

Ferret Suffers From Severe Sneezing And Itching

What would make a ferret have sneezing fits and itch?

By Karen Rosenthal, DVM, DABVP

Posted: January 1, 2010, 5 a.m. EST

Q: My ferret Missy, short for Mischief, has been having terrible sneezing attacks. Sometimes these become so strong that her whole body jumps, and she squeaks. She also becomes so itchy that she wakes up from her sleep to scratch herself. The veterinarian put her on antibiotics for one week. She will be seen for a follow-up soon. The antibiotics seem to help a little. She still has sneezing fits, just less frequently. Have you ever seen this problem in ferrets? I believe she may have allergy problems, because the antibiotics are not curing her.

A: It is possible that your ferret is sensitive to something in the household, because she is both scratching and sneezing. Your veterinarian did the right thing by first trying to make sure she does not have an upper respiratory infection.

Because the antibiotics did not seem to cure her problem, you could try a number of things. Your veterinarian might prescribe a different type of antibiotic to see if a stronger or different spectrum of antibiotic would work better.

Your ferret could be put through a battery of medical tests to see if there is a problem in the nasal cavity causing the sneezing.

The simplistic and most reasonable course of action would be to start investigating what has changed in your house. New carpet cleaner, new laundry cleaner, new air freshener, new furniture? Anything that is new in the house could be causing your ferret's problem. Or if the heat or air conditioning has come on recently and the filters were not changed, perhaps allergens are now in the air that weren't there before. I would investigate all of these possibilities before trying new drugs or a battery of tests.

See all Ask The Doc questions and answers»