

## Swollen Chameleon Eye

**I take good care of my lizard. Any ideas on what causes his eye to be swollen?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

My male veiled chameleon's right eye is swollen. I have an appointment with my herp vet in 3 days. He is eating well and drinking. I gut load with Jurassi diet, powder with calcium and D3, and I also use another herp vitamin. Any ideas on what causes his eye to be swollen?

The most common reason for swollen eye(s) in chameleons is hypovitaminosis A (vitamin A deficiency). Without knowing the specific husbandry conditions involved with your case, I can't offer much more than generalities.

Other things that can cause a swollen eye are a traumatic injury, parasitic problems, infection and tumor, to name some.

Usually, once I have seen and examined a chameleon with a swollen eye, and I have taken a history, I will recommend appropriate testing. In most cases, I will recommend a supplement of beta carotene, which is converted to vitamin A in the body, and any unused beta carotene will be excreted unchanged. Vitamin A can be administered by injection; however, it is possible this can result in overdose, so beta carotene is much safer. Beta carotene can also be administered orally, which is easier to do. The only downside to beta carotene is that it is bright red and can stain things in and around the habitat.

I'm not recommending you go out and find some beta carotene to administer to your lizard. I think it is much better that you keep your herp vet's appointment, so the cause of the swollen eye can be diagnosed properly. If your vet has any questions about your chameleon's problem, don't forget to remind him/her about the free consultation service offered by most large veterinary diagnostic labs. Through this service, herp vets can call and speak with an experienced herp veterinarian who can help with difficult cases, or even if they just would like another opinion. I hope your chameleon will be just fine and all goes well.

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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.