

IGUANA NEWSBRIEFS

KISS OF THE KOMODO DRAGON

The **Denver Zoo** recently has received some little-wanted publicity concerning its Komodo dragons, giant lizards that are native to Indonesia. In mid-January, the Zoo began a special nine-day exhibit featuring their unique dragons. However, by late January, at least 25 visitors to the exhibit had reportedly become infected by *Salmonella*, a bacterial illness that causes diarrhea, cramps, vomiting, headache and fever. The 25 confirmed cases of salmonellosis ranged in age from infants to 25 years. At least three of the people required hospitalization. Apparently none of the zookeepers were affected.

During the special exhibit, a zookeeper would hold a Komodo dragon so that visitors could get a close-up look. Whereas some of the infected people touched the lizards, others apparently became infected by mere contact with straw in the exhibit or other objects the lizards had touched. *Salmonella* was cultured from at least one of the Komodo dragons. Contamination was presumably spread via contact with fecal matter.

Source: Denver Post

CALIFORNIA HOUSE FIRE BLAMED ON CLUMSY IGUANA

Dozens of snakes, lizards and turtles were rescued recently from a burning building in Napa, California. The fire in the two-story, wood-frame home was ignited when an iguana tipped over a heating lamp in a bedroom closet.

Napa Fire Department spokesman, Captain Don Cohn, said the smoldering, slow-burning blaze occurred at the home of Scott Pollock, a 34-year-old travelling snake handler. Cohn said that Pollock was away overnight, and when he returned home at about 9 a.m., he found the house full of smoke. "He was very lucky," Cohn said. "He came home at the right time. If he had come home five minutes later, the house would have been fully engulfed in flames."

"He had a bunch of newspapers on the floor to catch iguana droppings," Cohn stated. "In addition, there was a fluorescent heating lamp and a 100-watt heat lamp which were attached to a shelf with a spring clamp. We think the crawling around of the iguana knocked the lamp off the shelf."

Damage was estimated at \$10,000—\$7,500 to the building and \$2,500 to the contents, including the loss of several animals trapped in the smoke-filled closet. Fatalities included the iguana, a python, a boa constrictor, a Japanese dragon and another lizard.

Source: San Francisco Chronicle

NEW THREATS TO AN ENDANGERED BAHAMIAN IGUANA

IIS members **Sandra Buckner, John and Sheila Iverson, Ron Carter and William Hayes** recently visited the only remaining population of *Cyclura rileyi cristata*, an endangered Bahamian rock iguana. This lizard, which numbers only in the hundreds, occurs on just one small island in the Exumas. While camping on the cay they saw a handful of rats—which have been implicated in recent declines of iguana-sized tuataras in New Zealand and certain rock iguanas in the Caribbean. More perplexing were the obvious footprints of a raccoon that somehow had found its way to the cay. The handful of iguana carcasses found—some of which appeared to be well-chewed—suggests the raccoon was capable of preying on even the adults. Plans are underway to initiate a rat-eradication program not just on this cay but also on several rat-infested cays of San Salvador Island that host *Cyclura rileyi rileyi*. The raccoon, too, will have to be captured and removed.

Source: Editors

GREEN IGUANAS IN UK

On 22nd September 1995, IIS member **Roger Lamb** of West Midlands, England, successfully hatched his first second generation common green iguanas. All five fertile eggs hatched and are doing well.

These were laid on 4th June 1993 by a female he had captive bred, and are to his knowledge the first in the United Kingdom. Roger has kept green iguanas for the past 10 years and has hatched a total of 82 green iguanas to date. During this time he has experienced a number of failures in reproduction but has also enjoyed several 100% hatch rates.

For the past 4 years he has been using vitamin D₃, which has proven to be the key factor in his successful reproduction rates in a more northerly climate.