FERRET SURGERY

If your ferret needs to have surgery, the vet will usually want to see the ferret first. Call and try to make an appointment for the office visit and surgery on the same day. That way it's all done in one day and isn't nearly as hard on the ferret. Try to schedule the surgery for a day when the vet is working the next day, in case of any complications.

If your ferret is scheduled to have surgery, find out what time the vet performs surgeries. Plan to have the ferret there 1 1/2 - 2 hours prior to the time that time. Most vets say to bring the ferret in early in the morning. This is because they're used to having dogs and cats come in that early to keep them from eating and drinking before surgery. This isn't necessary for ferrets. The longer the ferret has to sit at the vet's office, the more stressed it will be. **Less stress equals better recovery.**

Plus, if you can get the ferret to the vet later, you can offer it soup before leaving, so it won't have a drop in blood glucose during the day. Ferrets do not have a gag reflex like dogs and cats, so they won't throw up food or water during surgery. This means you don't have to withhold food or water before the surgery.

Take your ferret in for surgery in a carrier that will fit in a cage in the vet's office. This way the ferret and carrier will be put in a cage and the carrier will be opened so the ferret can go potty if it wants to. the ferret will be less stressed if it can stay in its own carrier and not be taken out and just put in the vet's cage. Label the carrier with the ferret's name and your last name.

Ask what hours the vet performs surgeries and plan to pick up your ferret about 1 1/2 hours after the latest time. For example, my vet does surgery from 12-2. I take the ferret in by 10:30 and pick it up by 3:30. I call first to make sure there weren't any complications that will make the ferret need to stay longer. The vet techs always say they will call, and they will, just not necessarily as soon as the ferret is ready to go home. I don't want the ferret to stay at the vet's office any longer than necessary.

When you arrive to pick up the ferret, always take the ferret out of the carrier to check on it. If you have any concerns, ask right then. Don't think it will get better and you can call if it doesn't. Once I had a ferret that had already torn open its stitches by the time I got there, so it went right back in for those to be repaired.

If you have more than an hour's ride home, take some soup and water with you to the vet's office and offer it to the ferret when you pick it up. The vet's office can heat up the soup for you. It's not likely going to want to eat or drink. Offer it anyway. On the way home, if you can, pull over and offer the soup and water again. If you have less than an hour's ride, offer soup when you get home and make it and water available in the cage. You can even offer soup or water in a spoon to entice the ferret to take it.

Be sure you fully understand what is needed for care for the ferret after the surgery. The ferret should awaken and be a little bit active after an hour or so of being home. Call the vet if: the ferret's still lethargic 30-45 minutes after getting home, it's still lethargic the next morning, isn't eating soup or kibble on its own, or if there is more than a small amount of bruising around the incision (possible internal bleeding). **If you have concerns and can't reach the vet, you may call me at 770-235-0070.**

I always offer soup instead of hard kibble after surgery because the ferret is more likely to eat it, it's easier for the ferret to digest, the ferret will eat more of it than kibble and it will give liquids that the ferret needs.

You'll want the ferret to not move around much the first three to four days, depending on the surgery. Set up a one-level cage, large pet carrier, playpen, or something like that. You may take the ferret out for handling or let it walk around some, just not to run and play like normal. It's okay to let its partner sleep with it only if they're not playing and wrestling.

Some people feel they have to keep the ferret inactive until the stitches are removed. This is not so. Ferrets heal very quickly and will be going crazy if confined for ten days. If a ferret has had adrenal surgery with no complications, I will allow it out more and more each day with it being able to be with the other ferrets by day four or five.

Stitches are to be removed at the ten-day mark or very close to that. If you wait too long, the skin will start growing over the stitches and make removal more difficult. You can remove the stitches yourself by having someone hold the ferret, using small scissors to snip a stitch, and then using tweezers to gently tug the stitch out. Double-check to be sure you haven't left in any small pieces.