

Prehistoric Pets Care Sheet

Metabolic Bone Disease

Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD) is a common problem with captive reptiles and is the result of insufficient calcium and vitamin D3. Reptiles need calcium in order to build and maintain bone in their bodies. In order to use and absorb calcium reptiles need vitamin D3, which is produced by exposure to UVB light. Proper lighting is essential and reptiles need to be exposed to 12-14 hours of UVB every day. Since most reptiles are not exposed to natural sunlight a fluorescent or mercury vapor bulb must be used. Any artificial lighting has a productive lifespan and you should replace your bulbs as recommended by the manufacturer. Most bulbs should be replaced every 6-12 months. If you're not sure if your bulb is producing UVB, bring it in and we'll be happy to test it for you. Remember, glass or plastic filters out UVB light, you must place the bulbs over a screen or inside the cage. Depending on the type of bulb used, the maximum distance the bulb should be placed away from the reptile is 15 inches. Check with the manufacturer for proper bulb placement. Most reptiles in captivity do not have adequate calcium in their diet and additional supplementation is needed. Reptile supplements come in a powder form that you sprinkle on the vegetables or insects. Baby and juvenile reptiles need supplementation everyday while adults only need it a 2-3 times a week. Monitor lizards and other carnivorous reptiles need calcium on any food item that doesn't contain bone. If you suspect your reptile has MBD seek help from a qualified veterinarian. The early stages of MBD can be stopped and your pet may live a normal healthy life. However, any deformities such as bent spines, jaws, or limbs will remain that way. If you think your pet may have MBD these are the warning signs:

- Inactivity
- Inability to properly lift its body off the ground or move normally.
- Soft deformed jaw
- Kinked spine
- Swollen limbs
- Soft Shell (tortoises & turtles)
- Twitching or shaking (most common in adults)
- Seizures