

Bearded Dragon Lizard Being Lazy

Why is my bearded dragon no longer moving around?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

I am 12 years old and have 16 different pets. Three of them are reptiles. My question is about my 2-year-old female bearded dragon. I just noticed today that her eyes are red and look like they are dripping blood, but no liquid or crust is by her eyes. What is the problem? Could my lizard be sick?

Michael: It appears as if your bearded dragon is suffering from metabolic bone disease. The swollen limbs, flat posture and inability to lift up the body using the front and hind legs are the dead giveaway. Please read the answers I gave for the green iguana a few weeks ago and for the uromastyx in this week's postings.

This condition occurs when an animal doesn't get enough calcium in the diet, or it gets an improper calcium: phosphorus ratio (from too much fruit in the diet, for example, which has too much phosphorus), or it does not produce adequate vitamin D3 to properly utilize calcium, usually by not having full-spectrum lighting or access to natural sunlight that is not filtered through glass or plastic. The limbs swell due to fibrous connective tissue that develops around the bones to try to support the weakened bone structure. A sure sign of this condition is when a lizard cannot lift up its body to walk off the ground and must drag itself along on its belly. Some animals will have muscle tremors or seizures from low blood calcium.

Thank you for sending the photo which really helped me to get a better idea of his problem. Please contact a herp vet in your area and make an immediate appointment.

Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP has been an avian/exotic/herp animal veterinarian since 1981. She is a regular contributor to REPTILES magazine.

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.