

## Green Anole Lizard Color Changes

**I have a large male green anole. The problem is he won't turn green. What could be wrong?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have a large male green anole. The problem is he won't turn green. He is a sort of very light brown, not the dark brown they get when they're stressed, but the color they get when they're about to shed.

The humidity and temperature are normal. He shares a 54-gallon tall enclosure that is part glass and part screen with a juvenile largehead anole (*Anolis cybotes cybotes*). Could the largehead anole be scaring him? The largehead anole is his normal, relaxed, light-mocha coloration.

What could be wrong with my green anole? Is he stressed? Is he lonely? Should I add a couple of females in with him? I have UV light and a basking light, plenty of hiding places, etc. I don't know what could be wrong. He seems to be acting normally, eating well, active, basking, etc.

I think the first thing that I need to ask you is if you are certain that you have a green anole (*Anolis carolinensis*), and not one of the other types of anole that doesn't turn green? I am not trying to insult your intelligence, but I needed to ask this first off. OK, so I am assuming that you do know that you have a green anole, and we'll proceed from there.

Any time a green anole stays brown all the time (and not necessarily dark brown), that means to me that your male anole is stressed. It may turn green during the night when it's sleeping (maybe try to check on it without disturbing it, to see if that's happening). Your anole might be stressed from environmental issues (if the habitat is too hot or too cold, for example, but you assured me that this is not the case with your situation), or it can be psychosocial, from two or more anoles being housed together.

Most green anoles are wild-caught and may be harboring internal parasites. There may be some physiological stressors to begin with, so if you haven't had your anole checked out by a herp vet (bring a fresh fecal sample, if possible, for examination) please do so as soon as possible.

I do think that you may be correct in thinking that the juvenile largeheaded anole could be the problem. Do you have lots of plants and visual barriers in the habitat? If your adult male feels stressed from territoriality issues, moving out the other anole would be the first step. If the anole recovers and begins to change colors more normally, then you have your answer. Also, in regards to habitat, do you have a drip system, or mist the leaves for your anole to get water? Many wild-caught anoles haven't yet learned to drink from a water bowl. You say it is eating normally, so that is good. Is it evidencing any territoriality behaviors, such as head-bobbing, displaying its dewlap, etc?

I would recommend removing the other anole and seeing if that makes a difference after having your green anole thoroughly checked out by your herp vet. I would not recommend adding any female anoles at this time. If you acquired your green anole as an adult, that could be a problem, as youngsters tend to adapt better than adults. If it regains its normal coloration after removal of the other anole, then down the road, you may be able to add a female green anole or two, but probably not the largehead, again. While anoles are small lizards, they are members of the Iguanidae family and often have the same territoriality issues as green iguanas, and crowding issues, as well.

Good luck with your anoles. I am a transplanted Floridian, and I still find myself stopping to watch male anoles when they are displaying, and I still delight in watching an anole stalk a bug and run out to snatch it up and eat it! They are very neat little lizards with a big personality.

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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](http://www.arav.com). Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.