



HERPETOLOGIA

A column for short herpetological contributions.

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■ CUTTING CLAWS

The fact that force-feeding can be an unpleasant activity, will be confirmed by any snakekeeper who has had animals that were unwilling to eat. It has been repeatedly proven that force-feeding is an indispensable life-saving action (see Van der Stoel, 1981 on force-feeding). Nevertheless it is well to consider a frequently disregarded aspect of force-feeding. Recently an acquaintance who force-fed his snake, visited me. The snake had a discharge of blood from its cloaca, which is never a positive symptom. After some thoughts about the how and why this phenomenon occurred it turned out that it was because the snake had a prey animal with long nails pressed down its throat. Many snakekeepers nowadays breed their own mice, rats, rabbits, guinea pigs and several bird species to feed their snakes. It's a fact that the nails of prey animals kept in captivity do not wear out, or not as much as they would in nature. It's wise to cut the nails off the feeder-animal before it is used for force-feeding. This will help to prevent an injury of the snake's throat. Moreover take care that the legs or wings of the prey animals are not turned during feeding. Lubricating the prey animal with water also deserves recommendation, so it slides more easily in the snake.

■ LITERATURE

- *Stoel P.B. (1981). Force-feeding, a life saving act? Litteratura Serpantium 1: 189-197.*

Translation from Dutch by Thijs de Hoon.

English corrections by Mark Wootten.