



ONIONS AND SNAKES WITH A COLD



Johan Mavromichalis

Recently I took into my care, a very neglected Burmese python. The snake not only had a cold but you could clearly hear in her breathing, that she had lots of phlegm in her windpipe. Out of the nose, from this more than three metre long python, came at regular intervals the so-called 'bubbles'. According to an acquaintance of mine, this could be a sign of an amoebic infection, so I gave the snake a prophylactic treatment of Flagyl.

There has been many a time when I've dissolved rhino capsules in boiling water and placed this in an extra warm terrarium, to make the breathing easier and to loosen the phlegm for a Burmese python with a cold. That is what I wanted to do this time because this female python was having a problem with phlegm. This freed up, now and again, with the result that the glass of the terrarium was covered in phlegm. I was alas out of capsules and it seemed that there was nothing more that I could do for her at this time. That is until my girlfriend came up with a simple but practical solution, a sliced onion! It was a 'therapy' that had always worked effectively whenever my son had a cold. At night I placed a raw sliced onion at the head of his bed on a plate, to give him relief from a blocked nose.

I decided to try this therapy for the snake immediately. I placed her in a terrarium of 120x80x80 (L x W x H) with a temperature at almost 32°C and 90% humidity,

achieved by spraying lots of tepid water. I sliced an onion in pieces, put it in a sock and hung it up in the terrarium. After two hours I found the smell had so intensified that I took the onion out of the terrarium just to be sure. I'm not sure if the smell is too strong for snakes, it certainly causes no harm to humans. I repeated this a number of times, with the result that the terrarium glass became completely covered with phlegm. After a few days it seemed clear that the snake was having less of a problem with her breathing. During this period I also gave a cocktail containing multi-vitamins.

I think that the onion contributed in the easing of the snakes breathing problem. I must emphasise that if the cold lasts longer than two weeks, then it is wise to see a veterinarian. You will then receive an accurate diagnosis of the ailment and a recommended treatment. You cannot treat pneumonia with an onion! However in the early stages of a cold this therapy could save you a costly visit to a specialised veterinarian. In any case it is always better to check the snakes housing because a healthy snake should never catch a cold, in a well placed and equipped terrarium.

Thanks to my girlfriend Chantal Daniëls who gave me this golden tip.

*Translation: Marjon Jasker,
Corrections: Mark Wootten.*