

# LIFE THREATENING EMERGENCIES

## (LISTED ALPHABETICALLY)

- **Animal Bites/deep puncture wounds**
- **Bleeding**
- **Breathing, labored**
- **Broken Bones**
- **Burns**
- **Choking/Retching/Vomiting**
- **Convulsions**
- **Dislocations**
- **Drowning**
- **Ear Injuries**
- **Electric Cord Bite/shock**
- **Eye injuries**
- **Fainting or loss of balance**
- **Frostbite/Hypothermia**
- **Head Injuries**
- **Heatstroke**
- **Loss of Color of Gums and Nose**
- **Nose, Face & Jaw Injuries/nosebleeds**
- **Spinal or nerve injuries**
- **Unconsciousness**
- **Urination difficulties**

### **Animal Bites/deep puncture wounds**

Clean affected area with hydrogen peroxide. Do not apply any ointment to an injury which penetrates the full skin thickness.

### **Bleeding**

If possible, stop any serious bleeding by using direct pressure and a styptic pencil or powder.

### **Breathing, labored**

Any sounds of harshness, fluid, or increased effort needed to inhale or exhale, panting or open-mouthed breathing.

### **Broken Bones**

Manifested by inability to stand without pain, support weight normally, or move or walk normally. Ferret may vocalize, cry, or make some other unusual noise when picked up. There may be visible or internal swelling, with tenderness at the area affected.

### **Burns**

**Non-chemical:** apply cool compress, then light application of antibiotic ointment or aloe vera gel.

**Chemical:** rinse with cool water, apply cool compress, followed by light application of antibiotic ointment or aloe vera gel.

### **Choking/Retching/Vomiting**

Many different causes which include foreign body in esophagus, severe gastric ulcers, foreign bodies in the gastrointestinal tract which may be partially or completely causing an obstructing internal bleeding of respiratory system (i.e. lungs filling up with blood which the ferret Coughs up and swallows).

### **Convulsions**

Try giving 2-3cc Karo syrup or honey only if ferret is able to swallow. Ensure that ferret cannot harm itself on hard, sharp or dangerous objects.

### **Dislocations**

Swelling of any joint or limb, sometimes both. Restrict activity or immobilize in a towel until veterinary attention can be sought.

## **Drowning**

Keep ferrets away from water! They can only swim for a few minutes before succumbing to exhaustion. The amount of chlorine normally present in pools can be extremely irritating to a ferret's eyes.

## **Ear Injuries**

May range from bites and scrapes to avulsions (tearing off of tissue). Minor wounds may be cleaned and antibiotic ointment applied. Stop overt bleeding with direct pressure. Never insert a Q-Tip deep into the ear canal, as rupture of the eardrum may result.

## **Electric Cord Bite/shock**

Burns of the lips and gums may be visible. Ferret may be lying on its side having difficulty breathing. The most common consequence of electric shock is pulmonary edema (fluid accumulating in the lungs).

## **Eye injuries**

Can include scratches, perforating injuries, foreign bodies, chemical or contact corneal trauma. All are absolute medical emergencies.

## **Fainting or loss of balance**

Manifested by the ferret collapsing or showing weakness that is generalized or confined to the hind limbs. Could be a cardiac or metabolic problem. Try giving 1-3cc of Karo syrup or honey, only if the ferret can swallow.

## **Frostbite/Hypothermia**

Gently massage extremities and body. Keep the warming process gradual. Heating pads may be used if kept on "low" and the ferret is checked frequently. Bluish or black discoloration of the skin or limbs is very serious.

## **Head Injuries**

If ferret is unconscious or bleeding from ears/nose/mouth, keep horizontal and immobilized. Keep movement to an absolute minimum, since cervical (neck) injuries often occur along with head injuries; too much movement may result in permanent injury or paralysis.

## **Heatstroke**

Never leave a ferret in an enclosed area in the sun without adequate shade. Never leave a ferret in the car with the windows closed... even with them open, ferrets can overheat easily. Immediately wrap in a cool, wet wash cloth. Freshen with cool water every couple of minutes. Repeat procedure until ferret's body temperature is below 103 degrees.

## **Loss of Color of Gums and Nose**

Gums and nose should be pink. Pale or white gums are a serious problem. May indicate internal bleeding or shock. Conversely, gums which are bright red are the sign of a serious problem such as toxemia (overwhelming systemic infection).

## **Nose, Face & Jaw Injuries/nosebleeds**

If nosebleed is minor, apply direct pressure using gauze tissue, etc. nose, face and jaw fractures or injuries are serious, and handling should be kept to a minimum. Transport ferret to the vet wrapped in a towel.

## **Spinal or nerve injuries**

Symptoms may include wobbly gait, tenderness, difficulty in breathing, or inability to move front legs, rear legs, or both.

## **Unconsciousness**

If possible, take careful note so you can tell the vet whether ferret is breathing quickly or slowly, whether the pupils are dilated or very small, whether muscles are supple or stiff, and whether ferret is responsive to voices and/or touch.

## **Urination difficulties**

Straining to urinate, inability to urinate, producing small amounts of urine, or abnormal color to urine. May indicate infection, bladder stones, or urinary tract blockage.