

## White Substance on Chameleon's Nose

### What could the white substance on my chameleon's nose be?

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

Our female chameleon has a white substance around her nostrils. What is this, and what can I use to clean this up other than water, being that her skin is so sensitive?

I have two thoughts as to what this white substance might be. Iguanids that are herbivores have nasal salt glands that excrete excess sodium chloride through sneezing. This clear fluid from the sneeze dries into a fine, white powder. However, chameleons don't perform this activity, so this must be something else.

I wonder if you live in a hard water area of the country (a condition where there are lots of dissolved minerals in the water) and this is collecting as a white substance on her face as the hard water evaporates. If this is occurring, I would recommend switching to bottled spring water, and although this may result in a mineral build-up over time, this should help.

Have you noticed your chameleon sneezing? If that is the case, this white substance can be dried secretion from an upper respiratory infection.

You didn't give me much information to go on, so I am just offering suggestions. I don't know about your water delivery system or the temperature and humidity of your chameleon's environment.

If the build-up of the white substance is a new symptom, then I would definitely recommend that you have your lizard examined by a qualified herp vet.

I would only recommend using lukewarm bottled spring water to try to remove the white substance. Use a cotton-tipped applicator to gently dislodge the material. However, if you plan to take your chameleon in to see a herp veterinarian, I wouldn't clean off her face, so that your vet can observe what you are describing to me.

Good luck with your chameleon. Since they are easily stressed, don't handle her any more than you must and don't apply too much pressure in attempting to remove the white substance.

### Need a Herp Vet?

If you are looking for a herp-knowledgeable veterinarian in your area, a good place to start is by checking the list of members on the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarian (ARAV) web site at [www.arav.com](http://www.arav.com). Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.

Or, check out the state by state ReptileChannel Vet Listings.