

HEALTH & DISEASES



This column is taken care of by the "Studygroup for Diseases and the Optimum Keeping and Breeding of Terrarium Animals" of the Belgian Society "Terra". If there is a question concerning health or diseases, feel free to contact the president of the Studygroup: Mr. Hugo Claessen, Arthur Sterckstraat 18, B-2600 Berchem, Belgium. He will try to answer your question in this column to the benefit of all members.

A CASE OF POCK-LIKE INFLAMMATION IN *ELAPHE* *SCHRENKII*, FOLLOWED BY A CASE OF PRIAPISME.

By: A.M. Steehouder, Theresiaplein 24, 5041 BJ
Tilburg, The Netherlands.

When I acquired two specimens of the Amour rat-snake *Elaphe schrenkii* in August 1983, one had a large 'pock' on the right side of the body some distance behind the head. The abscess was opened and the cheese-like mass of pus was pressed out, whereafter a liniment, containing an antibiotic was used. This treatment was repeated for about six days, until all the pus was gone. The skin recovered remarkably fast.

In Januari 1984, I kept the animals cool for some weeks as a stimulant to reproductive behaviour. During this period I did not examine them - a mistake, for when I finally did check them, I discovered that the abscess had returned and had been growing fast. (A warning: only healthy ani-

mals should be allowed to hibernate.) The abscess spread over about 4 cm.

I started treatment with Belcomycine injections. After a week I opened the abscess again, removed the pus, brought in the linement. Temperature was raised.

A first complication was, that the animal was so weakened that it hung like a towel when handled. I gave it two injections of Nandrolon on two consecutive days. Such injections were recommended by H. Claessen, who had excellent results by using Nandrolon on very weak animals. As well as this anabole steroid, I force-fed the animal very carefully with horse flesh every other day. Additionally I gave it vitamin A and B.

The result of this treatment was, that the animal on 26 February, after a good sloughing, started to kill and swallow mice on its own. Thereafter it recovered fast.

A second complication was that the left hemipenis was erected and remained so, resisting any effort to press it back. This may be caused by the Nandrolon injection, this being given in the tail base near the hemipenis. The penis was finally amputated, by binding it up and cutting away the dried end after a week or two. The animal did not seem to be bothered by all this.

Finally I discovered that the inflammation was not completely cured. I decided, considering that there might have developed a resistancy against the used antibiotic, to give the animal Chlooramphenicol and Vitamin B intramuscular. I did this for forty days. The wounds are still deep but healing very well, the animal being quite lively, eating and sloughing.

I don't know whether it will be cured totally for a while. What I do know, is that it would have been dead long ago without the treatment I gave it. One of the things I have learned, is that intramuscular injection is better not in the tail base,

but in the muscles of the back, thus preventing any damage to the hemipenes.

Postscript of the editors.

1. During the hibernation there must be a regular control of the animals.
2. It's better to get in touch with an expert, instead of practising yourself.
One has to be very careful with medicines like Nandrolon.