

## **FERRET ADRENAL DISEASE PREVENTION**

Adrenal gland disease is a very common disease process in domestic ferrets in the US, affecting up to 70% of all pet ferrets. We have determined that it has been caused by spaying/neutering, which is a practice required by the USDA for the protection of native species. As this practice is unlikely to change, the exotic mammal veterinary community has been looking for ways to prevent the development of adrenal gland disease. Dr. Cathy Johnson-Delaney in Seattle and Dr. Nico Schoemaker in Europe have performed and published most of the work on this disease. Adrenal gland disease can cost ferret owners in the US up to several hundred dollars a year per ferret in medical management expenses.

We have been importing Deslorelin implants to treat adrenal gland disease for a couple of years now, and are excited that they are now available in the US under a conditional Minor Use/Minor Species license. This is not full FDA approval yet, but it makes it a lot easier to obtain these for our patients now. The implant lasts for approximately 18 months, so with our current pricing ends up costing about \$10 per month. We are using the implants both to treat and to prevent adrenal disease. For prevention, the timing of the first implant is very important. Young ferrets need to receive the implant at puberty in late fall of their first year, males around Thanksgiving and females around Christmas. If we miss this window with a young ferret, it is less likely that we can effectively prevent the onset of adrenal gland disease, but we can effectively treat the disease should it develop down the road.

For initial treatment in ferrets 3 or more years of age, we do require bloodwork before placing an implant. We do this because the second most common disease in ferrets, insulinoma, can occur at a subclinical (non-detectable) level and can be complicated by the hormone released from the implant, potentially resulting in a life-threatening condition. We will provide you with an estimate of any bloodwork we would require following an exam of your ferret.

Feel free to call with any questions, for specific medical questions, please ask for Brandi.