PRURITIS

Pruritis (excessive itching) can be caused by adrenal disease, fleas, mites, dry skin, blowing the coat in the spring and fall, mast cell tumors (on a specific spot), and occasionally other conditions.

First, be sure the ferret doesn't have fleas or mites. Fleas you can see easily enough. Mites you can’t see easily. It's uncommon for ferrets to have mites, but it does happen. For this, use a treatment where you apply drops to the back of the neck. This way, when the flea or mite feeds from the ferret, it'll die. (Some mites require medication to get rid of them.) For a ferret, use only Frontline II, Advantage II, Revolution, Selampro, Revolt (either dog or cat), or any product specifically made for a ferret. These are the only ones safe for a ferret. Use about one drop per pound of body weight. It won't hurt the ferret if you use more than two or three drops. However, it works well with a minimum amount and there's no need to put more poison in the animal than needed.

Next, see if the ferret has adrenal disease. Excessive itching is a symptom of adrenal disease. Treating for adrenal disease will usually reduce or get rid of the symptoms, including pruritis. (Melatonin implant, Deslorelin implant, surgery.)

You can ask your vet about trying antihistamines to help with the itching. I've not found Benadryl type antihistamine has any effect. Levocetirizine is an antihistamine that has an effect on some ferrets. Liquid (concentration of 2.5 mg per 5 ml) - Give 6-7 drops daily. The ferret isn’t going to like the taste, so it’s sometimes easier to give the tablet. 5 mg tablet – Crush and mix with 1.7 ml of salmon or other oil. Rub 1-2 drops on the tongue or gums. Treat once a day for two days. If not enough change, treat twice a day for two or three days. If not enough change, double the dosage in the morning and give the normal amount 12 hours later. If the doubled dosage helps during the day, then double it at night too.

If the ferret's diet doesn't have enough fat content in it, it can cause dry itchy skin. Fat content should be near 20%.

You may try giving the ferret a bath with an oatmeal shampoo (recipe below) as often as needed. This will help with dry, itchy skin and clogged pores on the tail (rat tail). It may or may not help with pruritis. 1 cup oatmeal, 1/2 cup baking soda, 1-quart warm water. In a food processor or coffee grinder, grind oatmeal until it’s flour. Pour into a bowl and stir in baking soda. Add warm water and stir until well mixed. When you’re ready to use it, wet the pet. Lather with the oatmeal shampoo and allow to sit for 5 minutes if possible. Rinse off and dry.

You can use pet cream rinse after a bath to really help moisturize the skin.

There are also anti-itch sprays you can try. Cover the ferret's head when spraying.

Adding salmon oil to the diet will help with dry skin as well, though many ferrets don’t care for it. Do not add it to the dry kibble, as it can cause the kibble to go bad if not eaten quickly enough. Give it in a dish, added to soup or with a syringe into the side of the mouth.