

## Gecko Lizard Regurgitating and Light-Colored Liver

**Our gecko lizard has a regurgitation problem and a light tan colored liver. Does that mean our gecko has liver disease?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have a leopard gecko approximately 6 to 8 months of age. We have taken her into the vet due to a regurgitation problem. He told us that her liver is supposed to be a dark color when seen through her skin. He said that hers is a light tan color and that she has a liver disease that she may or may not outgrow in time. He has put her on an antibiotic and said to leave her on that for the next four to six months until she becomes an adult.

I'd like a second opinion. From what I have told you, does this sound like good advice from him or not? Should we even be getting our hopes up that she may outgrow this disease? We have a few other reptiles as well, and love them all the same. I just don't want my kids hopes dashed when we go through all this only to find she will not live anyway.

Did your vet perform any diagnostic tests on your gecko? While these are small lizards, it is definitely possible to perform blood tests in order to try to diagnose certain problems. For example, a complete blood count (CBC) can be safely performed with a small amount of blood, and this can help diagnose certain infections. It is possible to even perform tests to evaluate your gecko's liver enzymes using a very small blood sample. Also, the regurgitated material can be tested, using a variety of methods (Gram's stain, acid fast stain, bacterial culture and sensitivity) in order to try to ascertain why it is regurgitating. Certain parasitic problems (including amoebas, worms and Giardia, for example) and bacterial infections (including salmonellosis) can be responsible for gastrointestinal problems.

That said, without appropriate diagnostics, I would hesitate to recommend keeping any herp on antibiotics for that length of time. Did you acquire your gecko recently, or did you acquire it as a baby? If she it offered a high fat diet (of waxworms and pinkies, for example) its liver might be a tan color due to fatty deposits in the liver tissue, and this is a quite different situation than an infection in her liver, requiring antibiotics.

I would recommend that you get a second opinion from another herp vet, or a referral center that is able to perform appropriate diagnostics. Then, your lizard can be diagnosed and appropriate treatment can be instituted. While a tan liver isn't normal, not all abnormalities require antibiotic therapy. Good luck with your gecko!

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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.