

Ferret Is Very Thin Despite Eating Normally

What would cause a ferret to be thin if it's eating normally?

By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP

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

Q: I have four ferrets, three males and a female. The female is skeletonlike, but she eats and drinks OK. I also feed her an extra feeding of chicken baby food once a day. I notice her two long teeth are much longer than those of the other ones. Should I be concerned? She also has bouts of the diarrhea, more often than not. Any suggestions?

A: You don't say if your female ferret has always been thin or if this is something new. If this is something new or if she has not been to a veterinarian for a checkup, your ferret needs to visit your veterinarian.

The first question the veterinarian will ask you is, do the male ferrets intimidate her? Even though you think she eats OK, maybe the males do not really allow her to get her fill.

I would not recommend feeding the baby food because it is not a balanced diet for a ferret. If she eats the baby food, perhaps she will eat less of the ferret food, which is balanced for her.

If she has diarrhea, that could also be the cause of her condition. Ferrets lose significant amounts of fluid, electrolytes and nutrients when they have diarrhea. It may be that she cannot keep up with the losses in the diarrhea. This is the most important reason to visit with her veterinarian.

As to the teeth, what likely may be happening is that her gums are receding, which makes it appear that the teeth are longer because there is less tissue covering the teeth. This could also be tied to her nutritional problems. Make sure you point that out to her veterinarian during the visit.

See all Ask The Doc questions and answers»