

## Poop Chart (by Dr. Bruce Williams, [www.miamiferret.org](http://www.miamiferret.org))

Yes, ferret lovers tend to be poop watchers. We're either cleaning it up or examining its colour and texture to monitor the health of our ferrets. Here's a chart on the various colour and consistencies that one may see and what it might mean. This information was originally posted to the Ferret Mailing List by Dr. Bruce Williams, noted veterinary pathologist and ferret expert.

- **Green poop** - a very non-specific sign - it just means that food is moving through too fast. The normal brown colour seen in faeces is the end product of breakdown of old red blood cells. The pigment goes through a green stage called biliverdin, before it becomes brown (called stercobilin). So if it is going through at an accelerated rate, it never breaks all the way down, and has a green colour to it. Anything that accelerates passage of food or causes diarrhoea can result in green colour - ECE, rapid food changes, lymphoma, just about anything.
- **Black tarry poop** - Very suggestive of gastric bleeding and usually associated with gastric ulcers. You have to have significant bleeding in the stomach for the faeces to turn black. The black colour is the result of digestion of blood, which usually only occurs in the stomach.
- **Bloody poop** - If you see frank blood in the poop - it is usually either from the large bowel or rectum (if seen in small amounts) - or if there is a lot of blood, it could come from the entire length of the GI tract. Massive haemorrhage is seen either from severe gastric bleeds or shock in ferrets, and as one might imagine, is a really bad sign.
- **Birdseed poop** - Generally a sign of mal-digestion or mal-absorption. Also non-specific, it can be seen with any disease that severely affects the small intestine. Most commonly seen with ECE, the individual seeds are usually undigested fat and starch complexes. When you see this, you should consider removing a ferret from kibble and going to a bland, easily digested supplement for a while.
- **Pencil-lead thin stools** - Think partial obstruction - usually a foreign body.

**IF YOU ARE AT ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE HEALTH OF YOUR FERRET**

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR VET IMMEDIATELY**

## Poop Chart Photos (courtesy of Ferret Harmony)

Normal Poops		
	Kibble-Fed	A normal, healthy kibble-fed ferret should have poops with even color, consistency, and shape.
	Raw Meat (boneless)	A ferret fed a meal of raw boneless meat will exhibit slightly loose or "wet" poops of varying colors and consistencies, depending on the meal. This is normal.
	Raw Meaty Bones	After a meal of raw meaty bones, there will be visible shards of bone in the poops, which will be more formed than a meal of raw meat or offal.
	Raw Organ & Offal	Organ & offal meats are high in blood content and yield looser, darker poops than usual.
	Whole Prey	Poops after a whole prey meal are in neat, dry 'packages' enclosed in fur.

Common Indigestions		
		These are examples of common indigestions. Generally, they are reactions to mild stresses and changes, but monitor your ferret's input and output closely for a day or so to judge whether a vet trip is necessary.
	Mucousy	Mucous is the body's natural protectant. Mucousy poops indicate a bowel upset, usually from the addition of a new food or treat or some minor life stress. If they persist, they can indicate an underlying issue and need to be monitored.
	Watery	Mostly liquid poops are caused by foods being passed too quickly, usually the symptom of mild stress or new food items. Make sure your ferret stays hydrated as loose poops can often cause dehydration.
	Seedy	The seedy texture of these poops is caused by foods being improperly digested. The pods are actually fats and proteins that haven't been processed.
	Jelly-like	These poops are entirely mucous blobs and need to be monitored closely for dehydration or intestinal blockage.
	Foamy/Bubblely	Usually these are the result of a new food or treat, though some bacterial infections are known to present as foamy and bubblely poops, so it's important to watch your ferret closely after seeing one of these in the litter box. Foamy fries and cheweasels are common treats that can cause these kinds of poops.
	Green	Green coloration in poops indicates that foods haven't been digested properly. Oftentimes it's due to minor stresses or changes in diet, but ECE is known as the "green slime disease" for a reason.

Serious Illnesses and Ailments		
		Only a licensed veterinarian can diagnose and treat these illnesses, so if you have concerns that your ferret may have one of these issues, please contact your veterinarian immediately.
	Parasites	Coccidia and giardia are common parasites found in many species of pets, and even humans. Usually contracted through contaminated water or food, these parasites inhibit the digestive tract's ability to properly break down and digest foods, and can become very serious, very quickly. They can cause loose, watery, seedy, and colored poops, and often have a particular "sour" odor. Intestinal parasites need to be treated with medications so it's important to get your ferret to the veterinarian if you suspect parasites. Parasites are highly contagious and all ferrets need to be tested and treated, even if only one is showing symptoms.
	Irritable Bowel Disease/ Syndrome	Irritable bowel disease or syndrome is not just a human ailment! Many ferrets have IBD due to sensitivities to certain foods, oftentimes chicken and grains. IBS is usually a symptom of another condition that affects the digestive tract, such as lymphoma or adrenal gland disease. If you notice sensitivities to certain foods, talk to your veterinarian and look into removing certain foods from your ferret's diet.
	ECE	ECE, commonly called "green slime disease" presents with explosive, green, watery poops that can quickly dehydrate a ferret. It is highly contagious and often shows up in stressed and immuno-compromised ferrets.
	Vaccine Reaction	Vaccine reactions have varying degrees of severity, some as severe as anaphalactic shock, or as minor as whipped, foamy looking poops. Generally, these pass after a day or so but if after a distemper or rabies vaccine, your ferret produces some questionable poops, it's best to contact your veterinarian for advice.
		Chart compiled by Erinn, with help from Chris, Ash, Sherry and Brandi. Copyright Ferret Harmony, 2009. To be used as a reference only.