

## Ferret Care Course: Washington Ferret Rescue & Shelter

Volunteer and Foster Ferret Parent Training

October 2007

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### Objectives: Ferret care-givers

1. will be able to restrain ferrets for routine grooming such as ear cleaning, nail trims, and teeth cleaning.
2. will be able to weigh the ferret, keep a record of each ferret's body weight (in kg), take and read the body temperature, assess dehydration, gum color, and look for signs of pain or distress.
3. will be able to safely fill a syringe, administer subcutaneous injection of medication, and dispose of the syringe and needle.
4. will be able to draw, warm, and administer subcutaneous fluids using a butterfly catheter, and safely dispose of the catheter.
5. will be able to administer oral medications.

### Useful Conversions: Keep a calculator with your ferret supplies, notepaper, pen

Lbs to kilograms: 1 kg = 2.2 lbs. OR 1 lb = 454 grams If animal weighs 3 lbs:  $3 \times .454 = 1.4$  kg Or you can do 3 divided by 2.2 = 1.36 or 1.4 kg

30 mL or cc = 1 oz 5 mL per teaspoon, 15 mL per tablespoon

28 mg = 1 oz

1000 mg in a gram, 1000 grams in a kilogram

1000 mL in a liter

240 mL in a Cup

**Fluid Therapy:** 50-100 mL/kg/day is basic maintenance, depending on if the ferret is drinking, eating on its own, and consistency of food. If the ferret is dehydrated or ill, the veterinarian may instruct more fluids than this. Best to give total fluid therapy dose for the 24 hr period in divided amounts i.e. ½ in the morning, ½ in the evening. Fluids should always be warmed to approximately 98 degrees F (test on inner wrist). You can place the bag in a big bowl of hot water from the tap, and let it sit for about 15 minutes, then remove it and clean the port for withdrawing fluids. Clean the port on the fluid bag, dextrose vial with rubbing alcohol. Let dry. Use 18 ga or large needle for filling the syringe. Replace needle with the butterfly catheter for administration. Dispose of sharps in a marked, aluminum can and return it to the shelter for disposal, or an approved medical sharps container can be used.

**Assessing hydration:** note if eyes are shiny, how much saliva. Main way: Tenting of the skin, usually done over the shoulders.

6%: barely tents, drops back upon release. Ferret may be slightly dry mouth, not urinating frequently. Earliest detectable clinical dehydration.

8%: barely tents, slower to drop back. Dry mouth, hasn't urinated recently. Eyes may seem slightly dull

10%: Tents, may stay up, dry mouth, eyes, no or little urine, very concentrated. Eyes may seem sunken in. Drop in body temperature. Will note body weight down from hydrated weight.

12-15% : Severe skin tent, will not go down, may not absorb subcutaneous fluids well at this degree of dehydration. Dry mouth, eyes, hypothermic, listless. No urine. This may require IV fluids to re-hydrate.

**Emergency fluids for seizing ferret (hypoglycemia):** 1 mL 50% dextrose in 10 mL LRS.

**Fluid therapy (supportive for ill ferret):** as directed by the veterinarian

0.5 mL 50% dextrose in 20-25 mL of saline or LRS

Administer subcutaneously over shoulders or flank using a butterfly catheter.

**Subcutaneous injections:** Scruff the ferret. Pull up loose skin, slightly pinching where you anticipate placing the needle. Insert needle parallel to the body just under the skin. You should be able to lift up the skin with the needle. Inject completely, rub skin when you pull out. Many injections will sting a little.

**Oral medications:** Scruff the ferret. Put dropper/syringe in the side of the ferret's mouth, gently squirt in. Follow bad tasting medication with a lick of Nutrical or ferretone.

**Emergency dextrose for seizing (hypoglycemic) ferret:** 0.1 mL into side of mouth, on gums, under tongue. Can use an eye dropper or 1 mL syringe. Best to get some Nutrical or regular food in as soon as the ferret starts to be aware of the oral stimulus. Then get the subcutaneous fluids in.

