

Ferret Medications: Prednisone

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Prednisone is one of the most frequently prescribed medicines for ferrets. It is a corticosteroid, and it has a variety of different uses in ferrets, including the treatment of a number of the most common ferret diseases. Though there are different kinds of prednisone that can be prescribed, we will refer to it as "prednisone" when discussing the uses, benefits, and possible side effects throughout the article to avoid confusion.

Prednisone is a synthetic corticosteroid drug. Corticosteroids are hormones produced by the adrenal gland that are important to a myriad of cell and organ functions. This is why prednisone is used to treat so many different diseases and conditions in ferrets.

Prednisone is especially effective when used as an immunosuppressant, as it has an effect on the entire immune system. Therefore, it can be used for autoimmune diseases (when the ferret's immune system attacks its own body tissues and organs) and inflammatory diseases and conditions (when there is significant swelling and inflammation in body tissues and organs). It is also used as a pain medication and to stimulate appetite.

Prednisone is used to treat the following diseases:

- Insulinoma
- Lymphoma
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
- Allergic reactions
- Adrenal insufficiency (Addison's Disease) - treatment or prevention after adrenal surgery
- Autoimmune hemolytic anemia
- Certain types of colitis
- Eosinophilic gastroenteritis

In most cases, prednisone is not a cure. It is merely a treatment used to control symptoms, slow the progression of the disease, and make the ferret more comfortable.

Side effects of prednisone can include:

- Weight gain
- Thin skin
- Cataracts
- Liver disease
- Diabetes

These side effects are associated with long term usage, and weight gain is the most regularly seen side effect. Ferrets on prednisone develop what is known among ferret owners as a "pred belly." Diabetes is a very rare side effect, and is generally only seen in ferrets that are very sensitive to how prednisone works to raise blood glucose.

It's important to note that because it is an immunosuppressant that affects the entire immune system, prednisone can leave your ferret more susceptible to other infections and diseases. It does this because it prevents the white blood cells that fight infection from moving towards areas of inflammation.

Prednisone is prescribed in one of three different forms: prednisone, prednisolone, and Pediapred. Prednisolone is the main ingredient in prednisone, and it's what the body breaks prednisone down into once it is processed by the liver. Many veterinarians prefer to skip this step, and put the ferret directly on prednisolone or Pediapred (an oral prednisolone preparation), as that is easier on the ferret's liver. This is necessary if the ferret has any kind of liver damage, as prednisone will not work as well as prednisolone for those ferrets.

Prednisone can be prescribed as a tablet or a liquid form. Tablets can be administered in pieces or crushed up into liquids. Liquid prednisone formulas can be compounded at certain pharmacies with flavors to make them more palatable for ferrets. If you are using the liquid type, make sure that your pharmacy is giving you Pediapred or another form that does not contain alcohol. The [Drs. Foster and Smith Pharmacy](#) also offers a compounded version of prednisone in treat-like forms such as Ani-Melts® and Gummie Chews.

Prednisone should always be administered after your ferret has eaten. Prednisone can cause nausea, and some ferrets are more sensitive to that side effect than others. Giving it on a full stomach will help to alleviate any stomach pain and protect the lining of your ferret's stomach. The best way to make sure that your ferret has a full stomach is to supplement your ferret's regular diet with [duck soup](#), wet food, or some other food that allows you to measure exactly how much your ferret has eaten.

When used properly, prednisone can help to improve your ferret's quality of life and effectively treat a variety of illnesses.