

Alice, the Lizard

I love to see unusual animals. 99% of the ones I see are dogs or cats. So it is always a thrill when something different comes into my office. One day, there came into my NYC office a young girl with a bearded dragon. I had never seen one before. Patricia told me that Alice, the lizard hadn't eaten in weeks. I didn't know how often a beardie had to eat, to be honest, and actually knew next to nothing about reptiles at all. I was candid about my ignorance, but the owner was more than happy to share her knowledge with me. She had just spent thousands of dollars at the Animal Medical Center, the biggest most prestigious veterinary institution in New York City, and arguably in the country. She had seen the expert herpetologist there. Despite a myriad of diagnostic tests, as well as poking and prodding every orifice in the hapless creature, they were not any closer to finding out what the problem was. More importantly Alice wasn't feeling any better and still wasn't eating.

So, with a bit of trepidation, due to my lack of reptilian knowledge I set about doing my homeopathic intake, the same way one would do for a human, dog, cat or any other living breathing species. My questioning focuses on the mental and emotional outlook of the animal. I was a bit skeptical as I asked my usual questions about her disposition. Is she a needy iguana? Is she friendly? Does she like company? Or is she independent? As I looked into those cold reptilian eyes, I felt kind of foolish. I, who prided myself on being able to easily read animals, had never noticed any expression whatsoever on a reptile or amphibian. "Oh yes," Pat told me, "she is very friendly and loves company and affection!" "Really! How can you tell?" I asked her, mystified. I couldn't believe I was having this conversation. "Well," said Pat, "she basically stays behind the couch all day when I am at work. But when I come home, she crawls out and gets up on the window ledge and looks out the window." Wow! I thought. Who knew?

I continued the questioning. "What does she eat?" I asked. I didn't have a clue what lizards ate. "Crickets" she said. "Live ones?" I asked, horrified. "Well, actually," Pat said, "she used to eat live ones, but I just recently switched to canned crickets. You know," she mused, "that may have been when this whole problem started. It was around that time."

Now we are getting somewhere I thought to myself. Perhaps she had eaten a bad cricket? A case of food poisoning? "Does she show any sign of abdominal discomfort?" I asked. "Well, maybe," she replied. "I have found her on her back occasionally when I come home from work. And she is frightened, because she can't right herself." "Really," I said. "How can you tell she is frightened?" "She alternates from grey to white, her color keeps changing and her heart beats very fast." My heart was warming fast to this iguana. I had no idea that reptiles felt the same emotions we do: loneliness, fear, dare I even say love?

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As it is impossible for this type of lizard to right itself, I concluded that there must have been some severe discomfort in her abdomen that would motivate her to relieve the pressure by turning on her back and risk the fear that she would feel.

Eating a bad cricket was my diagnosis. One dose of Nux Vomica, a major homeopathic remedy for digestive disorders was my prescription, and a delighted Patricia called me the next day to relay to me the good news that Alice started eating on her own. The dear thing had come out of hiding and was spending a lot of time on the window ledge now, happy and grateful that she was feeling better.

I will never look at a reptile the same!

