

Top 5 Ferret Ailments

A quick glance at the top 5 ferret ailments.

Ferret veterinary visits occur either to prevent an ailment or to treat one. The most common ailments that send a ferret to the veterinarian for treatment vary from practice to practice or region to region. Below, in no particular order, is a subjective list of the top five ferret ailments in the United States, with a simplified description of each. Always contact your veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment if you suspect your ferret is ill.

- 1) **Adrenal disease:** This hormone-related illness occurs when one or both adrenal glands in a ferret excrete excessive estrogen. The most common symptom of this disease is hair loss. Treatments involve surgery to remove the adrenal gland(s) or medication to alleviate symptoms for old or ill ferrets that might not survive a surgery.
- 2) **Insulinoma:** Similar to adrenal disease, insulinoma results when the body is forced to deal with excessive secretions -- in this case, it's insulin. Insulin-secreting tumors on the pancreas cause a drop in blood sugar that results in progressively worse dysfunction of the brain and nervous system. The most common symptoms of this disease are lethargy, going into trances or experiencing hind end weakness. Treatments involve surgery to remove the tumors or affected parts of the pancreas, or medication to alleviate symptoms for old or ill ferrets that might not survive a surgery.
- 3) **Gastric ulcers:** Just as with humans, gastric ulcers in ferrets are holes in the stomach. These holes make eating painful, so symptoms include weight loss from not eating, tooth grinding and excess salivation (the latter two indicate pain). Stress is suspected to be a major contributor to ulcers, so treatment involves reducing stress, medication and a switch to bland, easy-to-digest food.
- 4) **Inflammatory bowel disease:** With this disease, the ferret's body attacks itself. Specifically, the immune system damages the gastrointestinal tract. Symptoms include weight loss due to loss of appetite and abnormal stools. Treatment involves medication to shut down the immune system and a switch to a bland, easy-to-digest food.
- 5) **Lymphoma:** This neoplasm (cancer) arises when lymphocytes (part of the immune system) multiply out of control. Symptoms are varied or nonexistent. Treatment is limited, usually involving some medication to make the ferret's last days comfortable.