

Ferret Only Eats When Hand-Fed And Has Change In Stool

Why would a ferret seem to stop eating?

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Q: I have a ferret that's about 5 years old. Within the past couple of weeks, I noticed he is losing weight. I never seem to catch him eating, but I know he is still drinking water and he will always take a treat, Ferretone, or nutrition supplement from me. He is still very playful and not aggressive. I noticed his stool is much less frequent and smaller, and mostly comes out pretty dark.

I took him to the veterinarian, and we both came to the conclusion that it might be *H. pylori*, so we are treating him with the "triple attack" meds and Pepcid. He is not the type to eat things he shouldn't, and the veterinarian didn't notice any obstructions in his bowels or any sore spots. She weighed him and said that he is still a healthy weight.

It has been a week since he has been on the meds, and I still don't see him eating, unless I hand-feed him. The veterinarian also thinks it might be bacteria that my new ferret brought in, but I had the new ferret almost three months before noticing any of these issues. However, I have just recently discovered we have a mouse in the house. If he contracted anything, could it be from the wild mouse?

A: It is likely the wild mouse is not causing any problems. So at least we can say that. Until you and your veterinarian start doing some diagnostics, we are all guessing.

You and your veterinarian made a good, educated guess on the *H. pylori*. I would have hoped that after a week, you would have noticed improvement. It seems that you have not. I would revisit the veterinarian and ask her about either trying other medications or some testing.

If this is a bacteria in the intestines, possibly the medication that you have started is not effective against the species of bacteria. A simpler and quicker approach is to start with some testing. A complete blood count and biochemistry panel will help rule out any internal organ disease. And if your ferret's body is reacting to an infection, the results of the complete blood count will show this.

Also, it may be necessary to look at the teeth of your ferret with radiographs to rule out a dental problem, such as an abscess, causing your ferret to not want to eat.

Even though your ferret has not had significant weight loss, at some point, this will become a problem. It is important to find out what is wrong before the weight loss causes other problems for your ferret.

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