

Ferret With Strange Lump In Middle Of Tail

Could a lump in the middle of a ferret's tail be making it sick?

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Q: I have a 6-year-old, female ferret named Mischief. About three weeks ago she developed a lump on the middle of her tail; it started small but has grown quite large. The lump is cold to touch, and I believe it is cutting off circulation to the rest of her tail, for it is also cold. The lump isn't really hard, it's almost squishy. In the last week she has started losing hair on her back and around the lump, and her back has a scaly yellow to it. She has lost a quite a bit of weight and now in the last couple days has trouble walking and even standing. I'm not sure if this is because she is weak or not. She is eating and drinking but is sleeping all the time. The only vet in town that looks at small animals is quite expensive, and I am worried I will have to put her down. Any suggestions on what the lump may be would help. The only things I can come up with are a cyst or chordoma, but with chordoma it says that the lump is at the end of the tail. Do you think she is too far gone for help or is there still a chance? I just don't want her to suffer. I love her so much.

A: Sorry to hear about your ferret. Unfortunately, the only way to help your ferret is to visit a veterinarian who knows about ferret diseases. It is impossible to know if your ferret's current whole body illness is related to the lump on the tail.

Chordomas can appear anywhere on the tail, but what you describe could also be a chondrosarcoma. Chondrosarcoma is malignant cancer and can spread to other areas of the body. Chordomas are benign and, unless they are impinging on vital structures, they do not usually cause serious problems.

The most important thing to consider is this: you do not want your ferret to suffer. You also need a diagnosis. Your ferret may have a straightforward problem, such as an insulinoma that is making her weak, and we can treat that with inexpensive medications. The lump on her tail may be a second problem but not one that is making her sick. Or she could have systemic disease, and the lump on the tail is just one manifestation of that disease. The only person who can sort all of this out for you is your ferret's veterinarian.

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