

## Ferrets Have Strange Bumps On Body

**Why would two ferrets develop red, scablike spots on their back or tail?**

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**Q:** I have three ferrets, two girls and one boy. One girl is albino and the other is raccoon-colored. The raccoon-colored one has a red spot on the hump of her back; it's small, about dime-sized. It looks kind of like scabs in it a little. The albino does not have it. My male ferret seems to have something similar along his tail. I don't know what this could be. Any ideas or suggestions on what I should do?

**A:** If your ferrets "hang-out" together and if they roughhouse, as ferrets can do, then these just may be the result of some play fighting. They have scratched or nipped at each other, and you are now seeing the healing area with a scab over the wound.

If your ferrets do not play fight and these lesions have come up spontaneously, then the cause for what you are seeing might vary. The most likely cause is a mast cell tumor. These are benign tumors in ferrets that appear spontaneously and sometimes go away spontaneously. They can be itchy to your ferret, and scratching can cause some bleeding that forms a small scab. These small tumors can be flat or slightly raised and are usually red in color.

Another cause, although much less likely, are skin parasites that are biting and causing irritation of the skin. These parasites are very uncommon in ferrets and you would likely see all ferrets showing these lesions. Plus, your ferrets would look uncomfortable. They would be scratching all the time.

How do you tell what is going on with your ferrets? The only way is to visit your veterinarian. He or she may be able to tell just from the physical examination what is causing these skin lesions. Your veterinarian may also suggest putting a needle into the skin mass to remove some cells and look at these under a microscope. Or your vet might suggest removing the entire lesion and sending that to a pathologist. If this is a mast cell tumor, there is no treatment for it, because such a tumor either causes no problem or goes away on its own.

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