



The American Ferret Association, Inc.

PMB 255, 626-C Admiral Drive, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

1-888-FERRET-1 afa@ferret.org www.ferret.org

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January 24, 2007

Dear Fellow Ferret Veterinarian:

As every one of us who deals with ferrets regularly knows, vaccination against canine distemper, although life-protecting, can also be life-threatening to these little animals. Their incidence of vaccine reactions is high, and those reactions can range from as mild as lethargy to as severe as respiratory collapse and death. The most common reaction seen is gastrointestinal shock, also potentially life-threatening and certainly distressing to ferret, owner, and we as veterinarians.

For that reason, and because of the body of evidence suggesting that vaccination may confer protection for well over the year the vaccines are labeled for, I, with the cooperation and support of the American Ferret Association, am collecting data for an epidemiological study of the duration of vaccine-induced titers against canine distemper virus. In all species thus far studied, a titer of 1:32 or greater has been shown to be protective against infection, and personal communications indicate that this is believed to hold true for ferrets as well. The purpose of my study is to determine whether titers of this level or greater can be found in ferrets at one, two, three or even more years out from their most recent vaccination. Preliminary results are promising.

Tests must be serum neutralization and must be run at the NYS Diagnostic Laboratory at Cornell. To facilitate this, the AFA has set up an account to be used solely for this study and has negotiated a reduced rate for the tests. Although the AFA has a fund set up for this purpose, the fund is finite and donations to help support the study are welcomed. If your clients wish to donate to this fund, the test fee per animal is ten dollars. Funds can be sent to the AFA directly at the following address and should be earmarked for the "distemper titer study":

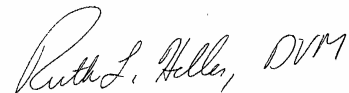
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Currently in my hospital the following protocol is used: each ferret that is presented for annual exam and vaccination is vaccinated for rabies and a blood sample drawn. The lab requires 0.25 ml of serum per test, and I have found 0.5 ml of blood to be sufficient, which leaves an ample amount for annual testing (blood glucose, etc.) if 1.0 ml is drawn. If the titer is negative or low (which has not yet occurred in my hospital) the owner would be advised to return for distemper vaccination. Every owner asked to participate in this study to date has been willing and eager to follow this protocol.

I enclose a copy of the submission form for the laboratory, as well as a copy of the History Data Sheet that is required for each ferret included in the study. Please send copies of the Data Sheet and the resulting report from Cornell to me at the Borderbrook Animal Hospital address or fax given above.

I am very excited about pursuing this study and look forward to seeing the results.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth L. Heller, DVM".

Ruth L. Heller, DVM

/rlh

Enclosures

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