

Common Lizard Diseases

Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)



MBD is commonly referred to as calcium deficiency by the general public and the novice veterinarian seeing pet iguanas and other lizard species. It is generally due to a combination of all or one of the following : Lack of UV Light, improper diet, lack of humidity or consistent below optimum cage temperatures. UV light must be supplied from direct sunlight (not thru glass or plexiglass) or by use of UV lights placed above the cage (unobstructed by wood, plastic or glass tops). Bulbs need to be changed every 6 months. Technically, MBD, is an imbalance of the Calcium / Phosphorus ratio in the blood. The ratio should be 2/1 or 3/1.

Symptoms

1. Bilateral Swelling of back or front legs in the mid section of the long bones
2. Muscle twitching
3. Anorexia
4. Soft lower and/or upper jaw

Diagnosis

1. Blood calcium and phosphorus level
2. XRAY

Treatment

1. Depends on calcium levels (needs to be under direction of a well qualified reptile veterinarian)
2. Change diet (WalkAboutFarms diets are highly recommended)
3. Place iguana in UV light daily for 1-2 hours during first month of treatment

Prevention

1. Use proper diet as directed by our 'Reptile Healthcare Information'
2. Use proper UV lighting
3. See your Reptile Veterinarian Yearly



Skin Mites

Symptoms

1. Blackened areas of skin in a variety of places on iguana's body and limbs
2. Tiny red dots under and between scales

Diagnosis

1. Veterinary examination and analysis of skin scraping under microscope

Treatment

1. Ivermectin oral medication (repeated in 2 weeks)
2. Washing skin with an antiseptic soap to remove majority of mites

Prevention

1. Veterinary examination within 1st week of purchase
2. Cleaning cage during and after veterinary treatment is helpful to prevent re-infestation

Subcutaneous Swelling (Abscess) - usually under lower jaw, but may occur anywhere.

Symptoms

1. Firm, nodular swelling under lower jaw, on tail , on feet or on torso
2. Corresponding weight loss
3. Discoloration of skin over swelling

Diagnosis

1. Surgical removal of mass
2. Bacterial culture of surface of mass or inside of pocket created by mass
3. Pathology report of mass from laboratory analysis (may be bacterial, mycobacterial or Vitamin A Deficiency)

Treatment

1. Surgical removal of mass and cleaning of abscess site
2. Selecting proper antibiotic according to culture report
3. Correcting any diet or housing problems

Prevention

1. Maintaining clean environment
2. Feeding diet recommended on our website's Iguana Diet Recommendations

Thermal Burns

Symptoms

1. Thickened, black skin on belly or back (edges may be peeling up)
2. Thick layer of dead skin that reveals raw skin underneath once peeled off

Diagnosis

1. History (use of hot rock in cage or a heat light within 1 foot of iguana's body)
2. Lack of skin mite infestation

Treatment

1. Cleaning wound with an antiseptic soap
2. Use of long term antibiotic orally
3. Use of topical burn cream

Prevention

1. Use 'undertank' heater
2. Keep heat lights at least 1 foot away from top level of cage