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## Paw Print - Issue #3 – February 2010

### Brrr!

It's been COLD here in the Northeast! Even those ferrets who normally squabble are cuddled up to keep cozy.

We don't have a lot of ferrets in the shelter right now, which is a welcome break. It's given us the opportunity to replace the shelter room floor, which had pretty much "had it." But ferrets are still being thrown out in the cold by heartless owners, and animals are in need all over. We'll be taking some "overflow" from neighboring shelters, and for anyone in Massachusetts thinking of adopting, we ask you contact their ferret hotline at 781.224.1098. We know they have animals for adoption and one of their shelter operators has to place her remaining shelter ferrets due to an upcoming surgery.

But February means spring IS in sight! Along with Valentine's Day, it's also Pet Dental Health Month. Read about dental cleaning for ferrets below, and check out the limited edition ferret goodies we have for sale. Keep warm!

L. Vanessa Gruden

Shelter Director

Paw Print is the [Ferret Association of Connecticut's](#) online newsletter. You are receiving this message because you contacted us for information. If you do NOT want to be on our e-mail list, please click [here](#) to unsubscribe! FACT never sells or rents our e-mail lists.

### Featured Article: Ferret Dental Disease

When's the last time you looked in your ferret's mouth? Last month? Year? Ever? Do yourself and your pet a favor and do it **now**.

In a young, healthy ferret, all you should see is white teeth and pink gums. If your ferret is a couple years old, you'll see some normal yellowing of the canine (two long front) teeth. Look further back toward the jaw. Do you see dark



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### Events

[A Night of Passion for Paws](#) is the annual ball for Protectors of Animals, a rescue group based in East Hartford, CT. This year, though the generosity of Laurie Scursso, a portion of proceeds will benefit FACT. Held February 13<sup>th</sup> at the Glastonbury Hills Country Club, tickets are \$70 per person and include dinner, dancing, and a cash bar. POA does great work and we are always delighted to work with them! Check out the Fur Ball for a romantic evening out that ALSO benefits animals! Call 860.416.9547 to order.



### Featured Ferret Treasures Sale Item: Valentine's Day Gift Pack

material on what would be our molars? That's the beginning of tartar buildup. Do you see red along the gums? That's periodontal disease starting, and it can lead to infections, internal disease, and death. What if you have a ferret over age 4? You could see a blackened tooth or teeth missing along the front jaw. The gums could be inflamed or even bleeding.

Other symptoms of dental disease? Take a sniff! If their mouth smells foul, that's a major sign there's a serious problem. Has your ferret lost weight or been eating less? When it hurts to eat, chewing kibble is hard and they don't have the option to order milkshakes at the drive-thru.

## Prevention is the Best Remedy

How nasty would **your** teeth be if never brushed? No one expects you to clean your pet's teeth after each meal, but if you want to keep them healthy longer, regular tooth care is key.

**NEVER** use human toothpaste, which isn't meant to be ingested, on a pet. There is no toothpaste specifically for ferrets but you can use cat or dog versions. Pet pastes can be found in any pet outlet and come in flavors like poultry or vanilla mint. Ferrets may also like this peanut-flavored version at : <http://www.dog.com/item/natural-toothpaste---2-1-2-oz/220415/>. You can also use human infant formula toothpaste like Baby Orajel, which comes in yummy apple-banana, berry, and mixed fruit flavors. Read the label and make sure it's safe to swallow.

Some sites recommend you use a rubber finger brush, but anyone who knows how much ferrets like to bite rubbery items will realize that's not a good idea! I dip a cotton swab, which will fit inside tiny mouths better, in the paste, rub especially along the back teeth, and just throw it out when done.

Incorporate tooth cleaning into your regular grooming routine and not only will you help delay expensive veterinary scalings, but catch any problems before they become a crisis.

