

L I Z A R D L E T T E R S

Veterinary Research at Texas A&M

I am an exotic animal veterinarian and teach zoological veterinary medicine at Texas A & M University. My research interests include the pharmacology of antimicrobials in reptiles. I am finishing research on the new quinalone, Baytril, in the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, Texas rat snake, and ball python. At some point, we would like to investigate this drug in lizards. No one has completed the pharmacokinetics of Baytril in any lizard species. Our work investigates the absorption, distribution, and elimination of the drug after it is injected, and from the assay of the serum concentration [we] determine the proper dose and frequency. I might add that I am impressed with the *Iguana Times*. It is timely, well-written, and professional.

*James H. Johnson, DVM
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas*

Sex-determination by Head-bobbing?

We are members of the I.I.S. and have two green iguanas in our apartment. We have a question about "head-bobbing" by one of them. According to the vet, "Trixie" is a female. "Norton" is a male. But he is not 100% sure about Norton. They are both about two-and-a-half-years-old. Trixie does this head-bobbing when she is with the other iguana or [with] one or both of us. She is doing it more frequently for the last six months, prompting this letter. Is it a sign of aggression, mating or illness? Perhaps the vet goofed on the sex determination.

*Angela A. Lainhart
Flushing, New York*

Head-bobbing behaviors of iguanas may be exhibited at any age, by individuals of both sexes, and may be directed toward any iguana regardless of sex or social status. They are frequently directed even toward humans, not just in captivity but in the field as well. As an important form of communication, the expression of head-bobs is generally species-specific, and may be associated with social status, territoriality, aggression, courtship and other behaviors. Thus, the context and meaning of head-bobs can be difficult, if not impossible, to interpret. You or your vet should try another means of sexing your pet, such as probing for hemipenes (see Iguana Times, Vol. 1, No. 3).

—The Editors

Why So Few Spikes?

I read your newsletter and look forward to receiving it every quarter. It has been informative and very interesting. My only suggestion would be to add a "Dear Doctor" column so that people can ask questions about various concerns they may have about their pet iguanas.

My husband and I have a green iguana, named Yoshi, who is about 2 1/2 years old. She is healthy, very strong, feisty and growing quickly. We are sure she is a female. Ever since we got her in April 1993, she has had very few spikes on her back. There are a few large spikes on the back of her neck and a few small strays on her back. Only her tail is covered with them. In the bare areas on her back, she has bumps that look like her spikes will grow out from them. Our vet has no idea why she has a spikeless back. What has caused this and what can we do to encourage their growth? Is it a vitamin deficiency? She eats a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, leafy vegetables and very small amounts of supplemental protein. She also receives the proper UV light and warmth.

*Julie Ziring
Columbia, Maryland*

At present, we have not heard from a vet willing to answer these types of questions. If we did, we would give your suggestion serious consideration. As to your concerns, it sounds like you have a healthy, properly cared for iguana. But just as in the distribution, color and texture of hair in humans, there is much individual variation in the distribution, size and shape of spines in iguanas. In your case, Yoshi sounds like she is very distinctive, but her lack of dorsal spines has nothing to do with her overall health, which sounds good.

—The Editors

