

Iguana Eye Problem

Why can't my iguana open its eyes?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

I am a student living in Pretoria, South Africa. I own a 16 month old male iguana. He has the correct lighting (at least 5 percent UVB), and the temperature gradient in his enclosure is correct at all times. The humidity varies between 40 percent and 60 percent. He was active and ate well on a diet consisting of 40 percent iguana pellets and about 60 percent leafy greens. I regularly add a good vitamin supplement as well as a calcium powder. I also put him outside in natural sunlight for two hours, two to three times per week in temperatures that vary between 27 to 33 degrees Celsius.

Two days ago, I noticed my iguana's right eye kept shutting. His eyes bulge like usual, but then after they have returned to normal, he closes them again.

The situation has worsened in the past two days. Both his eyes remain closed even when I approach or touch him. He is completely inactive, but he still eats a moderate amount of food.

I took him to my rep vet, who is convinced that it is a vitamin A deficiency. My iguana received an injection from him a day ago, but he shows no signs of improvement.

I wonder if this problem might have been caused by a harmful disinfectant that I used to clean his enclosure?

If you have any helpful hints or any idea of how I can help him, I would deeply appreciate it.

Yours sincerely,
Ernst

Thank you for the thorough information you supplied with your question. From your diet information, I doubt that your iguana is suffering from hypovitaminosis A (vitamin A deficiency).

I do wish, however, that you had provided me with specific information about exactly what disinfectant you had used to clean his enclosure. Some disinfectants can be quite irritating to the eyes, so that could be the case. Did you mention this to your herp vet during your visit?

It is possible to stain the corneas with a fluorescein dye that is harmless to the eyes, but will show any ulcers or damage to the corneas. Your vet could easily perform this test to see if there are any corneal lesions.

I would recommend that your herp vet perform a complete blood count (CBC) and chemistry analysis on your iguana in order to get a better idea of what is going on with him on the inside. It is a simple procedure to draw blood from the tail vein for analysis. This may be the best way to attempt to figure out what is wrong with your iguana.

I hope this helps. Good luck with your wonderful lizard. You are obviously a caring and excellent steward to your pet, so hopefully, you and your vet can get to the bottom of this problem.

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) website at 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.