

## Ball Python Blister Disease

**My ball python's belly appears to have blisters and orange dots. Is this blister disease?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

Q. I have a 2-year-old ball python. She is currently going into a shed after eating. I noticed today that she is acting lethargic. I picked her up, and noticed her belly appears to have blisters and orange dots. She didn't have these when I fed her three days ago. I keep her cage very clean. She has a 75-gallon tank with aspen bedding. One side has an undertank heater and a heat lamp. It stays at 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit. The other side has her water dish. When I saw her eyes turning a bluish color, I began misting the cage. The humidity levels have never risen above 60 percent. I usually don't handle her when she is shedding. Is this just shedding or is it blister disease? What should I do? Did I do something wrong? I am having Humidi-Mats delivered to me soon to make a retreat box for her so that I don't have to mist. What should I do in the meantime? Thank you for your help.

Aubrey

A. These blisters and dots are not normal, and I would recommend that you seek out a qualified herp vet and have your ball python evaluated as soon as possible. It sounds as if she might have an infection in her skin, commonly referred to as blister disease.

Blister disease usually occurs if a herp is kept in conditions that are too moist or humid. It starts with blisters or vesicles on the scales/scutes, and if left untreated, it may develop into a bacterial infection. Blister disease can rapidly progress to a more serious condition, so it is important to begin treatment as soon as it is identified.

The first thing to do is to move your snake to a drier environment. I recommend doing that immediately, and then using a povidone-iodine solution (not scrub) diluted to iced tea color to brush onto the dots and bumps. Leave it on for 15 minutes and then rinse her off, and dry her skin with a clean towel. You can do this three or four times a day until you can have her seen by your herp vet.

Blister disease is just a guess, however, because I cannot diagnose your snake without actually seeing her. It doesn't sound as if the humidity is too high, as ball pythons typically thrive in an environment with 70 to 80 percent relative humidity and a temperature range of 77 to 86 degrees. It sounds as if your husbandry is good. Once your herp vet examines and performs appropriate tests on your python perhaps that will provide you with the answers that I cannot.

**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) website at [www.arav.com](http://www.arav.com). Look for DVMs who appear to maintain actual veterinary offices that you could contact.

Or, check out the state by state ReptileChannel Vet Listings.