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Paw Print - Issue #5 – May 2010

Spring!

Well, it seemed like spring! But the last few days have been so cold here in New England it feels like winter has returned!

Do you know the saying about where the thoughts of young men turn when the weather warms? Love...and after that, come babies! At the National Zoo in Washington, DC, they keep a webcam in the nest box of an endangered Black Footed Ferret. The Zoo does captive breeding and places the camera with a bred female. In 2008, we got to see Georgia give birth, and last year Cyan had 6 (!) babies. It's wonderful to watch the kits grow & play. Thalia, the current female on view, has been introduced to a mate. The male is living with her and this is a great opportunity to see the pair together. Click [here](#) to visit the web site. You may need to download free software to view (the link is on the page).

What do you do when your ferret stops eating? While a ferret with a suspected intestinal blockage should never be force fed, sometimes it's a simple cold or flu and is treatable – if you know how to get them eating again. Recently, I was able help a gentleman in Malaysia whose ferret was refusing food. There are a lot of online sites with their own “duck soup” – I call it “gruel” – recipes, but below is a simple one anyone can make. I've also included an article on what to expect when you must force feed



14 Sherbrooke Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106-3838
www.ferret-fact.org

Events - The Ferret Treasures Store Sale

Twice a year FACT opens our doors to the public for a semi-annual sale of ferret goodies. **This year the date is Saturday, May 15, from 11 am to 3 pm.** No, the FERRETS aren't on sale, though you're welcome to visit those for adoption in the shelter! But besides all the rescuing, educating, and poop-cleaning we do here, our intrepid Shelter Director loves to sew. Her busy fingers make ferret pouches, blankets, hammocks, and the exclusive FurBall, a football-shaped creation of polyester suede lined with faux fur. They're good quality, reasonably priced, and help support the shelter, too!

The “store” also has a big selection of handmade jewelry, toys, and assorted gifts for ferrets and their owners. We have gently used cages, carriers, and assorted supplies sold at rock-bottom prices. Can't make it? You can order your own FurBall below.

FACT is located at 14 Sherbrooke Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106. For directions, visit <http://www.mapquest.com>.

you must have read:

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.

Simple Gruel Recipe

- Crush regular dry food (a coffee grinder works great).
- Add twice as much water. Microwave for 1-2 minutes, depending on quantity. Consistency should be that of thick soup.
- Cool to comfortable but not cold temperature (test with finger).
- Feed from syringe or off finger initially; ferrets normally learn to like it.
- 2 ounces is a full meal for a ferret. This is equivalent to about 4 tablespoons or the small sauce cup you get in restaurants.
- Refrigerate unused portions for reheating.

Featured Article: Stages of Force-Feeding

Either from a cold, flu, or other virus, ferrets may stop eating. As many owners know, this can lead to a rapid downward spiral. A ferret's highly acidic digestive system turns on itself within a day or two, causing nausea, mouth or esophageal



Featured Ferret Treasures Sale Item: The FurBall

The ultimate ferret sleepy spot. Ferrets love them because their body heat is trapped inside, keeping them cozy. They can be defended from intruders, if your ferret doesn't like others, or a larger one will let a couple buddies sleep together. Made from poly suede and lined in fake fur. All are machine wash & dry. Colors are assorted. FurBalls come in three sizes:

Regular (\$9) fits females and smaller males.

Large (\$12) is best for boys,

Xlarge (\$15) will fit big guys and a pair of friends.

Please add \$2.50 shipping for the first FurBall ordered, and \$1 for each additional one. To purchase, just e-mail [FerretTreasures](#). Your purchase helps the homeless ferrets cared for by the FACT shelter. Thank you!

Love Avon AND Ferrets?

Then you'll want to visit [Mary Van Dahm's Avon store](#)! Mary ran a large shelter near Chicago for many years and fundraises to help the ferrets still in her care. As a special bonus, she will donate 20% of sales of cosmetics, perfumes & more (10% donation for non-cosmetic items like jewelry) to the shelter of your choice. We hope you'll choose FACT! However, to make sure she knows, be sure to e-mail [Mary](#) directly.

ulcers, and these cause the anorexia to worsen.

The cure takes antibiotics. But until those take effect, the ferret HAS to eat. A day without food is not good; two days and the animal can become seriously ill, if not from dehydration than from low blood sugar.

Hand-feeding becomes necessary. Often you have to start by forcing food. The GOOD news is that within a few days you should see improvement. Here's a timeline that may help determine how your ferret is improving.

