

## The Importance of Proper Lighting

**My lizard is missing most of his tail and two digits on his right hind limb.**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have a bearded dragon named Norbert. I'm not sure of his age, and he's about six inches long. He's missing most of his tail and two digits on his right hind limb. His tail is only about two inches long.

I use a reddish-orange sand substrate, which has stained his limbs and the end of his tail. I've noticed that his missing digits have become a dark gray color and his tail is pale. I read about tail rot and started soaking his injuries in hydrogen peroxide a couple of times a week. He moves around, eats and seems healthy, although he hasn't shed in a long time. How often should bearded dragons shed? Should I be concerned about the changes in his injuries? I took him to the vet recently and he did not mention any problems with his injuries. I use full-spectrum lighting; temperature is about 75 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit. He gets bathed once a week and sprayed about four times a week. Thank you for your help.

I don't think that you are keeping him warm enough. If he doesn't sit and gape in his basking area, then he is not hot enough. I recommend a focal hot spot of 110 to 115 degrees Fahrenheit. Make sure that you are using a good quality full-spectrum light and changing it according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Bearded dragons don't shed based on any type of schedule; shedding will depend on how much he is eating, how well he is assimilating to his nutrients, what he is eating and if he is suffering from any infections or parasites. Because bearded dragons shed as they grow, I can't tell you how often each lizard should shed.

When you say that the missing digits are becoming a dark gray, I am guessing that you meant that some other digits on the affected foot are now showing signs of disease. Did you bring up your concerns with your vet when you were there last? Veterinarians can't read minds, so if you don't voice your concerns, your vet may not have known that you had questions about the toes and tail. Especially if the missing body parts were not new injuries.

It would be a good idea to have your lizard reevaluated by your herp vet, and make sure that you point out the abnormal toes and any other problems. Your vet may draw some blood for lab testing, to see if Norbert is truly healthy.