

## Ferrets And Tapeworms

### **What is the recommended treatment for ferrets with tapeworms?**

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**Q:** Do tapeworms harm ferrets? How do you treat a ferret with tapeworms?

**A:** Ferrets rarely have tapeworms. Tapeworms would rather live in the intestines of a dog or cat than in the insides of a ferret.

Tapeworms have an interesting life cycle. Their eggs are ingested by young fleas. As the flea gets older and starts living on the dog or cat, it is sometimes licked up by the dog or cat and ends up in the intestinal system, where the tapeworm eggs hatch. The young tapeworms then find a place to live in the intestines. As they grow, they "steal" nutrients from the dog or cat and, over time, if there are enough tapeworms, the dog or cat can become debilitated. All during this time, the tapeworm eggs are being deposited in the feces and released into the outside environment for the cycle to start again.

Tapeworms rarely bother ferrets, because it is rare for fleas to live on ferrets. Fleas, like tapeworms, would rather live on dogs and cats than ferrets.

But if there are fleas infected with tapeworms and they live in a house where there are ferrets, the fleas will have no choice but to take their meals off of the ferrets. So ferrets can have tapeworms, but it is rare. And if the tapeworms are not treated, ferrets can become debilitated, just like dogs and cats do.

We treat ferrets with tapeworms just as we do dogs and cats. Treatment consists of giving a very safe oral medication that is very effective against tapeworms. If you feel your ferret has tapeworms, bring your ferret and any tapeworm eggs to your veterinarian for this very safe and simple treatment.

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