



Ferret Foreign Bodies

Ferrets make wonderful pets, they are full of life and each have their own unique personality. One thing that is common to almost all ferrets is their inquisitive and playful nature. We love them for this however in some cases it can lead to problems. This is particularly the case when they eat something they shouldn't have! Today's story looks at mischievous ferrets doing exactly that, how we diagnose it and the treatment options.

What are some of the most common abnormal things you have seen ferrets eat?

Ferrets seem to love rubber and plastic items! The most common things that we remove from ferret's stomachs or intestines seem to almost always have a rubber or plastic component to them. We have removed ear plugs, magnets, rubber snakes, foam from cushions, chair stoppers and hair balls however they can eat just about anything!

What symptoms do they normally show?

If a dog or cat gets something stuck in their stomach they will normally start vomiting profusely. A common misconception is that ferrets will always do the same. We find that in some cases they might vomit once or twice however the most common symptoms are actually inappetence (not eating), abdominal pain and lethargy. Some ferrets will drool a lot or start clenching and grinding their teeth. We do get the occasional ferret that will continue to vomit continuously. Every ferret reacts differently and the signs that they show also depend on where the foreign object is lodged.

How do you diagnose that they have eaten something 'foreign'?

We start by giving the ferret a thorough clinical examination. If they are showing some of the symptoms of foreign body ingestion then radiographs (x-rays) or an ultrasound may be recommended. This allows us to see if and where a foreign object may be lodged.



What treatment options are available?

The treatment options depend greatly on what the ferret has eaten. If it is something very small or something that the body can break down then some ferrets can be managed with supportive care, this may include intravenous fluid therapy (a drip), pain relief, anti-nausea medication and/or support feeding. If a reasonably sized object is ingested or it looks as though the object ingested is causing an obstruction then surgery is generally indicated. This generally involves an exploratory laparotomy to locate the foreign body then either a gastrotomy (surgically entering the stomach) or an enterotomy (surgically entering the intestine) to retrieve the foreign object.



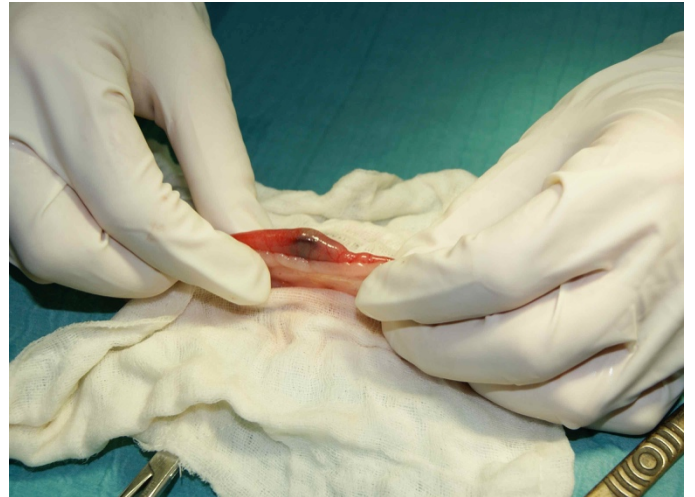


Do they normally survive?

If the object can be removed or passed successfully then most ferrets make a full recovery. On occasion the intestine can become very damaged or even rupture, in these cases the chance of the ferret making a full recovery are worsened.

What can I do to prevent my ferret eating foreign objects?

The best way is to be vigilant about what you allow your ferret access to. This can be achieved by ensuring you are supervising them if they are allowed to freely roam the house, and also ensuring that you are not leaving small chewable objects around.



What should I do if I think my ferret has eaten something they shouldn't have?

If you are concerned that your ferret may have eaten something they weren't meant to or they are showing any of the signs listed above then we recommend getting them seen as soon as possible. Just give us a call to find your closest clinic.

