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Vomiting in Snakes

Regurgitation or vomiting is a common symptom seen in snakes – especially in boas and pythons. A veterinarian should examine affected snakes as soon as possible, because the longer the disorder continues, the greater the risk of death from pneumonia or starvation.

Note that vomiting and regurgitation are symptoms of disease, but they are not diseases themselves. Therefore, the goal is to attempt to identify and correct the underlying cause. The table below lists some of the more common causes of vomiting or regurgitation. Many of the causes relate to improper management. In such cases, altering the husbandry techniques may solve the problem.

Snakes who continue to vomit or regurgitate in spite of an optimum environment and correct management generally will require an examination by a veterinarian and some combination of laboratory testing, x-rays, etc. in order to attempt to isolate the cause.

Possible reasons for vomiting:

- Environment too cold
- Food/Prey too cold
- Snake too cold
- Most boas and pythons prefer a temperature of at least 80 degrees Fahrenheit, with a focal hot spot, and a relative humidity of 50-70% or higher.
- Food items too large
- Excessive number of cage mates
- Excessive handling
- Handling too frequently after feeding
- Snakes should be left undisturbed for four days after feeding
- Behavioral anomaly
- Some snakes that are very active and/or nervous and lack a proper hide box may vomit behaviorally if disturbed after eating a meal
- Systemic infections
- Internal parasites
- Intoxication (poisons)
- Metabolic disease
- Purification of food in the gut
- Foreign body obstruction
- Cancer