



Cornell University
Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education

CARE608.01 Preventive Health Program for Ferrets

The intent of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe preventative veterinary care of ferrets. This SOP is intended for use by CARE and facility managers housing ferrets. This SOP is approved by the Cornell Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and the Cornell Center for Animal Resources and Education (CARE). Any exemption must be approved by the IACUC prior to its application.

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1. Introduction

Ferrets are obtained from approved vendors (such as Marshall Farm), or as a transfer from another source.

2. Materials

- a. Vaccines as indicated in section 3.b.
- b. Dental cleaning equipment.
- c. Physical Exam Materials – Stethoscope, blood collection tubes, thermometer, etc.

3. Procedures

- a. Resident animals
 - i. Review health certificate and vaccination history
 - ii. Keep ferrets in isolation for three weeks prior to introducing them into an existing colony
 - iii. In addition, for ferrets coming from another institution:
 - perform physical exam
 - collect and submit a pooled fecal sample for parasitology
 - iv. Vaccinate according to the schedule below (if compatible with experiment)

b. Vaccination

Vaccine	Age	Note
Distemper (Fervac-D [®] or PureVax [®])	8 weeks initial 12 weeks booster	Booster yearly; use only ferret approved vaccine since canine vaccines can be fatal.
Rabies(Killed virus)	12–13 weeks	DO NOT USE LIVE VACCINE Booster yearly

c. Parasitology

- i. Collect and submit feces for parasitology on incoming animals from other institutions.
- ii. Collect and submit a pooled fecal sample every 6 months from established colonies.

d. Physical exam

- i. Perform a physical exam annually.
 - ii. For animals over 3 years old, or following recommendation from a CARE veterinarian, collect and submit blood for Complete Blood Count (CBC) and Clinical Chemistry.
 - iii. Pay special note to signs of possible endocrine diseases.
- e. Dental exam-perform routine annual dental cleaning beginning at age 5 years or following recommendation from a CARE veterinarian.

4. Safety

- a. See Sharps SOP 711 “Sharp Precautions”
- b. Ferrets carry zoonotic organisms. Proper personal hygiene should be followed.

5. Contingencies

- a. In case of injury from ferrets, follow SOP 707 “Animal Related Injury”
- b. Consult CARE veterinary staff for any animal health issues

6. References

N/A

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