

WILDSIDE VETERINARY HEALTH CENTER
Handout: Pinworms in Reptiles



Pinworms are a common parasitic infection found in reptiles, including snakes, lizards, and turtles. These small, thread-like worms belong to the family Oxyuridae and can affect the overall health of your reptilian pets.

Pinworms probably are innocuous in small numbers, and not always require treatment, but in massive numbers are associated with unthriftiness, impaction and cloacitis.

Understanding the life cycle, diagnosis, treatment, and environmental control measures is crucial to maintaining the well-being of your scaly companions.

What Are Pinworms?

- Pinworms, scientifically known as Oxyuridae, are small nematode parasites that reside in the digestive tracts of reptiles.
- Pinworms have a direct life cycle.
- Animals get infected by ingesting contaminated feces and contaminated insects.

Diagnosis:

Fecal Examination: Collecting a fresh fecal sample and examining it under a microscope can reveal pinworm eggs.

Clinical Symptoms: Infected reptiles might display symptoms such as weight loss, lethargy, decreased appetite, and occasionally, visible worms around the cloaca (vent).

Treatment:

Treating pinworm infections in reptiles typically involves a combination of medication and supportive care.

Anthelmintic Medication: If we diagnose your pet with pinworms, we will prescribe an anthelmintic drug designed to kill or expel the pinworms from the reptile's digestive tract.

Hydration and Nutrition: Infected reptiles might require supportive care, including rehydration and nutritional support, to aid their recovery.

Environmental Control:

Preventing pinworm infestations is as important as treating them. Proper environmental management can significantly reduce the risk of infection:

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Regular Cleaning: Maintain a clean habitat by regularly removing feces, uneaten food, and other waste materials. This helps minimize the opportunity for pinworm eggs to hatch and spread.

Quarantine New Reptiles: Whenever introducing a new reptile to your collection, it's wise to quarantine them for a period of time before introducing them to your existing reptiles. This practice helps prevent the introduction of parasites, including pinworms, to your established collection.

Disinfection: Regularly disinfecting enclosures, hides, water bowls, and other equipment with appropriate reptile-safe disinfectants can help reduce the risk of infection.

- Diluted bleach can be effective at killing pinworm eggs and reducing their presence in the environment. However, it's important to use bleach properly and safely, especially in reptile environments, as reptiles can be sensitive to chemicals.
 - Prepare Diluted Bleach Solution: Mix a solution of bleach and water. A commonly recommended ratio is 1 part bleach to 10 parts water. This diluted solution is safer for reptiles while still being effective against many pathogens, including pinworm eggs.
 - Clean and Disinfect: Remove all items from the enclosure, such as substrate, decorations, and equipment. Thoroughly clean these items and the enclosure itself to remove any visible debris.
 - Apply Bleach Solution: Using a spray bottle or cloth, apply the diluted bleach solution to all surfaces inside the enclosure, including walls, floors, and furniture. Make sure to cover all areas that might be contaminated.
 - Rinse and Air Out: After applying the bleach solution, thoroughly rinse all surfaces with clean water to remove any residual bleach. Allow the enclosure and items to air out and dry completely before reintroducing your reptile.
 - Rinse Items Thoroughly: Rinse all items, such as decorations and equipment, very well to ensure there is no residue of bleach that could harm your reptile.

Let us know if you have any questions!

Sincerely,

Wildside Veterinary team

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