

## Snake With Rat Bite

**The rat I fed my snake left a small scratch wound. How can I treat this?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

Q. I've had my female ball python for six years. I've fed her live rats since she was big enough to need them and have never had a problem. But today the rat I fed her left a small scratch wound. I have heard that you can use triple antibiotic or povidone iodine on such cuts and scratches. What do you recommend?

A. This question illustrates why it is always best to convert snakes over to consuming killed prey, but that won't help you now.

If the small scratch is not too deep or near the eye, it is always best to first clean the wound with antibacterial soap and water. Then you can apply a small amount of a triple antibiotic ointment or dab on a bit of povidone iodine ointment. If you have povidone iodine scrub, you can clean the wound with that, too, prior to applying the ointment.

However, if the wound is through the full-thickness of the skin, or is in a sensitive area, you should set up an appointment with your herp vet, as suturing or stapling the wound might be indicated. Often bite wounds are infected and should not be sutured. It will depend on what your vet finds and also, perhaps, on what the bloodwork shows (if your vet deems it necessary to run blood tests, especially a complete blood count (CBC), that can show signs of serious infection).

To prevent injuries in the future, I would suggest that you attempt to convert her over to killed prey. I have seen and treated some horrific bite wounds from rats and mice. Believe me, you don't want to experience anything like that.

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