

'Black Box' Medicine

Get the most out of your next vet visit.

By Tom Greek, M.S., DVM

As I picked up the leopard tortoise to begin my examination, my client asked, "Gee, Doc, how can you tell what's going on inside? It's like a black box." With the tortoise's head covered by its front legs and its back legs tucked tightly into its shell, I couldn't agree more. I was looking at a tan-spotted box, and I had to figure out what was wrong with it. I felt like I was a kid at Christmas trying to figure out what was inside the brightly wrapped package. You can shake, rattle and poke, and still not know if it's that highly anticipated toy or the new pajamas from grandma.

Chelonians may seem like an impenetrable black box, but veterinarians have some tricks and tools to determine what is going on inside. Some of them you can do. Others should be left to the vet. But both will help you get a thorough examination of your pet and keep it around for years.

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