

Ferret Coughs, Sneezes And Chokes

What's going on with a ferret that's coughing, sneezing and choking?

By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP

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

Q: My 2-year-old ferret seems to have caught a cold (but people say that ferrets don't catch colds). She sneezes, coughs and chokes like she can't breathe. I give her 2 CC's of Benadryl and she gets better, but the next day it's just the same.

A: The most common respiratory infection that ferrets get is human influenza. This usually lasts about a week in the average ferret. Ferrets look just like people with this condition. Their eyes tear, they sneeze, they cough, they have nasal discharge and they just look like they feel — very sick. Sometimes, there is an intestinal component and their appetite may be down and they may have diarrhea.

Almost all ferrets get better with no treatment for the flu, just like people. Kits, ferrets sick with an additional disease, and geriatric ferrets can have complications due to the flu, and we watch these ferrets more closely for signs of problems.

Other infectious agents can cause similar signs to the flu, such as bacteria and fungi. If your ferret is still sick after about five days, talk to your veterinarian and see if you need to bring your ferret into the office.

Finally, two CC's of Benadryl seems like an awful lot of medication for a ferret. Before you give any more, please talk to your veterinarian to make sure that it is the correct dose for your ferret.