

Vaccination

As part of your regular husbandry measures it is advisable to ensure your ferret is vaccinated against CDV. Currently there is no licensed vaccine especially for ferrets therefore your vet will need to use a vaccine intended for another species e.g. dogs.

At this time we believe Nobivac DHPPi to display the best open field results in ferrets.

The following dosage is suggested: 1 dose = 1 vial

- if newborn kit then half dose given between 6-8 weeks and second half dose at 12-14 weeks
- if juvenile ferret under 16 weeks then initial half dose and then second half dose after 2 weeks
- if over 16 weeks then single injection of full dose

Annual booster of full single dosage

In some cases there have been allergic reactions to use of non-specific vaccine in ferrets and it is advised to fully consult with your vet prior to treatment.

It is recommended that your ferret remains at the vet surgery for a period of 1-2 hours after vaccination for observation purposes.

Disclaimer: All information supplied in this document has been verified to be known as accurate at the time of writing. FERT accepts no liability for loss or injury relating to the information contained in this document. E&OE

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The Ferret Education & Research Trust is the first dedicated national registered charity within England and Wales which aims to promote the care and welfare of the domesticated ferret. It has strong ties with various other ferret and veterinary organisations and welfare; international & overseas, national and also those operating in a local capacity.

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F E R R E T

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Ferrets

Canine Distemper (CDV)



**GRAPHIC
ADVISORY
CONTENT**

Distemper Overview

A highly contagious viral disease affecting a range of companion and wild animals including dogs, foxes, ferrets, mink, weasels, badgers and otters. There is no treatment for canine distemper and in unvaccinated ferrets the disease is fatal.

The virus can be airborne or transmitted by contact with bodily fluids of an infected animal. The incubation period can vary between 7 to 10 days but there are cases where ferrets have developed the disease after a longer period following exposure, up to 21 days. Working ferrets are at risk of contracting the virus when working rabbit burrows also predated by foxes. Similarly, pet ferrets may contract the disease through contact with dogs or areas used to exercise dogs.

The virus is relatively fragile and easily eliminated by most disinfectants suitable for use in ferret courts or cubs. The virus can be transmitted on clothing however the lifespan is limited.

Symptoms

Many of the symptoms of canine distemper are seen in a wide range of other diseases or bacterial infections. The most common symptoms are:

- Conjunctivitis
- Fever
- Coma
- Fits
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy and depression
- The classic inflammation and thickening of skin around the face – chin and lips which then becomes encrusted – this can then be extended to the abdomen and anal areas and the hard, thick pads on the feet.
- Diarrhoea

Bacterial infections develop in damaged tissue and are often the primary cause of death



If You Suspect CDV In Your Ferret

As mentioned previously, for the virus to spread does require contact with an already established source of infection. If your ferrets are displaying suspicious symptoms then do the following:

1] Consider where your ferret has been. Do you take your ferret for walks in public areas? Have you visited somewhere where other animals could be susceptible or possibly exposed to Canine Distemper?

2] Contact your local vet and advise them that you believe your ferret may have symptoms of Distemper. Ask for a suitable time to bring

the animal to the surgery. Your vet will likely want to put containment measures in place. They may suggest that a home visit is appropriate.

3] If the affected ferret lives as part of a group then separate it and keep it quarantined from others. If other ferrets from the same group display symptoms then hold them together.

4] When handling the ferret use barrier nursing methods. Obtain disposable gloves and use them when handling the animal. If you have an old fleece or coat then wear it when handling the ferret displaying symptoms.

Diagnosing CDV In Ferrets

To successfully diagnose CDV in ferrets requires a combination of reviewing clinical signs and also positive antibody tests. These can be done by your local vet. It is important to mention if your ferret has ever been vaccinated when being tested for CDV as the exposure to a vaccine can cause a positive result.



Treatment and Palliative Care

CDV is fatal to ferrets in over 99.9% of all cases. There is no cure and therefore euthanasia should be considered if the ferret is positively diagnosed with CDV. A ferret can be treated with antibiotics and supportive fluids. If the ferret becomes immobile then feeding and intensive nursing options may be considered. An infected ferret can experience high levels of pain and discomfort. The ferrets behaviour will likely become altered and unpredictable during illness.

Comparison Of Symptoms With Human Influenza Virus In Ferrets

Ferrets are also susceptible to another illness that does produce similar clinical symptoms to CDV - the Human Influenza Virus.

This can also make the ferret feverous, lethargic and also develop conjunctivitis around the eyes and discharge from the nose.

The infection of Human Influenza will differ as the ferret will not develop the thickening of the skin around the face and body nor the hardening and thickening of the pads on the feet.

Human Influenza Virus is normally eliminated by the ferret's immune system but may require some treatment to combat any secondary bacterial infections. With proper care most ferrets make a recovery.

