

Ferret Suffering Chronic Diarrhea Is Rapidly Losing Weight

A ferret's rapid weight loss requires rapid diagnosis and treatment.

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Q: My ferret is 5 years old and has been having diarrhea for a month. He's been on the medication metronidazole, which he could not keep down, and didn't stop his diarrhea either. The vets came to the conclusion it was his pancreas, and they put him on the enzyme pancreazyme powder. They also said that he has a food allergy and we started him on the ZD diet food. We also have tried over-the-counter drugs, such as Pepto-Bismol and Imodium AD, as suggested by our vet, but that didn't help his diarrhea. He has gone from 3 pounds to 1 pound 7 ounces in a month.

A: Your ferret is very sick to have lost that much weight so quickly. If you are not comfortable with the care that your veterinarians are giving your ferret, get a second opinion. There are not many causes of severe diarrhea and weight loss in ferrets. Your ferret is either losing nutrients, not absorbing the nutrients or both — which accounts for what you are seeing.

Your ferret needs a diagnosis and then appropriate treatment. Obviously, what your ferret is on now is not helping or not helping enough. Your ferret needs blood tests to determine if diseases such as epizootic catarrhal enteritis (ECE), eosinophilic gastroenteritis (EGE), a bacterial infection, a parasitic infection or even cancer are present. These are all serious diseases that need to be treated with specific medications and possibly special foods.

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