

## Healthy Gecko Not Eating

**My gecko is not feeding. He was checked out and seems healthy. What could be wrong?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have a male palm gecko, newly acquired from a pet store in Salisbury, Wiltshire, England. He is of good size and weight, and I was assured he was treated for parasites and mites. I also checked him visually and found no mites on him. He is in a new Exo Terra enclosure with a background temperature of 85 degrees F and 80 percent humidity. I have yet to see him eat, and he shows no interest in crickets or mealworms. I have been giving him T-Rex Hydro-Life, 9 ml, to rehydrate him and help him create the stomach bacteria he needs to begin feeding again. But this has not seemed to work. Can you help?

Do you happen to know if this newly acquired gecko was hatched domestically or if it was wild caught? This information can be very helpful when trying to figure out potential problems with a new lizard.

It would also help if I had the scientific name for this particular gecko, because geckos can be known by different names in various parts of the world. For example, some texts refer to palm geckos as being the same as tokay geckos, so I'm not sure exactly what species we are discussing here.

The temperature and humidity seem fine, (although in your original letter, you gave the temperature as 85 degrees C, which I cannot believe is correct) although the nighttime temperature should be 10 to 15 degrees less, as a rule. Nocturnal geckos are thought to not need ultraviolet light, but it may help to provide enclosures with live plants. During sunrise and twilight they will benefit from UVB light.

If there is a chance that your new gecko was wild caught, then I would suggest that you make an appointment with a qualified herp vet to have your new lizard examined and tested, especially for parasites. If he passes any stool, safely store it in plastic wrap and refrigerate it until you can bring it in to the vet. It is always best for a vet to examine fresh droppings, but an older sample is better than nothing. Imported or wild-caught herps are much more likely to be harboring intestinal parasites and are more susceptible to stress-related illnesses, such as salmonellosis. This is not to say that domestically bred herps can't also suffer from stress, protozoal infections, bacterial infections or other problems. These problems are more likely to occur after a stressful move, especially if the herp becomes chilled during the move.

Because he still isn't interested in eating, even after what you're doing for him, it's time for a qualified herp vet to find out exactly why he doesn't want to eat. If you don't have any experienced herp vets in your area, ask some pet retailers who they use, or ask vets in your area who they refer reptiles to. Another alternative is to find a vet willing to see your lizard and then encourage him or her to use a consultation service so your vet can consult with a more experienced herp vet.

Please have your lizard examined and treated, and hopefully, he'll be on the mend and eating in no time.