

## Lizard With Soft Stool

**My reptile's stool is sort of soft. Is this a problem? And if so, what can I do about it?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

My leopard gecko's stool is sort of soft. Is this a problem? And if so, what can I do about it?

I am glad you are so observant and concerned about your leopard gecko's health and well-being. You didn't say how long you have owned your gecko, so I can't be very specific in my answer.

If you have recently acquired the little guy, and his stool has been soft since you got him, then you might want to seek the assistance of a qualified herp vet who can run a fecal parasite examination and other tests deemed necessary. It would also make a difference if the gecko was bred locally or imported into your country for sale. Wild-caught geckos often are harboring intestinal parasites, though any gecko can be infested with them.

I have also seen recently imported geckos suffering from salmonellosis, caused by the *Salmonella* bacterium, which is contagious to other pets in the home as well as to humans.

Protozoal infections from *Cryptosporidium* and *Entamoeba* can also cause loose stool in geckos. These infections can be more difficult to diagnose. *Entamoeba* is also potentially contagious to humans.

If you have owned your lizard for a while, and the loose stool is a recent event, then I would ask if you had recently changed its food, such as the kind of insects, the gut-loading food or the vitamin/mineral dusting you are using. These things may cause a temporary change in stool consistency.

If you notice any weight loss (usually most evident in the tail) or if you notice he is not eating as well or has a change in behavior, then you should seek veterinary assistance.

I have spent some time in South Africa, so I know there are many veterinarians interested in working with herps in your country. Hopefully, you can locate one in your area who is willing to work with you and help diagnose the reason for the loose stools.

Make sure you are keeping him well-hydrated by misting or soaking him until this problem is resolved.

Good luck with your pet 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.