## Now What?

A special gift for your special furry valentines! This set includes a Snuggle Blankie in a heart pattern (flannel blanket 44" x 25"), a grape colored Polar Pouch (15" square pocket made of super-soft, double-sided fleece) and either a cool plush "bone" with a heart pattern and a squeakie inside (8" x 5") or plush "lips" with a pull cord that makes them vibrate (great for deaf ferrets – like TidyCat, below).

Only \$10 plus \$2.50 for US domestic postage, you can purchase one – or more! by e-mailing: [FerretTreasures](#). Your purchase helps the homeless ferrets cared for by the Ferret Association shelter. Thank you!

## Valentine's Day Cards

As a special fundraiser for the new shelter floor, we've created three slightly off-kilter Valentines. Being sold on Etsy, one specifically for animal lovers reminds everyone that sometimes the best kind of love is already right at your feet. Another, featuring a quote by *The Simpsons* creator Matt Groening, reminds us love isn't always fun – especially when "the ice weasels come!" And the third is just for anyone who could use a little extra hug on the "holiday for lovers" – personally, I feel like we singles get left out and send Valentine cards to every unattached person I know. You can see the cards in detail on [Etsy.com](#).

## Dental Before & Afters



TidyCat – Before

You've seen some dirty chompers and don't know what to do? Well, determining the progression of the problem is first. [Here's](#) a great web page written by Dr. Bruce Williams that explains more about dental problems. If there's no gingivitis (inflammation of the gum), you may be able to get away with scraping off the tartar yourself with a dental tool...or, for Connecticut residents, wait until FACT has their annual Frolic, where Tamara Von Ouhl usually performs low-cost scaling. If the situation is more serious, then a vet visit is in order.

## Your Ferret's Dentist – The Veterinarian

The modern veterinarian is skilled in dentistry as well as general medical care. He or she can clean, scale (scrape off tartar) and polish your pet's teeth, and, if necessary, prescribe medication to control infection.

The veterinarian needs to sedate your pet for a full cleaning, so make sure he or she is healthy enough for anesthesia. Costs will vary widely depending on the scope of the dentistry and the clinic fees, but the good news is, February is [National Pet Dental Health Month](#), so most hospitals offer special discounts for dental work. For some, it's so popular that they may extend the discount period from late January into early March.

To the right are some "before & afters" of two ferrets I recently brought to the [East Hartford \(CT\) Animal Clinic](#).

It's important to note that I would not have normally noticed the infections brewing in these critters' mouths. (Special thanks to a FACT member who alerted me to their condition!) While TidyCat had been losing some weight, Shia was still fat and playful. Looking back, yes, they weren't as active, but I just thought it was because both were now over 4 years old.

While quiet the night of the surgery, they ate normally and by the next evening were bouncing all around. Both seem to be feeling better and are more active and playful now that their dental issues have been solved.

## After Care



TidyCat - After



Shia – Before



Shia – After

## Featured Foster Ferret

One of our dental models (above), TidyCat came from the huge Ohio ferret rescue in 2007. At about 3 when she arrived, this tiny little black sable earned her name by being one of the FEW out of the 18 we took that **didn't** toss her food and water all over the place! Miss Cat is deaf and didn't like other ferrets at first, but now likes to snuggle with Caution, one of the big Ohio boys I adopted myself. She lives permanently Fostered here with my personal ferrets. To learn how you can sponsor TidyCat, one of the other 30-40 ferrets in FACT's Foster Program, or make a one-time donation, visit our site: [Make a Donation](#).

Paying for a full veterinary dental cleaning doesn't solve the problem forever. Unless YOU keep up the care with in-home brushing, those sparkly whites will just revert back to grubby. Other good preventative measures include always feeding dry kibble, not soft or moist food and limiting treats (especially those with sugar!). Some ferrets like tartar-reducing pet treats, like [Greenies](#). (Use the small ones made for cats.)

However, until your ferret is able and willing to brush their own teeth, you'll have to keep an eye on them to make sure your furry buddy enters old age eating great and feeling great.



FACT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and donations are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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