Keeping Your Ferret Healthy

Preventive care
Follow these simple health pointers, and you'll be well on your way to raising a healthy pet:

Housing – Ferrets are easy to litter box train and do best with pelleted litter. They are extremely curious and, if given the chance, will explore every nook and cranny of their environment. That's why “ferret proofing” your home is so important. Never leave your ferret out of its cage unattended, or your furry escape artist will disappear and get lost in a blink!

Ferrets explore their surroundings with their mouths and are notorious for swallowing things they shouldn't, such as pencil erasers and pennies. So keep household items in their proper place, keep cabinets securely closed and give your ferret lots of appropriate toys and attention to help ward off boredom.

Like all pets, ferrets can be fearful of children. Be extra cautious when introducing the new member of your family; ferrets can bite!

Feeding – Ferrets are true carnivores, so a large part of their diet should include a high-quality, meat protein source. Several companies offer high-protein ferret food that's also high in calories to maintain a ferret's active lifestyle. Premium quality dry cat foods are not as good as ferret-specific foods and should only be used for a short term; kitten foods are best because they contain higher amounts of fat and protein. It's important to make food and water available at all times–ferrets have a rapid metabolism and need constant energy.

A feline hair ball treatment several times a week promotes regular bowel movements and prevents hairballs. Ask your veterinarian to help you select food and supplements for your pet.

Grooming and Bathing – Routine combing will keep your ferret's coat matt-free, reduce hairballs and help you detect parasites like fleas. When you bring in your pet for its routine, twice yearly examination, we also can instruct you on proper nail trimming, dental care and ear cleaning.

Some ferrets, especially males, secrete a musky odor from skin glands and from scent glands located near the anus. You can help control the odor by having the anal glands surgically removed, a procedure that's often performed at the same time a pet is spayed or neutered.

Regular bathing with a high-quality pet shampoo will also help control odors and can prevent dandruff. If your ferret still smells unpleasant, we can help you select commercial ferret deodorizers that you can spray or rub directly on your pet.

Regular Healthcare – Twice yearly physical exams are critical in maintaining your pet’s health. During an exam, your pet’s doctor will check the heart, lungs, coat, teeth and abdomen. He or she will also want to administer annual vaccinations to prevent such deadly viruses as distemper and rabies. Ferrets who are 6 weeks and older need a vaccine booster schedule tailor-made for their needs.

Your ferret may also need monthly heartworm preventive to decrease the likelihood of infection with this potentially deadly parasite. Additionally, your pet may need protection against fleas, ticks, lice and ear mites.

Surgery – Spaying or neutering your ferret is an important preventive healthcare measure. Scheduling this surgery early in your pet's life helps prevent many future problems, including cancer of the reproductive organs and behavior problems. Many ferrets are spayed or neutered before entering pet stores; a tattoo inside the ear may confirm that the surgery has already been performed.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.