Dental Care of Ferrets

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Ferrets should have their teeth professionally cleaned to remove plaque and tartar, and prevent early periodontal disease and loss of teeth. Ferrets fed a soft diet are more likely to have a significant build-up of plaque and tartar (calculus) on the teeth than those fed a dry pelleted ration. Check your ferret's teeth regularly, especially the canine teeth and upper molars, to see how much plaque has accumulated.

Professional care

Oral Exams by Your Veterinarian: A thorough dental exam can identify potential problems such as plaque and tartar build-up, gingivitis, periodontal disease, and fractured or abscessed teeth. During an oral exam your veterinarian will:

- Examine the face and head for asymmetry, swelling, or discharges.
- Examine the outside surfaces of teeth and gums, and the "bite".
- Open the mouth to examine the inner surfaces of the teeth and gums and the tongue, palates, oral mucosa, tonsils, and ventral tongue area.

Dental Cleaning by Your Veterinarian: If your ferret's teeth have tartar, it is necessary for your veterinarian to remove it and polish the teeth. This professional veterinary dental cleaning is also called a prophylaxis or "prophy." A routine dental cleaning consists of:

- Anesthetizing your ferret and flushing the mouth with a solution to kill the bacteria.
- Cleaning the teeth with handheld and ultrasonic scalers. All calculus is removed from above and below the gumline.
- Using a disclosing solution to show any areas of remaining calculus which are then removed.
- Polishing the teeth to remove microscopic scratches.
- Inspecting each tooth and the gum around it for any signs of disease.
- Flushing the mouth, again, with an antibacterial solution.
- Recording any abnormalities or additional procedures on a dental chart.
- Determining the best follow-up for your ferret.

Professional dental cleaning may have to be done once or twice a year in older ferrets, depending on the condition of the teeth and the diet.

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