

Giving Oral Medications To Ferrets

What tricks make it easier to give oral medication to ferrets?

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Q: What is the magic secret to getting oral medicine into a ferret? Even with additional "flavor" the antibiotic is very bitter, and the ferrets act like I'm poisoning them when I do get past their clamped jaws. Most of the time we both wind up wearing the medicine, and the experience is very traumatic. Is there a better way?

A: This is a common problem in ferrets that need medication. There are a couple of tricks that you can use.

First, use the smallest syringe or dropper you can to get medication into the oral cavity. Don't try using a small scoop or spoon. Those never work.

Second, ask your veterinarian to make doses the smallest volume possible. This means making the medication as concentrated as possible.

Finally, many medications do not come in ferret convenient forms or concentrations. Many of the medications ferrets need come as pills. Your veterinarian needs to make this into a liquid because pills are close to impossible to give to ferrets. Mixing pills with liquids to make a palatable medication is a very difficult art and science. And some of the liquid medications are not particularly tasty to ferrets.

Given all of this, many veterinarians have a system of flavor additives that are good tasting to ferrets. But these additives need to also mask the bitter taste, especially when pills are crushed in the liquid.

The most important thing you can do is to let your veterinarian know whether or not your ferret accepts the medication. Otherwise, your veterinarian will think everything is fine. If your ferret refuses the medication, your veterinarian can either select a pharmacy that makes up medication that is palatable to your ferret, or your veterinarian can order a flavoring system that might make the medicine acceptable to your ferret.