

Taipan Snake Health Problems

Supplement to the August 2008 REPTILES magazine article "Taipan Number One."

Text and photo by Raymond Hoser

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Parasitic nematodes are routinely extracted from the guts of taipans treated with standard dog- and cattle-worming treatments.

Because so many taipans are wild-caught, your new charge might have some health issues. Here are three problems and their treatments.

1. Taipans may carry ticks. If attached to a snake's lower jaw, they give it a bearded appearance. For a tick and mite problem, it is best to treat with ivermectin. After two days, pick off any dead ticks with tweezers. Use commercial mite sprays or appropriate pest strips for mite-only problems.
2. Tapeworms, nematodes and lungworms are common in wild adults. Treat these parasites with the usual drugs: Droncit (per orally), Panacur (per orally) and ivermectin (per intramuscular injection).
3. Skin lumps, caused by an internal parasite migrating through the snake's body and ending up encysted under the skin, are also seen sometimes. Snakes eating infested skinks and occasionally other animals encounter the problem. External lumps may be literally cut out through incisions between the scales, but the unseen internal ones are hard to deal with. Tapeworm treatments have a level of success.

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