



## **Special Problems of Pet Iguanas**

### ***General Information***

Iguanas have several unique problems; understanding these problems will allow you to better care for your pet and minimize future health care problems.

### ***Cystic Calcul***

Commonly called bladder stones, these occur when minerals from the diet form crystals, which then form stones. Usually these are composed of uric acid, which may result from a diet that contains too much protein (such as a diet high in dog food or cat food).

Often, you will detect blood in your iguana's droppings. An examination and radiographs (X-rays) allow your veterinarian to correctly diagnose the problem. Surgical removal of the stones is needed, as is fluid therapy to prevent kidney damage. Your veterinarian will discuss dietary correction in an attempt to prevent future stones from forming.

### ***Salmonella***

While turtles are most commonly incriminated for causing *Salmonella* bacterial infections in children, iguanas have lately been determined to be a source of this infection as well. This bacterium can cause severe gastrointestinal disease or septicemia (blood poisoning). Many animals and people carry the bacteria without showing any clinical signs (remember Typhoid Mary?), yet shed the bacteria in their feces which can infect others.

Prevention, through proper hygiene, is the best way to control the disease. Since most iguanas which carry *Salmonella* are not ill, they usually require no treatment (treatment often fails to kill the bacterium anyway).

### ***Avascular Necrosis***

Iguanas are often afflicted with a condition called avascular necrosis. In this condition, blood flow to the affected body part, usually the tip of the tail or one of the digits (toes), is blocked. The blocked blood flow means that the affected body part doesn't receive blood, and starts to become necrotic, or dies. Within a short period of time, the toe or tip of the tail becomes discolored and possibly infected. The necrosis or infection can spread up the tail or to other toes. Several things can

cause the blood vessels to become blocked, such as infection spreading to the tail or toe, a blood clot in another part of the body (embolus) spreading to the tail or toe, trauma causing damage to the blood vessels, or a tumor cutting off the blood supply to the tail or toe. Usually, the cause is not determined. Treatment involves amputating the affected tail or toe in an effort to stop the spread of the necrosis. Most pets recover well and lead normal lives after the surgery.