

Is Loss Of Fur Contagious In Ferrets?

Could a bald ferret be the cause of another ferret losing its fur?

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Q: I have a ferret that is starting to lose his hair at the tip of his tail. He has a friend ferret that has lost almost all of his hair. Is this something that is contagious? Or is it something deeper? Please help. I don't want a bald ferret.

A: Without seeing your ferrets, it is just a guess on my part. But if we look at the common reasons for hair loss in ferrets, then this problem is not contagious.

The contagious reasons for hair loss in a ferret would include ectoparasites — small parasites that live on the skin and hair of a ferret. It is very, very uncommon for ectoparasites to infect ferrets and cause the hair to just fall out. You would also see itching, flaky skin and maybe redness to the skin. And, most importantly, your ferret would look uncomfortable.

It's very uncommon, but maybe something in your carpet cleaner or laundry detergent has caused this reaction. The chances of this being the cause, however, are very, very small.

The most likely explanation is that the ferret that has lost most of his hair has adrenal gland disease. The ferret that is losing hair on the tail tip may also have adrenal gland disease. This disease is so common, it may seem contagious but, as far as we know, it is not a contagious disease. Some veterinarians believe more than 50 percent of ferrets over the age of 3 will develop adrenal gland disease.

Finally, the ferret that is just starting to lose hair may have something as benign as seasonal hair loss on the tail.

Regardless of the cause, visit your veterinarian with both ferrets for a diagnosis. If the cause is adrenal gland disease, there are treatments for your ferrets.

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