

Lizard With Lumps Behind Ears

My lizard has lumps or bulges right behind his ears. The right side lump is larger than the left. What is it?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

I have a green anole, which I think is 2 years old. He has lumps or bulges right behind his ears. The right side lump is larger than the left. He was in a 30-gallon tank with another anole and long-tailed grass lizard and a green treefrog. The temperature is good, and I mist daily. I clean weekly. I have moved him into our quarantine tank but don't know what else to do. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Well, my best advice is to find yourself a herp vet in your area willing to have a look at your anole to see what is going on here. It sounds like your green anole has developed middle ear infections, which are much more commonly seen in chelonians (turtles, tortoises and terrapins). The majority of swellings in reptiles are due to bacterial abscesses, which usually appear as encapsulated pockets of thick, cheesy-appearing debris. These can occur as a result of malnutrition, overcrowding, suboptimal conditions or from bite wounds (not likely in your case).

I am assuming that you are describing bulges behind the exposed ear drum, technically called the tympanum, or tympanic membrane, and not in the area found behind the ear, meaning not under the eardrum, but in the area of the neck region located distal to the eardrum.

Aural, or ear abscesses, can often be successfully treated by surgical means, and appropriate diagnostics, including bacterial culture and sensitivity, followed by antibiotic therapy and whatever support care is necessary.

Please find a herp vet in your area who can help you by evaluating and treating your anole. Small lizards can undergo the same medical care as larger ones, and we are only limited by the amount of blood that can be drawn for testing, due to their smaller size. But the lizard can be anesthetized, cultures can be taken, cytology or biopsy specimens can be taken, and even radiographs (X-rays) can be performed.

Treating your lizard is definitely doable, but your vet must also evaluate your husbandry situation, to attempt to determine why these lesions have occurred in the first place.

I hope this helps. Find a vet willing to work with you and your anole, and you'll be on your way.

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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.