

tummy and needs something bland or soft to eat.

You will undoubtedly need to give your ferret medicine following his surgery, so be sure to read up on how to do this so you minimize the stress to both you and your ferret during this difficult time.

If you notice anything out of the ordinary, excessive lethargy, difficulty going to the bathroom, unwillingness to eat, trouble around the incision, etc, be sure you contact your vet right away.

Most importantly, your ferret will need lots of TLC from you to help them recover quickly and get back on their feet (and up to their old tricks)!

## OTHER COMMON ILLNESSES

Information on the following illnesses and ailments can be found on our website at [www.MDFerretPAWS.org](http://www.MDFerretPAWS.org). Another great source of information on ferret care and illnesses is *Ferrets for Dummies* by Kim Schilling.

1. **General**
  - 1.1. Colds
  - 1.2. Blockages/Hairballs
  - 1.3. Teeth Problems
2. **Parasites**
  - 2.1. Ear Mites
  - 2.2. Fleas
  - 2.3. Ticks
  - 2.4. Coccidia
  - 2.5. Heartworm
  - 2.6. Ringworm
  - 2.7. Giardia
3. **Viruses**
  - 3.1. Distemper
  - 3.2. ADV
  - 3.3. ECE
4. **Bacteria**

- 4.1. Helicobacter
- 4.2. Urinary Tract Infections

### 5. **Chronic Conditions**

- 5.1. Ulcers
- 5.2. Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- 5.3. Splenomegaly
- 5.4. Cardiomyopathy

### 6. **Cancers**

- 6.1. Adrenal
- 6.2. Insulinoma
- 6.3. Lymphosarcoma
- 6.4. Chordomas
- 6.5. Mast Cell/Basal Cell Tumors

## ABOUT MD FERRET PAWS

MD Ferret PAWS strives to protect and improve the lives of ferrets in Maryland. We seek to improve the relationships between ferrets and humans through education and outreach. We promote legislation and research that makes life safer and healthier for all ferrets. Through our efforts the status and life of the ferret as a companion animal will be enhanced, legitimized, and more enjoyable for everyone. We need your help to accomplish these goals! Visit our website to see how you can become a member!



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## FIRST AID AND COMMON MEDICAL CONDITIONS

### BASIC FIRST AID KIT

It is almost inevitable that at some time your ferret will become ill or require medical attention. The following is a recommended list of items to have on hand in case of emergency or illness. Remember to never medicate your ferret without first discussing it with your veterinarian.

**Pediatric Benadryl** - useful for allergic reactions and colds

**Pepto Bismol** - for stomach ills

**Vitamins** - for an added boost or replacement when a ferret is not eating or losing nutrients to vomiting or diarrhea (like PetTinic, NutriDrops, Ferretvite or Nutrical)

**Karo Syrup** - useful if the ferret has a hypoglycemic seizure due to insulinoma (see the **insulinoma section**)

**Qtips** - to clean ears or wounds, apply medicines

**Gauze** - for wounds

**Styptic Powder or Gel** - to stop bleeding, especially useful if you accidentally clip a toenail too short (can also use cornstarch)

**Baby Food - Meat Based** - recommended is Gerber's Stage 2 Chicken and Chicken Gravy or Turkey and Turkey Gravy (must be MEAT, not meat and veggies)- good for ferrets with upset tummies, ferrets who need high protein diets

**Electrolyte replacement** - recommended is Pedialyte or similar - good for dehydration, but expires quickly after opening

**Vet #, Emergency #, Poison Control #** - these should be posted on your refrigerator or other highly visible and easy to access area

**Health Records** - it's important to keep health records up to date and easy to find in case of a trip to an emergency hospital where your ferret hasn't been seen before

**Any prescription medicines that your ferret is taking**

**a/d** - This is a canned prescription food made by Hill's and is useful for ferrets who are ill or not eating

**Peroxide** - to clean wounds initially (for continued cleaning use warm soap and water)

**Neosporin** - to apply to wounds, cream could be preferable to ointment which may attract less debris

**Probiotic** - ask your vet about using a probiotic when giving antibiotics

**Rectal thermometer or ear thermometer made specifically for ferrets** - normal ferret temperature is 102 F

## GIVING MEDS

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If your ferret becomes ill, you will most likely have to figure out a way to get them to take the medicine prescribed by your veterinarian. Rest assured, if you get more medicine in the ferret than you end up wearing on your first try, you're doing well. Some medicines can be disguised in a treat such as Ferretone or Ferretvite, while others must be given the hard way. Consult your vet on the best method of giving the medicine. If you must give it by mouth via syringe and it's a nasty-tasting medicine (and most are), be prepared for medicine to go flying on your first try. First, load the syringe and pick a place where you can sit comfortably and access the syringe.

Next, get the ferret and hold the ferret firmly by the scruff on the back of their neck. It might be helpful to wrap the ferret in a towel if they are particularly squirmy or if it is a rather awful-tasting medication. Place the tip of the syringe in the back corner of the ferret's mouth and squirt the medicine onto their tongue toward the FRONT of their mouth and wait for them to swallow. This is very important. If you squirt the medicine into the back of the mouth, you can cause the ferret to aspirate the medicine (inhale it into their lungs) and cause serious problems. Congratulations! You only have to do this a dozen more times or so and by then you'll have the hang of it for sure! (It gets easier, we promise.)

## FORCEFEEDING

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Forcefeeding a ferret is sometimes necessary if they become anorexic due to stomach ills such as an ulcer or other health problems. Consult your

veterinarian before beginning a forcefeeding regimen. Forcefeeding is done in much the same way as described above for giving medication, but is ultimately much, much messier. You use a much bigger syringe, a lot more towels, and you must be especially careful that the ferret does not aspirate the food into his lungs. If your ferret is not eating at all on his own, you must do this every 4 hours or so. Less often if your ferret is eating smaller meals in between.

What you use in the syringe as your food supplement is up to you and your vet. Common suggestions are Hill's a/d, chicken or turkey baby food, or another duck soup recipe.

## POST-SURGICAL TREATMENT

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Your veterinarian will give you post-surgical instructions that are specific to your case, but there are a few general guidelines to abide by following any surgery.

You will need to have a 'sick cage' ready for your little patient. This should be a smaller cage without levels but complete with bedding (sometimes limited to NO hammocks, especially for abdominal surgery), food and water bowls (bowls are always better when recuperating because they will drink more), and someplace to go to the bathroom. Depending on the surgery this may be some paper towels or newspaper on the floor of the cage, a litter box with paper towels instead of litter, or the litter box with normal litter inside.

You might also need to be prepared to provide some duck soup or other nourishment if your little one has an upset