

## Feeding Reptiles Only One Type of Insect

**I have been unable to get my lizard to eat anything but large mealworms. He will not eat frozen or live pinkies or crickets. What's wrong with him?**

*By Margaret A. Wissman, DVM, DABVP*

I have recently been given a Cuban knight anole. The person who gave me the lizard stated that she fed it crickets daily and nothing else. Well, I have been unable to get Mike Tyson (lizard's name) to eat anything but large mealworms. He will not eat frozen or live pinkies or crickets. I have viewed pictures of these lizards online, and Mike seems a little thin and has been so since I got him. He does eat the mealworms very eagerly and consume about 15 to 20 a day. Any suggestions?

Your concerns about your new lizard consuming only mealworms are justified. As with just about all creatures on this planet, a diet consisting of only one food item is cause for concern. The more variety in the diet, the better the chance it will not suffer from a nutritional deficiency or imbalance.

Since you think that Mike is a bit thin, perhaps you should visit a herp veterinarian. I would suggest you bring in a sample of your lizard's stool for examination for parasites, and allow your herp vet to perform a physical examination and any diagnostic tests necessary. Any problems uncovered by the tests can be treated, and this alone may spark his appetite.

Make sure you are maintaining him within the correct temperature range, which should be between 82 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, and at night, the temperature should range from 75 to 80 degrees F. I recommend misting the anoles twice daily because most will readily lap water from wet leaves. The habitat should have branches for climbing and for hiding, too. Full-spectrum lighting with UVB ultraviolet light should also be provided for proper calcium uptake and utilization. If possible, the lizard should be allowed to spend some time out in the sun, not filtered through glass or plastic, making sure it has adequate shade to get out of the sun if need be.

You should be offering insects, including gut-loaded crickets, mealworms, waxworms, cockroaches, grasshoppers and other seasonal insects. These lizards will also consume some vegetation, including leaves, flowers (hibiscus and rose), vegetables (those suitable for green iguanas) and fruits. They have been known to catch and eat small lizards and should consume pinkie mice, too. Perhaps if you maintain him at a warmer temperature, it might stimulate his appetite.

As one last thought, please be aware that these large anoles can deliver a nasty bite. They are the largest of the anoles and have a proportionally large mouth with sharp teeth and a fairly powerful clenching ability with those jaws. On top of that, they tend to be easily irritated and will bite with little provocation. So, for the most part, look but don't touch these handsome lizards.

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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.