

## Shortage Of Ferret Vaccine

### **Why would there ever be a shortage of vaccine for ferrets?**

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Posted: June 1, 2010, 5 a.m. EDT

**Q:** Why would my veterinarian be having problems getting the vaccination for my ferrets' shots? My oldest ferret, Bandit, is turning 5 next month, and a ferret I was given, Peanut, needs to have his shots so I know he is up-to-date. They're my "kids," and I want them ready for any kind of insect-transmitted diseases.

**A:** You ask a great question. At various times, we have been experiencing a shortage of both the canine distemper virus vaccine for ferrets and the rabies virus vaccine that is approved for use in ferrets. In both cases, there is only one vaccine that is approved for ferrets, so your veterinarian has only one choice on which vaccine to use for canine distemper and for rabies. If the company that produces these vaccines experiences a problem, there is no other company for us to turn to that would allow us to use an alternate vaccine for a ferret.

Vaccine companies experience shortages for various reasons. If the raw materials needed to produce vaccines are not available, then vaccines are not produced for a period of time. Sometimes this can be for an extended period of time, such as months. If there is limited amount of raw material, and various vaccines use that same raw material, the vaccine company will make the most popular vaccine first and produce the less popular vaccine when there is more material. When this happens, ferret vaccines can take a back seat and be produced after enough vaccines for canine and feline diseases are in the hands of veterinarians.

Another possible reason for vaccine shortages, although not the reason for the current ferret vaccine shortage, occurs when a government agency finds violations in the production facilities of vaccine companies; until the vaccine company can rectify the violations, no vaccines are produced for weeks or months.

Finally, sometimes natural disasters like floods or fires will destroy the vaccine production facility or the facility that produces the raw product. When that happens, we have to wait until the facility is back online producing vaccine, which again can be weeks or months.

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