

## What Causes A Sandlike Bowel Movement In Ferrets?

### **Why would a ferret have poop that looks like sand?**

*By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP*

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**Q:** One of my ferret's bowel movements looks like sand. Any thoughts?

**A:** When the bowel movement looks like sand, it is because the nutrients in the food you are feeding are not being digested and absorbed correctly. This happens because there is disease along all or part of the intestinal tract. Usually, this means that either disease has destroyed the cells along the intestines that are necessary to digest and absorb the food or the disease has created cells that crowd out the normal cells and do not let the normal cells function properly.

Diseases that destroy cells include cancer, infection and toxins. Diseases that crowd out cells also include cancer, infection and immune-mediated disease. Usually, veterinarians can tell you which of these categories are likely causing the problem based on the history of your ferret, some blood tests and maybe imaging studies like radiographs and ultrasound.

Sometimes, veterinarians can treat for the likely causes and, if your ferret responds well, we have made a diagnosis. The most direct way to answer the question about what is causing this problem is for a veterinarian to go into your ferret's abdomen and take some samples of the intestines and look at the cells under a microscope.

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