

Hairball Question & Answers

By: Callie

The Educated Ferret Association
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7. My ferret has hair loss on the top of his head, the base of his tail and the knuckles of his toes, and heels of his feet. What can cause this?

Hair loss on the base of the heels and knuckles of the toes are usually the first sign of adrenal disease. Then the top of the head, the base of the tail usually occurs at the next shed change. A change of personality like aggression with playmates or marking their litter pans, food dishes, and also your feet are an early sign. If you find fleas this also can cause hair loss. Most cats and dogs are not allergic to fleas, but most ferrets area. Advantage for kittens from your vet will take care of them. Please note: treat one at a time and keep them away from the other for at least two hours until it is dry. Follow the directions carefully.

If you have any questions always feel free to call DA MaMa at the rescue (413) 538-7108 and she will share what I have taught her or direct you to a ferret friendly vet.

Thank you,
Callie

Your Educated Ferret Senior Mascot



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I/We currently have _____ ferret(s). At least one ferret has been part of our family since _____.

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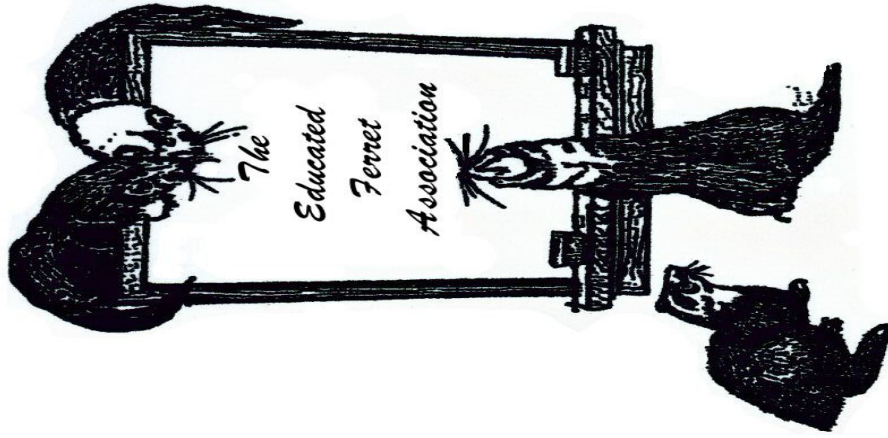
Name of Business: _____

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I/We want to volunteer my/our time to the following Educated Ferretted Association as follows: _____

Your membership is valid for one year from date of issue, and includes special offers on ferret related items from other businesses and organizations as well as your subscription to our newsletter.

OFFICE USE ONLY:
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Donna Spiritio ~ Rescue Director
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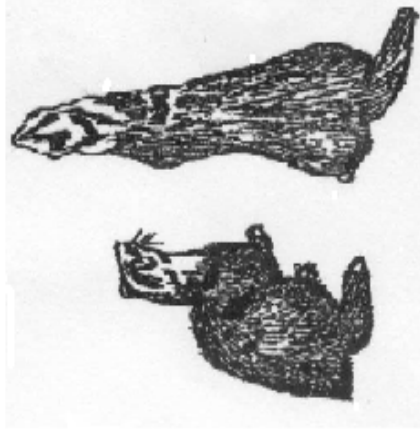
Hello all you humans out there. I get to share my favorite time of the year with you. I love it because I get to have more Petromalt than any other time and since I'm your teacher I also get to work. This is the time of year the phone rings all the time with many questions:

1. My ferret is scratching all the time but I cannot find any fleas. Why is he so itchy?

In the late summer the daylight changes and tell us it is time to shed and get our winter coat. Since we eat more this time of year to get ready to shed and gain our winter fat our bodies change. The oils from the fat in our food coat the new hairs as they come out so our coats are really soft. As the new hairs come out we become more itchy so we scratch more. We also scratch to remove the old hairs. It's our way of grooming. We also love to rub on your carpets, cloths, furniture, and sometimes your sneakers. We really appreciate gentle back scratches with the balls of your fingers.

2. My ferret is coughing more frequently and seems to want to throw up. Is this normal at shed time?

This is the most common symptom of some type of blockage this time of year. If you saw or suspect your ferret has eaten something he should not have we should see a vet. It is usually a hairball.



3. Can they throw up a hairball?

Yes, we can throw up a hairball. We have a 2 ½ inch one in a jar at the rescue for education. Unfortunately, we very seldom throw them up. If we do not throw up the hairball we need Petromalt. There are other signs of a hairball to look for.

4. What are hairball symptoms?

The first one is usually our poops change in color or get runny. As the food goes through the digestive system the hairball prevents it from passing through. So the fluids go through and the food sits in front of the hairball. I get frequent little ones cause Mom treats me with more Petromalt this time of the year. I am very clean in the litter pan but I also will poop where I am not supposed to, just to show her I have a bellyache. Not all ferrets are smart enough to do this. Then I blow diarrhea.

Sometimes brown, pink, tan, green, or seedy looking poops pop out. MaMa says I have all the rainbow colors, what ever that is. She knows that black jell poops mean a vet visit.

Mischief used to back up in the litter pan and not go. Mom had to watch him a lot to make sure if it was poop or pee that was waiting to come out. If the poop does not come out for over 6 hours with hairball treatment we are in trouble and should go to the bet as the hairball or object is stuck and we need to have it treated or removed. No pee is usually a vet visit too.

A gentle pluck of our but hairs will also tell you we are shedding. More then five a pluck means we have just started. Usually if you have many ferrets you will see actual hairballs in the middle of our hammocks or bedding.

5. What do we do to keep us from getting a hairball or if we get one how do we get rid of it?

At the rescue we use Petromalt, malt flavored. It can be found in the cat hairball or ferret section(s) of your pet store. Marshall Farms has it's own hairball remedy. If you see any of the above symptoms when they first start it's time to give us Petromalt. We get it every week when we have our nails done to help remove hair build up. The first time you see any of the symptoms you can give the boys one inch and the girls ½ to ¾ of an inch. Two to three times on the first day. The second day twice then every other day till the shedding is done. Remember if you have more than one ferret we all need to be treated because we all must use the same space to live in. Please note: Hairball treatment coats the digestive system and your ferret will not digest its food so please only give at least ¾ of an hour after eating. Frequent brushing and changing of our bedding or play area will keep the hairballs down. A bath also assists in removing loose hairs. Please remember our body temperature is two or three degrees higher than yours, so the water should be pretty warm. Only bath at shed time with a mild ferret shampoo. No human shampoo as it is too strong and will dry out our coats.

6. My ferret has two bald patches under his hind legs on his belly. What are they?

Our natural mating time is during the spring and fall, and these are mating patches. The hair usually grows back after about two to four weeks.