

## Lizard Eye Injury

**My lizard seems to have scratched her eyeball and keeps it closed most of the time.**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have an 18-month-old female panther chameleon, and she seems to have scratched her eyeball and keeps it closed most of the time. I have flushed the eye with water, which seems to be helping a little, but I'm still worried. Is this something that will heal itself, or should I take her to a vet?

You should schedule an appointment with a herp veterinarian. It is possible that your chameleon injured her eye, but it is more likely that she might have a problem with vitamin A deficiency, or hypovitaminosis A.

Many herps that develop hypovitaminosis A will first show one or more swollen eyelids, and the vitamin A deficiency may progress to respiratory signs. The eyelid swelling may eventually develop into severe edema (swelling) that renders the herp blind because the eyelids can no longer open.

Because of the unique anatomy of the chameleon eye, it is well-protected, making it less likely to become damaged from a scratch. Other diseases and problems can cause a chameleon's eye to become swollen, so it is a good idea for you to seek a veterinary professional who can use a special stain to see if the cornea is damaged and can test for other problems. It is possible to treat hypovitaminosis A by injections or by the use of oral beta-carotene, some of which is converted in the body to active vitamin A. It is possible to overdose an animal on vitamin A, so beta-carotene is safer. Other problems could be due to trauma, parasites, bacterial infection, fungal infection, nutritional disorders or developmental problems.

Sight is vital for all living creatures, and chameleons rely on their sight for accurately catching their prey, so please have your chameleon evaluated as soon as possible. Her health may depend on it.