

Can A Ferret Be Underweight?

Does a small but seemingly healthy ferret need to gain weight?

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

Q: My female ferret, Kuda, is about 7 months old. She weighed about 1.9 pounds the last time we took her to the vet, who said it was a healthy weight. Kuda is a runt. The last month or month-and-a-half, we brought a 3-year-old female ferret into our home that we adopted from a woman who takes in abused ferrets. Penny, the new ferret, is in good health. Kuda and Penny get along fine and play fine, they're buddies. But I've noticed Kuda seems to have lost a bit of weight. I'm not positive, though, because Penny is larger than Kuda. I'm not sure if Kuda is losing weight or just looks like it because I can compare her to another ferret now

I've tried to monitor to make sure Kuda's eating. I think she does grab a few pieces here and there, but I don't feel it's frequent enough or that she's eating enough. She does drink water, and she does take treats. Her stools seem regular and the correct color. She's also just as active and playful as usual.

I hand-feed Kuda kibble when I can to make sure she is eating. I usually get her to eat up to 10 pieces of kibble before she runs away. We gave the ferrets separate food dishes in case Kuda was just being a princess. Some days Kuda seems to like Penny, other days not so much; she's a very temperamental little thing.

Should I provide Kuda with some sort of extra protein for the next while so she can gain a little bit of weight? Or should I just let her be and monitor to make sure she's not getting skinnier?

I don't want to take her to the vet just yet, because my vet is very expensive. To have the vet just weigh her to find out she's the same weight would cost \$60. Last time she went to the vet, two months ago for her rabies shot, she was in very healthy condition.

A: According to my calculations, Kuda weighs about 860 grams. The average spayed female ferret weighs between 750 and 1,000 grams. So 860 grams seems fine, unless she is a big ferret.

If she appears healthy, if her stools are normal and her appetite is good, it could be that the extra exercise she gets now with her new ferret friend is causing her to lose weight. That is not a bad reason to lose weight.

If you do not want to take your ferret to your veterinarian, you can do some things at home that would be helpful. First, buy a scale to weigh your ferret on. There are many different types of gram scales that work just fine. You want a gram scale because it is more precise than a scale that measures pounds. With the gram scale, you can monitor your ferret's weight at home.

Put a container on top of the scale that you know the weight of and then put Kuda into the container. Deduct the weight of the container from the combined weight of your ferret and the container as an easy way to measure Kuda's weight.

In a more scientific approach, Kuda should be taking in about 65 to 100 Kcals of energy in her food each day. If she is very active with her new ferret friend, she may need more than that. If you feed your ferrets separately, you should be able to measure how many calories a day Kuda is ingesting. If you are not sure how to measure Kcals based on the food she is eating, I hope you can call your veterinarian's office and get help from them.

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