



The Critter Keeper LLC

# Comprehensive Reptile Health & Disease Guide

Professional Insights from 15 Years of Animal Care Specialty

*Adequate housing, a good diet, and routine parasite control will help to minimize disease in pet reptiles, as with other animals.*

## I. Heart and Blood Vessel Disorders

**Septicemia:** Widespread bacterial infection in the blood is a common cause of death. It can result from trauma, abscesses, parasites, or environmental stress. Signs include labored breathing, convulsions, and loss of muscle control. Purplish red spots on the belly are a key clinical sign. Immediate veterinary intervention with antibiotics is required.

## II. Digestive Disorders

The digestive system is highly vulnerable to viral, bacterial, and parasitic infections.

### Adenoviruses

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Common in bearded dragons, Jackson's chameleons, and certain snakes. Transmitted via fecal-oral contamination. Signs include weight loss, diarrhea, and sudden death. Survivors must be quarantined for at least 3 months as they remain infectious.

### Infectious Stomatitis (Mouth Rot)

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Inflammation of the mouth lining often caused by common oral bacteria. It can progress to the jaw bones and cause secondary respiratory infections. Treatment involves surgical removal of dead tissue and antiseptic cleaning.

### Intestinal Parasites & Protozoal Diseases

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- **Roundworms & Hookworms:** Can cause ulcers, intestinal obstructions, and inflammatory swellings.
- **Entamoeba invadens:** A serious protozoal threat causing bloody diarrhea. Transmitted by cysts in feces. Turtles and snakes should not be housed together to prevent cross-species transmission.
- **Cryptosporidiosis:** Causes stomach wall thickening and chronic weight loss. It is resistant to many treatments and requires intensive supportive care.

## III. Bone and Muscle Disorders

### Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)

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**Secondary Nutritional Hyperparathyroidism:** The most common bone disease, caused by poor diet (calcium/ phosphorus imbalance) and lack of UVB light. Signs include rubbery jaws, distorted limbs, and muscle spasms.

### Abnormal Beak Growth

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Often seen in turtles and tortoises due to calcium deficiency. Requires professional trimming and providing abrasive foods to allow for natural wear.

## IV. Brain, Spinal Cord, and Nerve Disorders

**Stargazing:** A neurological sign where the animal twists its neck to look upward. In boas and pythons, this is often a sign of **Inclusion Body Disease (IBD)**, a fatal viral infection spread through body fluids.

## V. Skin Disorders

- **Abscesses:** Pus-filled sores from bite wounds or poor sanitation; usually require surgical removal.
- **Dysecdysis:** Incomplete shedding often caused by low humidity. Treat by soaking in warm water (77°F to 85°F).
- **Scale Rot:** Ulcerative dermatitis caused by moist, unclean environments. Reddening of scales and pustules are early signs.
- **External Parasites:** Mites and ticks cause anemia and transmit diseases. Manual removal and safe insecticides are necessary.

## VI. Nutritional & Reproductive Disorders

**Gout:** High uric acid levels caused by dehydration or excessive dietary protein. Can affect organs (visceral) or joints (articular).

**Dystocia (Egg Binding):** Failure to pass eggs or fetuses. Often requires surgical removal of reproductive organs if medical labor induction fails.

**Disclaimer:** The information provided in this document is for **educational and informational purposes only** and is based on current veterinary husbandry standards. This content is not a substitute for professional veterinary advice, diagnosis, or treatment. As a veterinary professional with 10 years of clinical experience, I provide these guidelines to assist with the daily care and management of your animals. However, always seek the advice of a licensed veterinarian regarding medical conditions. **\*\*In the event of a medical emergency, contact your local veterinary emergency hospital immediately.\*\***