

## Screaming Lizard

**Today I picked up my reptile and she started screaming and when I put her down she kept screaming and running around and twisting her body. What could be wrong?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have a 10-year-old female leopard gecko. Today I picked her up and she started screaming and when I put her down she kept screaming and running around and twisting her body. After a few minutes she went in her log and went to sleep. She is in the middle of a shed but that has never bothered her before. Any help would be appreciated. Thanks!

I think that an appointment with your herp vet is in order to evaluate what is happening with your female leopard gecko. Since you have owned her for ten years (I'm guessing this since you didn't say that you recently acquired her) and you would obviously know how to pick her up and handle her, I can only guess that she must have pinched a nerve or suffered from a back injury or some other sort of soft tissue/musculoskeletal system damage. I think it would have to be some type of tissue trauma for her to act this way.

Hopefully, it doesn't have anything to do with her reproductive system (you made no mention of any recent egg-laying activities). You also didn't mention if she has been eating and passing urine/stool normally. All of those things are important, as well.

So, make an appointment with your herp vet, let them know the normal temperature range that you maintain your gecko within, and tell them the normal diet your lizard consumes, and don't forget to mention any supplements that you give her.

Leopard geckos have been recorded to live well into their 20s so this does not appear to be an age-related issue. Your little girl was obviously in some degree of discomfort, so I do believe that this episode is worth a trip to your herp vet. If you don't have a qualified herp vet in your area, you have several options. Make sure you read about the free consultation service offered by veterinary diagnostic labs for herp vets that I have discussed many times in my answers. It can be very helpful for new, inexperienced herp vets who are willing to try and are still learning (and we are all still learning every day!) and it is also valuable for a herp vet just wanting a second opinion or help with a case.

It is possible to perform many diagnostics on a leopard gecko, including a complete blood count and chemistry panel, radiographs, fecal parasite exam, fecal Gram's stain and/or bacterial culture and other specialized tests. So, I hope you can get your little lizard checked out and tested to find out what caused her distress and then have her treated.

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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.