

Coccidia Parasites and Reptiles

Coccidiosis, caused by single-celled parasites known as protozoa, can be particularly dangerous for reptiles, especially Bearded Dragons. While treatment is typically well-tolerated in adult reptiles, young or acutely infected ones may struggle to recover from severe cases. Proper disinfection after treatment is crucial to prevent reinfection, even if the treatment itself is straightforward.

What is Coccidiosis?

Coccidiosis is an infection caused by protozoa from the species *Eimeria* (also known as *Isospora*). These pesky parasites can be found in reptiles across all orders. The infection spreads through faecal contamination, as the coccidia reproduce in the intestines and release infective eggs that can contaminate the environment. Young reptiles, particularly Bearded Dragons, are especially susceptible to developing symptoms of this infection. A related subspecies, *Cryptosporidium*, can also affect



reptiles.

Signs of Coccidiosis

The signs of coccidiosis can vary based on the reptile and the severity of the infection. Keep an eye out for:

- **Diarrhoea**
- **Reduced appetite**
- **Depression or lethargy**
- **Blood or mucus in the faeces**
- **Dehydration**, which may present as wrinkled skin or sunken eyes

Some reptiles may not show any symptoms at all, so if you notice any of these signs in your pet, it's important to make an appointment with your local vet right away.

How Can You Prevent Coccidiosis?



Preventing coccidiosis involves maintaining a clean environment. Here are some key steps:

- **Hygiene:** Regularly clean the vivarium and remove any faecal matter promptly to reduce the risk of contamination.
- **Isolate New Reptiles:** If you introduce a new reptile to your home, consider keeping them separated for a while to monitor for any signs of illness before mixing them with your existing pets.

What Should You Do If You Suspect Coccidiosis?

If you think your reptile might have coccidiosis, visiting your vet is the best course of action. They'll conduct a thorough physical examination and may recommend faecal tests to identify the presence of the parasites, though this can sometimes be challenging.

Your Health

The good news is that you can't contract coccidiosis from your reptile. So, while it's important to care for your pet and monitor their health, you can rest assured that this specific infection isn't a risk to you.