

**WILDSIDE VETERINARY HEALTH CENTER**  
**Handout: Adrenal disease in Ferrets**



Adrenal disease is a common health issue among ferrets, particularly in middle-aged and older individuals. This condition can be a cause of concern for ferret owners, but with the right information and proactive care, you can help your furry friend lead a happy and healthy life. This handout will provide an overview of adrenal disease in ferrets, including its possible causes, symptoms, treatments, and prognosis.

### **Possible Causes of Adrenal Disease in Ferrets**

Adrenal disease in ferrets primarily involves the overproduction of sex hormones, such as estrogen and testosterone, by the adrenal glands. The exact cause of this overproduction is not well understood, but several factors are thought to contribute:

Genetics: Some ferrets may have a genetic predisposition to develop adrenal disease.

Hormonal Imbalance: Changes in hormone regulation can lead to the overproduction of sex hormones.

Diet and Environment: Diet and environmental factors may play a role in the development of adrenal disease, although research is ongoing.

### **Common Symptoms of Adrenal Disease**

Recognizing the symptoms of adrenal disease is crucial for early intervention. Common signs include:

Hair Loss: Bilateral hair loss, especially over the tail and rump, is a hallmark sign.

Itching and Scratching: Ferrets may scratch themselves excessively due to skin irritation.

Enlarged Vulva (in females) or Enlarged Prostate (in males): Due to the hormonal imbalance.

Muscle Atrophy: Muscle wasting, particularly in the hind legs.

Lethargy and Weakness: Ferrets may become less active and display a general lack of energy.

### **Treatment for Adrenal Disease in Ferrets**

The first treatment option for adrenal disease in ferrets is the use of a deslorelin implant, which needs to be placed every 9-12 months. This implant helps regulate the production of excess hormones. This implant can also be used to prevent adrenal disease if used yearly on young ferrets starting at 9 months of age.

If this approach does not provide satisfactory results, another option is surgical removal of the affected adrenal gland(s), known as adrenalectomy.

Find us at: [www.wildsidevet.com](http://www.wildsidevet.com)

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**Monitoring Your Ferret's Health**

Once your ferret has been diagnosed and treated for adrenal disease, it's important to keep a close eye on their health to ensure the best possible outcome. Regular monitoring includes:

Follow-up Veterinary Visits: Schedule regular check-ups with your veterinarian to assess your ferret's progress.

Observation: Continuously monitor your ferret for any signs of recurrence or complications.

**Prognosis for Ferrets with Adrenal Disease**

The prognosis for ferrets with adrenal disease is generally positive, especially if the condition is caught and treated early. With appropriate treatment, most ferrets can return to their normal, active selves. However, it's important to be aware that recurrence of adrenal disease can occur, and long-term management may be necessary.

We are here to help and guide you with your exotic pet needs!

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Wildside Vet Staff