

## Gecko Lizard Tail Loss and Growth

### **Will my son's African fat-tailed gecko regrow its tail?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

We have an African fat-tailed gecko, which is close to 2 years old. My 5-year-old son loves her, and the gecko really likes to chill out on him. Recently she tried to get under the couch, and my son accidentally popped off her tail. He was horrified. Can you tell us how long it will take to grow back, and if there is anything we can do to help her?

Also, our only pet store closed down so we don't have access to crickets. What else can I feed her, and how often is enough? I could drive to a big city to get crickets, but how often would I have to do that? The nearest city is two hours away. Would it be better to just find her a new home in a city where there are pet shops?

Your second question is the easier one to answer, so I'll start with that one. If you check in REPTILES magazine, or do a search online for crickets, you will find many companies that will ship you crickets, and a cricket-keeper to maintain them in until it is time to feed your lizard. Because it is always best to vary your lizard's diet, you could also purchase a tub of mealworms and waxworms when you order your crickets. It is easy to set up mealworms to breed, so you could maintain a small colony of them for a never-ending source of lizard food. You can also catch insects such as moths and other suitable bugs outside, weather permitting.

You should be dusting your crickets with a calcium powder prior to feeding your lizard. You should also consider gut-loading your crickets prior to feeding your gecko, using a commercial gut-load product that should also be available where you purchase your crickets. It is also a good idea to give your gecko the occasional pinky mouse once a week or so. You should pay special attention to your gecko's diet during the tail regrowth process, as she needs extra protein and calcium during that time.

Because I don't know how much of your gecko's tail has been removed, but I suspect that the whole tail has been "popped off." It is likely that your gecko will regrow a small replacement tail, and how long it takes to regrow will depend on her general state of health and plane of nutrition. You should start to see a little nub of a brown tail starting to appear soon. It definitely won't be as thick and pretty as her first tail was, but she should be regrowing one very soon.

And be sure that your child always washes his hands after handling his pet lizard for safety.