

The Importance Of Spaying Ferrets

Will female ferrets die if left unspayed?

By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP

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Q: Is it true that a ferret can die if it doesn't get spayed?

A: The short answer is yes! Unspayed female ferrets are likely to die unless they are bred or their body is fooled into thinking they were bred.

The heat cycle in ferrets is very different than in dogs. Unlike dogs, ferrets remain in heat until they are bred. Dogs go in and out of heat cycles based on the time of the year. Ferrets stay in heat unless bred, meaning that the hormones that are uniquely present in high concentrations during the heat cycle remain in the system. These hormones, which in low concentrations are not deadly, can cause havoc on the ferret's bone marrow.

As the ferret remains in heat, the estrogen concentration remains high for many months, maybe even a year or more. This high concentration of estrogen eventually causes the bone marrow to stop producing new cells. The bone marrow of ferrets produces red and white blood cells and platelets. Once the bone marrow stops functioning and no new red blood cells are put into circulation, the ferret becomes more and more anemic. If she does not die from the profound anemia, then the lack of white blood cells will cause common infections to become deadly, because there is no longer any immune defense against these pathogens. Finally, if she does not die from anemia or constant attack from unfriendly bacteria, she will bleed to death because of the lack of clotting, as platelets are no longer produced.

It is a fairly horrendous way to die. All of this is totally prevented by having your female ferret spayed.

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