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## Coccidiosis in Reptiles

### What is coccidia, and how is it spread?

Coccidia are protozoa (a parasite) that can infect many reptile species. Coccidia have been found to infect a variety of tissues, but most commonly the gastrointestinal tract.

Coccidia can be passed from one infected reptile to another through the feces. Coccidia can be stable in the environment for weeks. Crickets (or other insects) may be vectors (spreaders) but are not the source of the infection.

### How is coccidia diagnosed?

The most common species of coccidia can be diagnosed through a physical exam and basic fecal evaluation

Your veterinarian may want to perform additional diagnostics however to rule out other disease conditions, such as:

- Blood work (complete blood count, plasma chemistry)
- X-rays
- Advanced fecal testing and PCR

### Symptoms

Coccidia typically infects the intestines. Symptoms include:

- Poor growth
- Weight loss
- Bloody feces or diarrhea

### How is it treated?

Your veterinarian will prescribe an Anticoccidial drug. In severe infections additional supportive care, such as fluids and antibiotics, may be needed

Strong hygiene practices are necessary to prevent re-infestation:

- Remove all items from the cage to properly disinfect
- Discard substrates that cannot be effectively cleaned, such as paper towels, aspen, soil, and coco bedding
- Porous items such as wood may be impossible to disinfect, ideally discard and replace items after treatment course
- Ammonia OR chlorine bleach can be used as a disinfectant
  - Ammonia can be used undiluted
  - Bleach should be diluted 1:10 (1 part bleach to 10 parts water)
  - Allow the disinfectant to remain on the surface for 10 minutes prior to rinsing
  - Ammonia can be rinsed with water, bleach can be neutralized with a dechlorinator added to the rinse water or with placement of the items in direct sunlight for a few hours
- Scrub the underside and back half of the reptile with a soft bristled toothbrush in a warm bath after each defecation for the duration of treatment
- Repeat the disinfection protocol after each defecation

*In a healthy individual with low numbers of coccidia treatment may not be necessary*

Recheck fecal sample 6 weeks after treatment



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### **How can I prevent coccidia?**

Good hygiene – Remove all feces and feces-contaminated food and water daily. Insects and other food items must be removed daily.

### **Zoonosis**

There have been no documented cases of zoonosis (infecting a human) with a reptile coccidia species.