

## Rabies And Ferrets

### Is there a new strain of rabies in Arizona?

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**Q:** What have you heard about the new, fast-evolving rabies virus that is going around. I think it has to do with skunks in Arizona. From what I hear, it can be passed like the flu Should ferret and other pet owners be concerned?

**A:** The story about a fast-evolving rabies virus appears to have started on the Internet. It has some elements of truth and some elements of just plain panic.

There is an increase in foxes and skunks with confirmed rabies virus in certain areas of Arizona this year. This is due to a number of factors, none unique to Arizona. As people encroach on wildlife areas, more opportunity exists for contact between people and sick wild animals.

The rabies virus variant that is found in bats in Arizona has evolved over the last few years to use foxes and skunks as a host. Although the virus has changed regarding its host, its transmission is no different.

So, how does this affect your ferret? It really should not change the current recommendations. Make sure your ferret is always up-to-date on its rabies vaccination. Do not let your ferret have contact with wild animals. Protect your ferret if he/she goes outdoors or lives in a hutch outdoors. If you think your ferret has had contact with a wild animal, call or visit your veterinarian as soon as possible.

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