

Is A Ferret's Protruding Rectum A Problem?

Does a ferret with a rectal prolapse require veterinary attention?

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Q: My female ferret is about 2 and a half years old and has a protruding rectum. She has not had any diarrhea and none of her eating/drinking habits have changed. She is just as "frisky" as normal. Is this something I should worry about?

A: A protruding rectum is not a normal condition so something wrong with your ferret, but it is difficult to say if it is something to worry about.

The condition you describe is called a rectal prolapse. Tissue inside the rectum is "pushed" toward the anus and appears to be protruding out. In severe cases, a large amount of tissue protrudes from the rectum causing that tissue to become inflamed and infected, which adds to the primary problem.

Causes of rectal prolapse include parasites like coccidia, abscesses, bacterial infections, severe diarrhea and tissue masses, both benign and malignant. The only way to know which of these conditions is causing the problem is to visit your veterinarian.

Because you have not seen any diarrhea, the cause may be an abscess or a tissue mass. Some of the diagnostic tests the veterinarian would do include a fecal examination, cytology of the protruding tissue, radiographs and possibly passing a very small scope into the rectum while your ferret is under anesthesia.

Almost all of the causes of a rectal prolapse can be treated and cured, but the sooner the diagnosis is made, the better the chance for a successful outcome.

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