

# Hind Leg Weakness (Posterior Paresis)

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Posterior paresis is the medical term for weakness that affects the rear legs. It is a common condition in ferrets.

What causes hind leg weakness?

Weakness of the rear legs of a ferret may be the result of many disease processes affecting multiple organs. These include:

- [Hypoglycemia](#) resulting from a tumor of the pancreas, other cancers, sepsis, severe liver disease, food restriction, or loss of appetite
- Heart disease, anemia, and other conditions causing hypoxia
- Central nervous system conditions resulting from toxins, infection, cancer, intervertebral disk disease, or trauma
- Infections with bacteria, fungi, [canine distemper virus](#), toxoplasmosis, and [Aleutian disease virus](#)
- Abdominal pain caused by [urinary stones](#) or obstruction, an [enlarged spleen](#), peritonitis, or abdominal tumors may cause signs which mimic posterior paresis
- Other diseases such as hypocalcemia (low blood calcium) in nursing jills, thiamine deficiency, and renal failure

What are the signs of posterior paresis?

Ferrets with posterior paresis may be frog-legged and drag the rear part of the body while trying to walk. They are unable to stand, or can stand for only short periods of time. If they stand, it is generally without the normally arched back. A ferret with weak hind legs may also be incontinent.

How is posterior paresis diagnosed?

Hind leg weakness is not a disease itself, but a sign of other diseases as listed above. A thorough physical exam including an accurate history of the illness may indicate which disease is present. Often, laboratory tests such as [chemistry panels](#) and [complete blood counts \(CBC\)](#), [radiographs \(x-rays\)](#) or [ultrasound](#), an EKG, a spinal tap and analysis of the fluid, and even exploratory surgery may be necessary to make the correct diagnosis.

How is hind leg weakness treated?

The disease causing the paresis will need to be treated. Keeping the rectal and urogenital areas clean and dry is important in ferrets who are incontinent.

References:

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