VACCINATION OF FERRETS (M. putorius furo)

The American Ferret Association recommends vaccinating ferrets with U.S.D.A. licensed vaccine products labeled for use in ferrets.

**CANINE DISTEMPER VIRUS (CDV)**

Ferrets are highly susceptible to CDV. The disease is virtually 100% fatal in unimmunized ferrets.

**USDA LICENSED VACCINE(S):** FERVAC-D (US License No. 245)

**TYPE:** Live Attenuated Virus. Manufactured by United Vaccines, Inc., Madison WI

For information, contact United Vaccines, 1-800-283-6465.

**RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE** (Consult product label):

1ml SQ in healthy ferrets at 8, 11, and 14 weeks, and then annually.

- KITS 6-14 weeks of age with no, unknown, or outdated vaccination history
  - GIVE: Series of 3 boosters given at 3 week intervals, then annually on anniversary of the last booster.
  - **NB:** In a recent CDV outbreak some ferrets who received only 2 boosters -- the last given at less than 14 weeks of age, succumbed to CDV.

- FERRETS over 14 weeks of age with no, unknown, or outdated vaccination history:
  - GIVE: Series of two vaccines given at 2 weeks apart, then annually on the anniversary of the last booster.
  - KITS OR ADULTS WITH DOCUMENTED & CURRENT VACCINATION HISTORY:
    - Complete the series, consult the vaccine label.

**RABIES VIRUS**

Although there have been less than 20 ferrets ever reported rabid in the U.S., the vaccine is safe and efficacious in preventing rabies in ferrets. All ferrets should be vaccinated against rabies.

**USDA LICENSED VACCINE(S):** IMRAB-3 (US License No. 298)

**TYPE:** Killed Virus. Manufactured by Rhone Merieux, Inc., Athens, GA

For more information, call 706-548-9292.

**RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE** (Consult product label):

1ml SQ in healthy ferrets at 3 months, and then annually.

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**Vaccination Protocol Recommendations**

- As is seen in all animal species, adverse reactions to vaccine products have been known to occur in ferrets following immunization. In ferrets this may be seen as a blushing of the ears, restlessness, respiratory distress, vomiting, bloody diarrhea, seizures, coma and rarely, death. For this reason, no animal should be vaccinated unless appropriate emergency measures are available to manage such potential occurrences. Following vaccination, the ferret should be observed for no less than 20 minutes, and preferably up to an hour, for signs of immediate hypersensitivity. AFA strongly encourages all vaccinated animals to be observed for a period of time no shorter than 20 minutes at the veterinarians office so immediate care can be administered if needed. Owners should be told to report any changes in behavior or signs of reactions that are observed in the ferret which may occur within 72 hours following the vaccination and report such occurrences immediately to the clinic.

- Although there is no evidence that delivering more than one vaccine product to a ferret is associated with a higher incidence of adverse events, if a ferret has experienced problems in the past, it is suggested that each vaccine product be administered separately, so that in the event of a reaction the contributory role(s) of the product(s) can be more easily determined.

- No animal should be vaccinated that has an active infective process. In addition, animals who have hematologic malignancies, or that are undergoing immunosuppressive treatments, may (A.) Produce a poor immune response which may not be protective, (B.) For live-attenuated viral vaccine products, experience adverse effects, including contracting the disease itself.

- Information on the effects of vaccination on the kits of pregnant jills is insufficient. Administration of live viral vaccines to any pregnant animal is generally discouraged. Breeders should consider updating the vaccinations of both male and female animals at least one month prior to anticipated breeding if they are nearing their annual booster date. This will prevent the possibility of infection being transmitted from the breeding interaction and may confer some immunity to the kits through the mother.

- Vaccine Adverse Events should be reported to the manufacturer, or to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (515-232-5789, collect; after hours, call and leave message). The following information should be provided: species; sex; age; reproductive status (intact/neutered); vaccine product name WITH LOT OR BATCH NUMBER; expiration date of the product; animal’s prior immunization history; status of animal prior to vaccine; description of events; any concurrent medications; outcome. It would also be helpful to know if the animal had experienced any prior adverse events, and pre-medication, or had an existing condition which may have contributed to the reaction.