ULCERS AND STOMACH PAINS

An ulcer can occur from stress, not eating enough, medication, and other things. Stress can include being handled too much, too much noise around the ferret, not enough restful sleep, other animals/ferrets trying to interact with the ferret, and having a prey animal in the house that the ferret wants to kill. The harsh digestive juices increase with stress. When not eating enough, the digestive juices don’t have food to break down, so they start working on the stomach lining.

**Symptoms** can include: lack of appetite, signs of pain (gnashing teeth, whimpering, watering or squinted eyes), gagging when drinking water (also a sign of nausea), black or tarry stool (indicates stomach ulcer), blood in the stool (indicates intestinal ulcer), lack of activity, stomach
making noises, anemia (from a bleeding ulcer).

**Treatment** involves several things. First, take away kibble for at least a couple of days and offer soup only. (See info for ferret soup recipe or where to order.) Soup is easier on the stomach and doesn’t aggravate the ulcer. The ferret may not want to eat due to the pain. If so, start
medication and then start giving soup. Force feed if necessary. (Force feed only through the side of the mouth and a very small amount at one time, so you don’t asphyxiate.)

Get the ferret to a vet for further treatment. This is important. An ulcer is deadly. The vet will usually start the ferret on Carafate or Sucralfate. It’s usually prescribed at .5-1 ml two to three times a day. The vet will also likely have you use a human stomach medication like Pepcid, Famotidine, etc. Directions for using stomach medication are below. The vet may also give sub-q fluids if the ferret is dehydrated.

Keep the ferret stress free! Any more stress keeps the ulcer or stomach issue from healing. Stress can be from something as simple as a trip outside of the house, being handled when it’s trying to sleep, bathing, etc.

Pepcid, Famotidine, or Zegerid - The vet may prescribe Famotidine once or twice a day, and Zegerid twice a day. I prefer to use a capsule like Zegerid, as it's easier to mix the powder with something to give to the ferret. **Do not give these meds within one hour of giving any other
medication** as it will keep that medication from working. It should be given one hour before other medications to prepare a less acidic environment for the other medications. These medications alter the natural bacteria in the gut and should not be used more than ten days in a row. Give a break of at least two days and then restart if necessary. You can ask the vet if you can use over-the-counter medications to save money and prepare it yourself.

It's generally recommended to give the Carafate / Sucralfate after the other medications. You can ask the vet for tablets to save money and prepare it yourself. This is how the rescue vet has us prepare ours. Put 4 ml of water in a dish and add 1/4 tablet. Let soak for a bit. With the
back of a spoon, crush the tablet into a fine powder. Mix with the water well. Give .5 ml twice a day for at least a week. Give about 15 minutes before food.

**If the ferret isn't doing a little better within two days, it should be seen by a vet again.**