

EXPERIENCES WITH COLUBER VIRIDIFLAVUS CARBONARIUS.

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On 15 October 1983 I bought two specimens of *Coluber viridiflavus carbonarius*, the black subspecies of the European yellow-green racer, which is known for its wildness. Therefore I found it remarkable that both specimens were not aggressive at all, letting themselves be handled and not trying to bite. This behaviour should have been enough for a wiser person than I, not to buy them, as their quiet behaviour was, as became clear later, caused by their miserable condition.

Both animals had mites, that were treated with Neguvon. I gave them Panacur against endoparasites. Specimen 1 was thin, refused food, felt weak. Its faeces smelt bad, were too soft, and were grey and slimy. Specimen 2 had the same faeces, but ate willingly and seemed to be in better condition.

I treated both animals with Stomorgyl (active ingredients: metronidazole and spiramycine) for ten days. The faeces improved.

Specimen 2 started to slough and did not eat afterwards. Specimen 1 had still not eaten.

On 14 November I ascertained a severe infection of tape-worm: a vomitted prey with threads of tape-worm all through the cage. I quickly cleaned the mess and gave the animals a large dose of Panacur over four days. The fifth day specimen 1 accepted very young mice, and showed a welcome change of behaviour: it became more active, started digging in the cage, and its movements became faster.

On 6 December specimen 2 died. This was the animal that seemed to be in better condition initially. Specimen 1 continued to improve, but it got small lumps under the skin, especially on the tail above

the spinal column. The lumps were filled with clear water-like fluid. A fourteen days treatment with Belcomycine (0.025 ml/100 g bodyweight) showed results after five days, but had to be repeated later. After that, the lumps were gone.

Ever since, the specimen has been thriving. It is fast, aggressive, alert. It is very shy too, even to prey animals: it only eats newborn mice and rats, sometimes fuzzies, avoiding larger prey.

My experiences with this species confirm what better judges than I already knew: it is a very difficult snake to tend, a notorious escaper, always damaging its head by trying to break out, especially in the evening and during the night. As far as I know, there has been no successful captive breeding of this species.

As many snake lovers may be tempted to try and catch Colubers during their holidays and bring them home, it may be wise to point out to them that these snakes are not easy captives, very bad pets, and that it is wiser to leave them alone where they belong.

Besides, it may not be superfluous to some, to point out that they are ophiophagous and might eat their cage-mates. One should not keep them with smaller snakes of other species in the same cage. It must be said that *Coluber gemonensis* may be excluded from the above negative advise as I have seen at least one specimen that thrived well in captivity.