly?

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

Q: I am a recent ferret owner. One of my 6-month-old males, Terrence, an albino, has had a sneeze and a cough since I got him four months ago. I bought a ferret respiratory treatment to put under his nose, which gives him limited relief. What can I do for him? He sneezes and coughs all the time. He is vaccinated for rabies and distemper. There is no ferret-specializing vet in my area (Athens, Ohio). I took him to a small animal specialist, and she gave me some antibiotic that did help. Am I being paranoid, or is there something going on here?

A: It is uncommon for ferrets to cough and sneeze constantly. Something is definitely bothering the respiratory system of your ferret. The first thing I would do is to make sure the ferret's environment is not the cause of this. Is the air very dusty where your ferret spends most of his time? What type of substrate is on the cage bottom? Is that dusty? What about the type of litter you use? I recommend a type that does not have any dust associated with it. Do you use air fresheners or carpet cleaners that have a lot of perfume?

If you feel the environment is not the cause, then you need to revisit with the veterinarian that you saw. Since you believe the antibiotic helped, it makes me think that possibly this is an infection. It could be that the antibiotic needed to be used for a longer time, at a higher strength, or a different antibiotic was needed. Even though your doctor is not someone with an interest in ferrets, there are many resources out there for veterinarians to consult with other colleagues to give your ferret the benefit of someone who really knows ferrets.