

## Is A Ferret's Hair Loss From Adrenal Gland Disease Or Rat-Tail?

**How can you tell if a ferret's hair loss is from adrenal gland disease or rat-tail?**

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**Q:** I have a ferret that is about 3 to 4 years old. She started losing hair on her tail and rump (the undercoat hair), but she acts perfectly normal. She does have blackheads on her tail. Does this sound more like rat-tail or adrenal gland disease, given that she has no other symptoms. What is the treatment?

**A:** Unfortunately, from your description, this sounds like adrenal gland disease. In a ferret that is middle-aged and losing hair on its tail, the most likely reason is adrenal gland disease.

Blackheads can sometimes accompany the hair loss with adrenal gland disease. And most ferrets with adrenal gland disease do not appear sick. As the disease progresses, hair loss occurs on other areas of the body, including the belly, the sides and eventually along the back. You may also see your ferret's vulva enlarging.

In rat-tail, none of these other conditions occur and the rat-tail appearance may be transient.

Before you begin any treatment, the most important thing to do is to take your ferret to the veterinarian and get a confirmed diagnosis. Once you have a diagnosis for this very common ferret malady, you have many choices for treatment.

Adrenal gland disease can be treated using surgical options, long-acting injectables, implantable medications or daily oral drugs. These treatment choices all have their pros and cons, and your ferret's veterinarian is the best person to help you decide which is best for your ferret and for you.

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