

## Second Opinion On A Ferret's Health?

**If you don't agree with your veterinarian, is it time for a second opinion?**

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**Q:** I have a 3-year-old male ferret (Freddy) who I think may have adrenal disease. The only signs I see are hair loss around his rump and moving upward. He is pretty aggressive at times with our 2-year-old female, but nothing too out of the ordinary. I took him to the nearest veterinarian, who said that blood tests aren't adequate to detect the disease (and only an ultrasound will work), and also said that treating it with medication is useless. I've read that treatment won't remedy it, but at least will stop gland inflammation and signs. I admit that I cannot afford a surgery, so medicinal treatment would be my only choice. Should I trust the vet's opinion, or should I just go to a different vet and ask that blood tests be done and go for melatonin if he does have it?

**A:** First, I think you are correct. The signs your ferret is exhibiting are typical of adrenal gland disease. The hair loss on the rump that progresses over time is the most common sign of adrenal gland disease. Other diseases can cause hair loss, but adrenal gland disease is the most likely. Combine this with aggressiveness toward the female ferret, and it sure sounds like adrenal gland disease is present.

Various ways exist to diagnose and treat adrenal gland disease. There is a blood test to diagnose it. An ultrasound examination may find a large adrenal gland but this test is not 100 percent sensitive in all ferret cases. If further hair is lost and other diseases are ruled out, it is likely that adrenal gland disease is present.

Medical treatment includes injections, oral medications and melatonin implants. Prices vary and not every type of medication works for every ferret. Also, in a ferret that is relatively young, such as yours, medication may cost more in the long term than the price of surgery.

In some ferrets if the only sign of adrenal gland disease is hair loss, one might argue that treatment is only for cosmetic reasons. Of course, there can be serious and even life-threatening affects from adrenal gland disease. Any ferret owner takes a risk if they do not treat a ferret suffering from adrenal gland disease. If you disagree with the advice given to you by your doctor, you have every right to seek another opinion.

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