

Goniurosaurus luii

Uncovering the... Cave Gecko

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dubia roach care and breeding

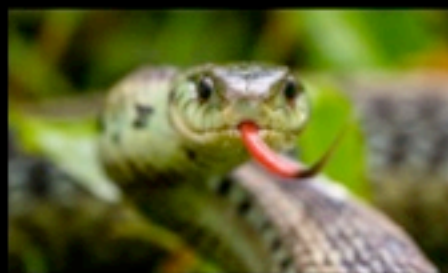
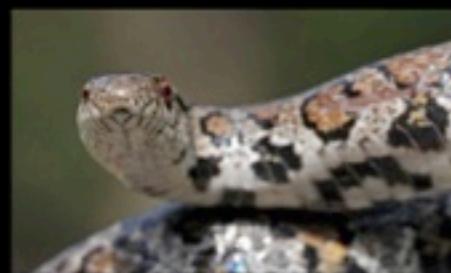
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Joy, has asked this. “We have whites tree frog. We have had her for 4 years and she lived for 2 years with another family previous to us but other than that we have no indication of her age. She was taken to the vet last year for cloudy eyes. The vet at that time was fairly certain it was protein or calcium deposits due to diet or possibly age since we do not know her full past. At that time it consisted of crickets alternately dusted with vitamin or calcium powder. He made a few diet adjustments and as a precaution also prescribed some Gentamicin Sulfate Solution (0.3%) in the last year the eyes have gotten slightly more cloudy. It came to my attention after cleaning her tank yesterday that she was holding one of her eyes shut. After further examination it appears there is a pin sized area that looks as though it has been punctured-there is a small bulge. While I know ‘in person’ veterinary attention is what she needs but I cannot provide that for her this month. Unfortunately we had to replace our car engine and there went the savings account. I promise we are not bad pet owners it is just bad timing! My question is will the drops I have cause further damage or potentially help her if there is an abrasion? Is there anything else that I can do that might be worth a try? I know an eye injury can go bad VERY quickly so I am extremely concerned.”

Unfortunately I receive messages like this by email and on Facebook or Twitter on a regular basis, as pet owners either do not know a reliable exotics vet, cannot afford to pay for veterinary treatment or don’t know if a trip to vet is necessary in the first place. It is extremely difficult to make a diagnosis or give the correct advice with a description alone, so I would always urge owners if in doubt to bring the animal to a vet in person if possible, and in the case of an

emergency or where the animals’ welfare is compromised not to depend on a reply online which may severely delay treatment and prolong suffering. It is equally important to emphasise that if you have taken on the responsibility of acquiring an exotic pet you should have identified a vet to treat that animal before health problems arise and have the funds available at least to pay for an initial consult to diagnose the problem or come up with a treatment plan, or indeed put an animal that is suffering out of its misery if financial constraints preclude treatment.

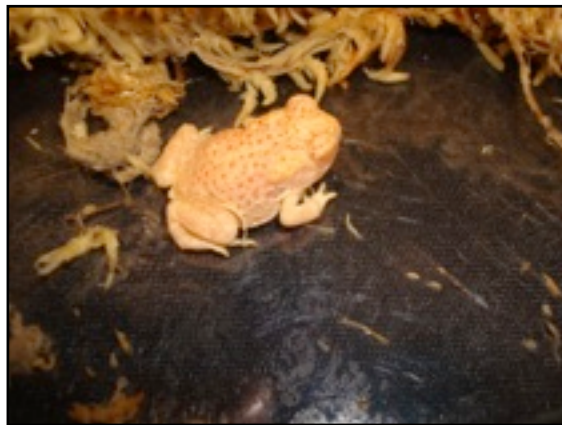


Photo Courtesy of Austin P. Lynch

Far too often in the reptile community, animals are left without treatment and advice is requested online on social media sites or forums instead of seeking professional help. I would suggest that if one lacks the resources, financial or otherwise, to provide medical care for their pets when they become ill that they shouldn’t have the pets in the first place. I do realise of course that sometimes, as in the above example, life throws up unexpected expenses and funds can

