

# BLOOD GLUCOSE MONITORING IN FERRETS AT HOME

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Insulinoma, cancer of the pancreas, is one of the more common diseases in ferrets. The tumors on the pancreas cause an overproduction of insulin resulting in low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) in the ferret. Clinical signs of the disease can include lethargy, hindleg weakness, nausea, pawing at the mouth and even seizures, also referred to as crashing.

Immediate care must be provided if a low blood sugar incident occurs. Rubbing a sugary substance such as honey on the ferret's gums may help. Treatment in the long-term may include the use of prednisolone (pred) and/or diazoxide, prescribed by the veterinarian. Feeding a high protein diet at regular intervals throughout the day can help prevent low blood sugar incidents. Surgical removal of cancerous tumors is also something to discuss with the vet.

Normal blood glucose levels in ferrets are reported as between 90 – 120 mg/dL with below 60 mg/dL considered hypoglycemic. To monitor blood glucose in an insulinomic ferret, you can purchase a blood glucose tester. There are several available on the market including a new version by Zoetis known as the Alphatrak 3. Another tester is the OneTouch Verio. Test strips compatible with the system are also needed.

Bonnie Russell, shelter operator at Washington Metro Area Ferret Outreach shared some tips for testing your ferrets. First, she actually tested her device in her vet's office and found it was accurate. She chose a device that requires only a minute bit of blood as well. She opts to prick the tail to get blood and tests at the end of 12 hours, right before the next dose of pred.

Russell's further advice includes:

1. Pick a glucometer and the brand strips and stick with it!
2. Don't get hung up comparing your results to other people's glucometers or your vets'.
3. Stick to a routine, test at the same time of day, and make sure your ferrets is comfortable and relaxed
4. Routinely test ferrets who are on pred for insulinoma and of course, also test if someone seems "off"
5. Beware that various conditions or acute illness can affect the glucose levels

You can watch this short video on checking a ferret's blood glucose here: <https://youtu.be/lumYxu3sKcY>

