

Female Ferret Has Enlarged Vulva But No Hair Loss

What causes enlargement of the vulva in female ferrets?

By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP

Posted: October 1, 2009, 5 a.m. EDT

Q: My ferret is fixed and about 6 years old. I noticed she has a very enlarged vulva but doesn't seem to have hair loss. She eats normal and seems happy. What is causing her vulva to be enlarged?

A: Unfortunately, your ferret more than likely has an extremely common disease called adrenal gland disease. Some female ferrets with this disease have only an enlarged vulva. Some have hair loss and an enlarged vulva. And some have just hair loss.

This is such a common disease that some believe more than half of the pet ferrets will come down with this disease if they live long enough. There is a lot of information about this disease.

You should visit a veterinarian that is familiar with ferrets. He or she will be able to give you an abundance of information on adrenal gland disease. It is relatively easy to diagnose, it can be frustrating to treat, but the prognosis is not always bad.

Treatment includes surgery or medication. Medication can be given orally, by long-acting injection or by implants under the skin. The prognosis for this disease depends on many factors, but treatment can give your ferret an excellent quality of life for an extended period of time.

The two most important things I need to emphasize are:

1. Do your homework before you visit your veterinarian so you can ask questions.
2. Go to a veterinarian who is familiar with adrenal gland disease and has treated many ferrets with it.

See all Ask The Doc questions and answers»