

Bearded Dragon Vomiting and Diarrhea

What could cause a bearded dragon to throw up?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

My friend has an adult beardie of an unknown age who has been doing very badly. He has had some trouble shedding but we've just gotten him to start shedding with regular baths in warm water. He is about 18 inches long and eats plenty of mealworms, crickets and mustard greens sprinkled with a vitamin powder specially made for beardies. My real concern is that he has been vomiting shortly after eating and having diarrhea too. What could be the problem with my friend's dragon and what should he do?

I am beginning to sound like a broken record here, but for everyone writing in to ask questions, you can expect to get advice from me about finding a herp vet in your area who can examine, perform tests and treat your pet herps.

That said, I really, really think that your friend should collect some vomitus and some of the diarrhea (in separate containers, and refrigerate until you can get an appointment with the vet) and make an appointment ASAP with a herp vet. There are many different bacteria, parasites and other conditions, such as foreign body ingestion (sand, rocks, etc.) that can cause what you are describing. I am especially worried about Salmonella, a bacterium that can cause infections in herps and humans. Until you get your friend's beardie diagnosed and treated, practice excellent sanitation, washing your hands after handling him, and do not clean any of the cage equipment in the kitchen sink. (Actually, this is good information for any herp owner regarding sanitation.) Salmonella can cause gastrointestinal signs such as those you are describing. This bacterial infection can also occur secondary to a problem with the intestinal protozoa, called coccidia. Coccidia lives in the small intestines and can cause intestinal cells to rupture, which allows bacteria to invade, and is a common problem in bearded dragons.

Your friend should have tests run on the vomitus and/or diarrhea, and perhaps some blood tests should be done, as well, in order to try to diagnose the problems affecting his beardie. In the meantime, keep him at the correct temperature range (95-110 degrees F during the day) and keep the cage immaculately clean.

Whatever is causing the problem, it is going to require prescription medications, most likely, so please encourage your friend to get the professional assistance that his beardie needs.

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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) web site at www.arav.com. Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.