

Ferret Lymphosarcoma

Information for the Ferret Owner

Lymphosarcoma is a common tumor of ferrets. The most noticeable feature to owners is the enlargement of superficial lymph nodes or 'glands'. As these glands enlarge, many ferrets become listless and do not eat well.

Ferrets usually fall into two categories. Young ferrets less than 1 year of age usually develop acute thymic enlargement. Adult pets usually develop multiple lymph node enlargement.

Prognosis is variable and is based on progression of the disease. It is the veterinarian's job to determine the extent of the disease and discuss with you the available treatment options. Diagnostic tests usually include some blood testing and a biopsy of the affected lymph node.

Treatment can be one of three types. The first is to do nothing. Ferrets usually survive two to six months from the time of diagnosis. The ferret is typically euthanized by the owner due to a poor quality of life.

The second is to symptomatically treat the ferret with a steroid. I typically use a liquid prednisone starting at every third day. As the disease progresses, the time interval is shortened to every other day and then daily. Some ferrets have gone up to a year on steroids alone. Steroids do not change the progression of the disease! It just makes the pet feel better and maintain their appetite and weight better. Usually the pet will have an acute flare up of the disease with greatly increasing lymph nodes.

The third method is to do chemotherapy. There are a variety of protocols available. These protocols are involved and are the most expensive treatment.



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