Stage 1: "You're KILLING me!"

Boy, this is fun. You make some nice, warm, yummy gruel or duck soup and present it to the ferret. Who takes one sniff and turns away. So now you have to force feed with a syringe. If the ferret is really, really sick, you actually won't get much of a fight out of them. They'll accept the food in their mouth and swallow.

It's when they're feeling stronger that they start resisting. This becomes "scruff & stuff" time. And you, the ferret, the floor, and anything within spitting distance WILL be covered in gruel spots. BTW, that "chewing cud" mouth movement you're seeing means the ferret is feeling nauseous. Go slow with the food – how would YOU feel if you were vomiting and someone was trying to make you eat? Intersperse food with syringes of plain, warm water.

This is the most crucial period. You can't reason with them that they need to eat to get better, like you would with a sick human. You simply have to grit your teeth, bear the spots, the scratches, and the ferret's conviction that you are KILLING THEM, and feed. (To begin with, I will try to feed a little every few hours.)

Featured Ferret for Adoption

A kind young man found Simone on a busy street in New Haven. He took her in and called us. Simone is about 2 years old and has a [chordoma](#) on the end of her tail that will be removed soon. Simone doesn't really like other ferrets – what she likes the most is to stick her cold wet nose up your pant leg. If you're interested in adopting Simone, please [e-mail](#) us for an adoption application. If you'd like to help with her medical bill, visit our site: [Make a Donation](#).



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

Cool Links

FACT is *everywhere*...at least it seems that way! Within the last couple weeks Board President Ann Gruden was interviewed on online radio. [Click to listen](#) to the 1 hour chat and hear some of FACT's history.

Shelter Director Vanessa Gruden has written an article currently featured on the Small Animal Channel website, "[25 Wonderful Things to Do for Ferret Shelters](#)." The site is run by the publishers of Ferret magazine and has GREAT info! You can also sign up for their free e-newsletter.

I've had people say, "Oh, Bandit will hate me!" for forcing them to eat, but my answer is that would you rather have Bandit "hate" you, or be dead? Ferrets don't hold grudges. I've found if you begin the antibiotics the same day you started feeding, it will take about 2 days until you see improvement.

Stage 2: "I'll Eat, But I'm Not Happy About It"

You put the syringe full of gruel in the corner of their mouth, and they stop twisting like Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*. They just hang there, looking like they've been beaten, letting the food dribble out of their mouth and all over themselves and you. Persist! Some food will be entering their mouth. This stage should last 1-2 days.

Stage 3: "Maybe It's Not TOO Bad"

The first time you see your sick ferret actually willing to eat off the syringe willingly, you may want to cheer. You'll now be able to get more of the food inside them rather than outside, so you can cut down to 3 times a day feedings. Resist the temptation to try to stuff too much into their mouth, or they'll start kicking again. This stage usually only last a day, as it soon with transition into:

Stage 4: "OK, I'll Eat a LITTLE"

Not by themselves, out of a dish. Not yet. They may start to lick a few drops that have fallen onto a napkin, but will probably still require a little syringing to have enough for a full meal. But this is a HUGE improvement over the force-feeding, and you can feel good that they are well on the way to recovery. This stage is usually only 1 or 2 days, maximum.

Stage 5: "Hey, This Stuff Tastes Good"

Ah, they'll eat out of a cup or bowl! Hurrah! You can go to work or bed without cold, wet ferret food all over you. Sometimes if I see the ferret licking slow down, I'll move the food away a bit and let them reach for it, just to encourage eating a bit more. Very soon (maybe a day) they will eat a full meal on their own and you're nearly out of the woods.

There's one temptation here, and that's to stop feeding and medicating too soon. Unless you SEE the ferret actively eating their dry food - and this can be hard when you have a horde - keep feeding twice a day. Otherwise, you risk a relapse.

Stage 6: "Gimme More!"

At this point, your ferret is fine, eating regularly, and has been weaned off gruel. However, he or she has now learned to LOVE the stuff, and will steal it from any other oldie or sickie whose food you may be supplementing.

Yes, they may now be a pest, but congratulate yourself - you've helped them survive what could have been a fatal illness. If the result is a "gruel hog," that's not a bad price to pay.

Paw Print is published by the [Ferret Association of Connecticut, Inc.](#), a nonprofit humane organization dedicated to helping ferret owners, caretakers, and most importantly, the ferrets themselves. Website: www.ferret-fact.org.

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