

Bearded Dragon Dark Colored and Constantly Sleeping

My son's reptile is often dark in color and is constantly sleeping and breathing heavily? What is wrong?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

My son has a bearded dragon who is not looking himself lately. He is often dark in color and is constantly sleeping and breathing heavily?

It really helps if you (my readers) can tell me pertinent information about your pet herp, such as its age, regular diet and the temperature/humidity range in the habitat. This allows me to better answer your questions.

For example, I have no idea if your son has been maintaining your beardie at an appropriate temperature. It is a common mistake to keep the habitat at too low of a temperature, which can lead to problems with digestion and the immune system. Please have a look back in the archives of my column to get specific and detailed information regarding correct bearded dragon care.

They should have a focal hot spot of approximately 110 degrees Fahrenheit, and a cage gradient from 80- to 90-degrees Fahrenheit. If you don't know the temperature range or are not keeping it warm enough, I would make those changes right away.

Beardies also tend to go into a type of torpor from changes in the environment. I covered that extensively in an archived column, so please check that out as well.

My feeling is that you should try to find a vet with herp experience to examine and treat any underlying problems that your beardie may have. I honestly don't know what your situation is like in Malta (you're my first question from there!) and whether or not you can find a vet who can help you with your son's bearded dragon.

In the meantime, make sure that you are providing everything correctly for your dragon and start looking for a herp vet. Perhaps you can ask the employees at the pet store, where you bought him (assuming that you bought him there,) whom they use for a herp vet or ask any local herp breeders which vets they recommend (try checking classified ads in the newspaper for local breeders).

I do hope that you can find someone to help you with your beardie, as I do believe it needs to be examined.

Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP has been an avian/exotic/herp animal veterinarian since 1981. She is a regular contributor to REPTILES magazine.

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.