

## Stray Procedures

### Part 1: Evaluating a ferret on entry

1. Check all paperwork to make sure all information is filled out. Then search for information on time and where ferret was found. This will help you with the evaluation.
2. Fill out the personal card as you inspect the ferret. Make sure you place the nose and ear dot patterns, color & markings in the first, as this is the best way to identify a ferret when you have several ferrets and more than two that look alike.
3. Place plastic on scale and weigh ferret. This is very important as fluid lost with lack of food or diarrhea can be checked daily.
4. A stray ferret can have several medical issues that can and will affect your own ferret's health especially if you have very young, sick or very old. The attached papwork is to educate as a foster family why safety precautions are a must and why we require you to follow this procedure.
5. Always do preliminary examination in hell, entryway or away from your own ferrets, or their living space.
6. Make sure you have clothes to change immediately after you are done handling a stray ferret. Place them in a plastic bag and wash as soon as possible and not with other laundry. If you do not want to change a plastic poncho will prevent fleas, ear mites, or parasites from traveling on you to your ferrets.
7. We usually have a tray with ear mite treatment, a flea comb and treatment, tick spoon, nail clippers, q-tips, ear cleaner, nail clippers or any other supplies needed. Nail clippers must be cleaned after each ferret.
8. Handling: A ferret will tell you whether they are friendly or not by their body language.
  - A. Never offer your fingers to a strange ferret as you are automatically asking them to bite you.
  - B. If they are real scared, been abused, ill or taught to bite by their humans they will and hard. If they show fear then offer them some food, Ferretone, Petromalt, baby food, or water on a spoon.
  - C. If they seem friendly offer them your hand palm up and fingers together with soft come command.
9. Start with nose and inspect its body. Check for:
  - A. The color of it's nose, ears and pads. Very pink, pink, pale pink, white or yellow.
  - B. Clean and check ears for ear mites. Ear mite fecus usually look like rust or red cocoa flecs. You can set the q-tip on a paper towel and check after examination.
  - C. Check teeth and note tarter, gum disease or broken teeth. To guess age check the front upper fangs. A clear tip is usually over three. Half clear is over 6. All clear over 8. This is just an estimate, as age, diet, care and medical condition will affect this.
  - D. Smell behind the ears. If they smell like fish then you will know that they have been eating either a fish based cat food or Marshall Farms.
  - E. Check back of neck skin for dehydration. If it does not snap back quickly this is the fist sign of loss fluid.
  - F. Gently feel down body for any lumps, especially on its neck, under its armpits, and on the bottom inside of its hind legs. Make sure you note anything found on the card as you do it. This also helps the vet when they do their examination.
    - a. Hard round firm lumps in this area can be lymphoma.
    - b. If soft it is usually fatty deposits.
    - c. A single lump can be a small infection or small abscess.
    - d. If you find a round mound with a hold in the middle then you have found a Bott fly larvae.
      1. If you gently squeeze the mound from the sides, its feces will come out the hole.
      2. These can be found on any part of the body, but usually behind ears, around neck, and ribcage.
      3. It is best for the vet to remove this. They can be a half-inch or up to two inches long under the skin or ribcage.
    - e. Any wounds should be cleaned.

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- f. A raised circular mound can be a skin tumor. Ferrets are very prone to these. Some are pale tan in color, black with crust, or a scab on them.
- g. Puncture wounds can be caused by a bite from another animal and must be monitored. The vet will not give a rabies shot with this type of wound until the quarantine period is over.
- G. Check skin for lease or ticks, and note if hair is dry, shedding, or loss of hair.
  - a. Hair loss is usually caused from poor diet, adrenal disease, a flea allergy or an allergy to something in its environment.
  - b. If ferret is older and the back neck skin seems tight and there is not much for scuffing check and feel neck muscle and skin.
    - 1. If it feels kind of like it has a layer of foam or padding under it this is a possible symptom of early adrenal. Also you can usually smell testosterone on the skin. Slightly burns your nose or kind of like a light must or urine odor.
  - c. If hair loss is severe and skin is dry with lesions then you have a ferret with late stage adrenal.
  - d. An early adrenal sign is a slight hair loss on knuckles of toes or heels of back feet. This usually occurs the shed cycle before you notice the hair loss on base of tail, top of head or shoulders.
- H. Stomach area: With your left hand fingertips gently feel the stomach areas just under the rib cage. If there is a large lump and feels like a finger this can just be a full stomach, however if it feels like it has a ridge like a piece of liver and larger then this is the spleen. Note on a personal card. Any other lumps in the abdomen should also be noted.
- I. On Females, check the vulva. It is just in front of the anal area. It should look like a tuff of hair and is also area where they urinate.
  - a. If it is pink or like a button this is usually an early sign of adrenal or if not spayed she is going into estrus.
  - b. If it is discharging this is an infection and a vet visit is requires ASAP.
- J. On a male gently take your two fingers and palpitate the area just under the penis down do the anal area.
  - a. If you feel a lump in this area it can be one of many medical issues. An enlarge prostate due to mating time, adrenal disease or infection. A bladder infection, tumor, or sometimes I can feel a small hairball. Of course a vet visit is needed.
- K. Muscle tone is also important to check, as this will help you determine what kind of diet the ferret has been eating.
  - a. Gently feel the leg muscles in both front and back legs.
  - b. Scruff ferret and push back legs up and down to see what resistance the muscles have. Hind leg weakness can be caused by very poor diet, insulomia, dehydration or poor muscle tone from being caged all the time with no exorcise.
- L. The end, the tail.
  - a. Things that you can see. Hair loss on tail is common in older ferrets. It can also be caused by a black head colony, ferrets in a dirty environment, or late state adrenal. I have also found that most albino, marked whites, dews, silvers, and panda are more prone to blackhead colonies. Of course if the hair loss is also on the base of the tail or goes up into the lower back then adrenal disease is usually the cause. Flea allergies symptoms are usually, severe scratching, a rash, dry skin/hair, and thinning of hair.

Sounds like it would take hours for an evaluation. The more you do one the quicker you become and eventually you will be able to do this in the same time a DR gives you for a visit.