be limited at certain times, but I would encourage owners to make contact with their local veterinarian anyway and explain the situation and see what can be done for the animal there and then rather than waiting for advice online. Perhaps pain and suffering in reptiles and amphibians is difficult to relate to, identify or empathise with as their biology and appearance is so remarkably different from us as mammals, but nobody could deny their ability to suffer and feel pain and discomfort just the same as a pet cat or dog. Fortunately we don’t see the same attitude to such mammalian pets very often. If such a question was posted online where a pet dog had a ruptured eyeball but the owner couldn’t afford vet treatment that month and instead requested advice for home treatment I suspect the general response would be outrage. Why then do we see this type of post so often on exotics forums, and members freely

dispense advice which is at best substandard care and at worst totally contraindicated for the condition in question? The following article explores this issue in more detail, and is well worth more thought:

[Disposable Pet Nation](#)

In relation to the question above, I am not trying to criticise the owner, but the problem illustrates an all too common trend in the herpetoculture community. As I said before, I do sympathise that unexpected expenses can place us in financial difficulty at any point, and the fact that the owner has sought help with a reputable source is to be commended.

Regarding this frog, it is difficult for me to provide a diagnosis on the original problem with the frogs eyes without an ophthalmic examination and detailed case history, but your vet highlighted two likely causes as calcium or protein deposits within the cornea or perhaps lens. Aging changes of the lens such as cataract formation are also relatively likely as a cause of cloudiness and are not unheard of in geriatric reptiles and amphibians. Similarly glaucoma is a possibility whereby the intra-ocular pressure within the eye is increased and can cause secondary problems, apart from being an extremely painful condition in itself. Trauma may be the cause of the swelling if for instance the frog crashed into some of its vivarium furnishings, so this issue may have nothing to do with the longstanding cloudiness. Whatever the underlying disease process, the fact that the cornea or surface of the eye appears to have partially ruptured with a red swelling protruding from it is very much a medical emergency. Treating with Gentamicin antibiotic drops at home will possibly treat any infection present and indeed prevent an infection setting in subsequently, but will do little if anything to relieve pain or preserve the integrity of the eye. Depending on severity and how this problem progresses it may be necessary to enucleate or remove the eye in question which is a permanent solution to the problem. Appropriate pain relief should also be provided. If nothing is done, the frog may survive and the eye may collapse and become nonfunctional. We know from wild reptiles and amphibians that this type of injury and outcome often occurs in the wild, and the animal survives and gets by without any human intervention albeit with a reduced fitness and predator avoidance ability. So one may argue why we should not let this process take its course in captivity too? This is an ethics question for which there is no correct answer, but I would probably say that there is a duty of care when keeping animals in captivity to prevent suffering and pain in our charges, therefore withholding medical treatment or euthanasia if treatment is impossible is in my opinion a failure in this duty of care.

The frog in question may still eat and display natural behaviours, but these are not necessarily indicators of good welfare, these are integral behaviours to survival despite poor welfare. If the frog does survive and the result is an animal that is healthy and happy with only one functional eye remaining one month after the initial problem arose, is it justifiable to have given whatever treatment was available to the owner at the time yet allow pain and suffering in the interim period until the frog healed itself? Do we accept this standard of care in our reptile and amphibian pets yet hold our cats, dogs, rabbits or other animals in higher regard in terms of our duty of care? Is this because it is more difficult to empathise with a frog than a dog, a lizard with a cat? Or is the exotic pet industry creating a 'disposable pet nation' as the aforementioned article suggests? Is the reptile community shooting itself in the foot and providing the animal welfare groups and anti-exotic pet movement with abundant ammunition to oppose the hobby on welfare grounds? Food for thought. I would love to hear your views on this dilemma the owner above found themselves in. I realise I have not helped very much the frog in question, but what can I do remotely from my keyboard other than pointing them in the right direction for appropriate treatment for the animal. I can only urge pet owners to pick up the phone and speak to their local vet as a first port of call when their pet reptile or amphibian is injured or unwell. Delaying treatment is often the biggest cause of failure in many of my clinical cases, so time is of the essence. Awaiting a response online is not only causes such delays but also may result in unsound advice or furthering suffering."



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