

## Prevent Ferret Illness

**Regular veterinary visits and attention to your pet's health can help your ferret live a longer, happier life.**

*By Dr. Susan A. Brown*

Your new pet probably has found a permanent home in your heart, and you may hope you can spend many years with your frisky ferret friend. Unfortunately, ferrets in the United States have a high incidence of health problems, particularly cancer. The average life span for a ferret is five to seven years, with a few lucky individuals making it to their 11th birthday.

For now, the best we can do to stay ahead of the numerous health conditions is to follow a regular veterinary preventive care program. Many of the conditions ferrets develop can be controlled if found early. Regularly scheduled visits to your veterinarian will not only keep you on top of your pet's health but also keep you informed of new advances taking place in the veterinary world.

To get your relationship with your ferret off to the best start, you should take it to a veterinarian within 48 hours of the initial purchase. Within this time period, pet stores and breeders usually are obligated to take back the ferret if it has a serious medical problem.

If you have other ferrets at home, separate the new ferret from the others until after the veterinary exam. To be on the safe side, consider extending your quarantine period for at least 14 days after purchase. This will help prevent the spread of infectious disease, such as viral enteritis, canine distemper and influenza. It will also give your new ferret time to get used to its environment before it meets its new ferret pals.

Remember, it is you, the vigilant and caring owner, who can provide additional information that may make the difference between a shortened or lengthened life span for your ferret.