

## Lizard Not Eating or Loss of Appetite

**My vet gave me Panacur to orally give to my lizard. Approximately how long should it take for him to start eating again? Last night he ate one cricket and to my knowledge did not regurgitate it but also hasn't gone to the bathroom either.**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I recently I brought my albino leopard gecko to a vet because he was not eating or going to the bathroom. The vet gave me Panacur (fenbendazole) to orally give him. Approximately how long should it take for him to start eating again? Last night he ate one cricket and to my knowledge did not regurgitate it but also hasn't gone to the bathroom either.

You didn't say if your vet ran any tests or just prescribed fenbendazole. While certainly intestinal parasites can cause a gecko to go off its feed, that shouldn't cause constipation (if that is why it is not defecating). There can be many causes for these general clinical signs, including dehydration, intestinal impaction with sand, gravel or other tank substrate, intestinal protozoa that would not be eliminated by fenbendazole, kidney disease or bacterial infection, to name just some of the causes.

While it is a good thing that your gecko ate one cricket already, I am concerned that your lizard might need more extensive care than just a dewormer. It might require parenteral (not oral) fluid administration, radiographs (x-rays), blood tests and fecal parasitology to ascertain what the problem is.

However, that said, if the deworming is all that it needed, its appetite should continue to pick up and it should begin passing fecals soon. You may want to soak it for hydration (more on that later).

If your gecko is not passing feces because it has not eaten, that should improve once it starts consuming insects again. But even if it begins eating, if it is suffering from an impaction, it may begin regurgitating again (I am supposing that it was before, from what you said) and still will most likely not have a bowel movement without medication and/or an enema to loosen the impaction.

If your vet didn't do any diagnostic tests, either please return to your vet and ask for a diagnostic work-up or perhaps you should ask that vet for a referral to a more experienced herp vet if your vet doesn't feel comfortable performing diagnostic tests on your gecko. You can also request that your vet call the diagnostic lab that their clinic uses and set up a consultation with an experienced herp vet. Most veterinary labs offer this service gratis for the vets that use their lab. This way, your vet can discuss your case with a herp vet who is experienced with these types of problems. It's a win-win situation.

In the meantime, if your vet did not suggest soaking your lizard, you can make up a warm solution of clear sport's drink and soak your gecko in enough so that it can drink some, but not enough so that it can drown. This way it can become better hydrated, if dehydration is a problem. Also, the sugars and electrolytes in the sports drink will provide some basic nutrients to help sustain it until you can have it treated again. I hope this information helps.

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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.