

Ferret Adrenal Gland Problems - Drugs to Avoid

Drugs that should not be used in treatment for ferret adrenal gland problems.

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Mitotane, such as Lysodren, is the primary medicine used to treat adrenal gland problems in dogs. However adrenal gland problems in dogs (Cushing's syndrome) are quite different than adrenal gland disease in ferrets. Dogs with adrenal problems overproduce cortisol. Ferrets overproduce the sex hormones and androgens. In dogs ACTH is stimulating the adrenal glands. In ferrets LH stimulates the adrenal glands. Lysodren will destroy the cortisol-producing cells in the adrenal glands. This product does not work well in ferrets, and it can cause serious low blood-glucose problems in ferrets with concurrent insulinomas.

Ketoconazole, such as Nizoral, is another medicine used in adrenal dogs. It is an enzyme blocker that lowers cortisol and androgens. This product does not work well in ferrets.

Trilostane, such as Veteryl, is a medicine that is used in adrenal dogs. Unfortunately this product increases 17-hydroxyprogesterone levels in dogs. This is one of the common hormones that is elevated in ferrets with adrenal gland disease. It will likely raise this hormone in ferrets, too, and make the adrenal problem even worse. Preliminary work with Veteryl in the Netherlands has shown this to be the case.

Tamoxifen, such as Nolvadex, is a common anti-estrogen used in human medicine. This product works by blocking estrogen receptors. Unfortunately a study in ferrets showed Nolvadex to have estrogenlike effects in ferrets, which would make estrogen-induced anemia, thrombocytopenia and mammary gland hyperplasia even worse.