

## FECAL EXAMS FOR REPTILES

A microscopic exam of the feces is recommended for all reptile patients every six months. Why?

1. All reptiles have some gastrointestinal parasites, even when captive bred and raised--the housing conditions at breeding and distributor facilities promote continual infection (high populations/crowding, young growing animals under stress, imperfect sanitation).
2. Parasites will multiply in the gut and environment of a healthy reptile, and will over time exceed the "carrying capacity" for the number of parasites that the animal can handle and still remain healthy. The animal will become dehydrated and nutritionally debilitated very quickly when this happens. The stress of treatment and dying parasites in the gut can overwhelm a patient, and especially the younger/smaller animals will frequently not survive treatment. This is why it is so crucial to monitor the parasite load, so that treatment can begin while the animal is strong enough to tolerate it.
3. Zoonotic potential: "zoonosis" = A disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans. While proper hygiene is critical when handling reptiles because of Salmonella, this goes for parasites as well. Increased fecal shedding of parasites by the pet means increased risk to the owner.

How to collect a sample:

\*A freshly passed stool sample is always preferable and can be collected from water as well.

\*Collect sample with feces portion (white portion is not feces, this is urate, a solid form of urine produced by birds and reptiles), place in a sealed plastic container (ziploc bag, film canister, etc.), and place in refrigerator until it can be delivered to the clinic. The best samples are the freshest, they start to lose diagnostic value immediately, but especially after 24 hours.

If the sample is positive:

\*We will contact you regarding treatment necessary.

\*You will need to completely clean and disinfect the reptile's housing, including discarding any items that are porous or permeable.

\*Follow the prescribed treatment instructions exactly. Missed or incomplete doses are as bad as none at all as they can result in drug resistance by any surviving parasites. Don't hesitate to ask us for help in administering difficult medication (pets are like kids, some are easy to medicate and some are not!). Our whole reason for being here is to keep your special friends in the best health possible!