#### General Maintenance:

- Teeth brushing: use cotton swab with CET malt flavored toothpaste. All ferrets, at least once a week. Ferrets over 3 years of age: need annual veterinary scaling, and then brushing multiple times a week.
- Ear cleaning: use cotton swabs, ear cleaner or ear mite medication, 1-2 X a month unless directed for ear problems
- Flea control: All mammalian pets in the household on the same program. Recommend Advantage® 1-2 drops per ferret, on the skin, back of head. Do on the First of the Month! Year-round control is needed in our area, as eggs may have been introduced into the house in the fall and hatch throughout the winter.

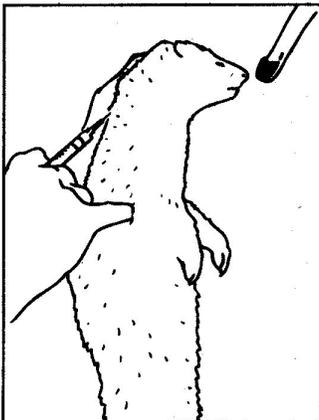
#### Signs of pain or distress:

Ferrets tend to be rather stoic on first look, but to the trained eye, there are very clear signs of pain exhibited. Small vocalizations on movement or during urination/defecation or when picked up may indicate some degree of pain. Walking a little, then lying down, pelted posture, with dull look in the eyes, big sign. Eyes being kept not fully open or looking like they are slightly sunken in. (not dehydrated). Reluctance to play, eat, drink, socialize. Tendency to just want to sleep. Change in litter box habits. Inability to groom or scratch properly. All over muscle tremors, shivering, inability to get comfortable. Grinding of the teeth, excess salivating, gagging may indicated stomach/abdominal pain. Lameness, change in gait.

If any of the above are noted, please write down time, what is seen and keep a running record of urination, defecation, and actual food/water intake. While these things may be difficult to keep track of, they are important in trying to figure out the illness and prognosis.

Records Records Records!!!! When in doubt – Write it out!

#### Notes:



The ferret can be distracted with Nutrical on a tongue depressor while a SC injection is being given.

### Equipment Needed at Home by All Fosterers for WFRS:

- A gram scale
- Calendar and folder for foster ferret information: record monthly weights, vaccination information, veterinary visits, any other health information
- List of veterinary and emergency help numbers, calculator, pen
- Nutrical
- Carnivore Care
- CET toothpaste
- Nail clippers, hemostatic agent (like Kwik stop)
- Syringes, various sizes for oral medications
- Bag of LRS and bottle of 50% dextrose (if older ferrets and/or ones documented with insulinoma): butterfly catheters, large needles, large syringes
- Rubbing alcohol
- Thermometer for rectal temperatures – prefer digital ones (ky jelly or Vaseline to lube)
- Cotton swabs (q tips) and non-alcohol based ear cleaner
- Pepcid AC 10 mg tablets (or generic famotidine); Pepto bismol liquid (preferably cherry flavor)
- Children’s oral Benadryl without alcohol (or generic diphenhydramine)

Dook Soup Recipe: Approximately one meal:

- Carnivore Care mix with low sodium chicken broth or water: approx 1 heaping tsp CC plus enough liquid to make it soupy
- 1 tsp Nutrical
- Pulverize/grind regular ferret food into a powder. 1 tsp powder plus enough water or broth to make it fluid – may need to soak for over an hour until it is lumpy chowder consistency
  - Add 1 tsp of this to the Carnivore Care soup
- 1 tsp baby food chicken or turkey, or cooked chicken puree
- 1 mL of calcium glubionate syrup or 50 mg pulverized calcium carbonate without vitamin d (human quality)
- Additional nutrients may be prescribed by the vet.
  - Mix all of the above with enough additional broth or water to make it “soupy”
  - The ferret may need encouragement to eat – often feeding off a finger or spoon may be needed to get one started. Can also do by syringe.
  - Meal: usually consider 30 mLs of CC based food per 1 kg ferret at least 3 X a day – need to keep from losing weight.

Notes: