

Sluggish Mali Uromastyx Lizard

My reptile has sand clumped around his nostrils, kind of like a runny nose. What could this be?

By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP

I just got a Mali uromastyx a few months ago. Lately he hasn't been coming out of his cave very often, and he's always sleeping. I put food in his reptile tank, but sometimes he never comes out and eats it. The food just sits there and is not edible after sitting in the heated area. He's not basking as much either. Every now and then when he comes out, I notice he has clumps of sand built up on his nostrils as if his nose was running a little. I take the sand off of his nose, but I'm still very concerned.

Unfortunately, we don't know as much about uromastyx as we do about many of the other species of lizard that have been kept in captivity for long periods of time.

Uromastyx require a desert type environment, with a focal basking spot of up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and a gradient to 90 degrees. They require a basking area and a full-spectrum ultraviolet light. At night, the temperature can drop to the 60s.

Are you offering your lizard a mix of vegetables and fruit, as well as gut-loaded crickets, superworms, waxworms, mealworms and moths? Does he get a vitamin/mineral supplement? If so, how often? Are you keeping him at the correct temperature?

Herbivorous iguanid lizards will sneeze a salt mixture out of their nose from a nasal salt gland, but I am not aware of uromastyx having those. (If anyone knows for sure if uromastyx have nasal salt glands, I would love to be enlightened.)

I am concerned that your lizard may have a respiratory infection. The only way to know for certain would be to take him in to see a herp vet who can run tests on him and perhaps take radiographs (X-rays) to see if he has pneumonia. He certainly cannot go on the way he is. Your herp vet can help you with him. These are certainly not the easiest lizards to maintain, but because you have taken on the challenge, please follow through and find a vet who can help you with him.

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.