

Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians

Advancing reptilian & amphibian medicine, surgery, & conservation worldwide



ARAV Monthly Herp Blerp

Greetings from your ARAV Vet Tech Liaison!

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Tis the season to be thankful and jolly! For all of you looking to give your technicians, technologists, and associates a gift that keeps on giving, look no further! Go to www.arav.org and sign up today! The look in their eyes will rival the beauty of a panther chameleons chromatophores!

I am thankful to all the technicians and students that submit articles to this newsletter! Please, keep them coming, it wouldn't be the Herp Blerp without you!

Your Herp Blerpin' Tech,
Erica Mede, CVT

Microchipping Scaly Companions

The use of microchips for identification purposes in our pets, while widely accepted in the mammalian community, still remains a heated topic of debate within the reptile world. Many see the medical procedure as unnecessary while potentially posing long-term threats to the overall health and life-span of the reptile. Others see it as an added level of protection for valuable animals that may be stolen or for those wily reptiles who may escape. Which brings us to the ultimate question, to chip or not to chip?

It is true that reptiles simply have less subcutaneous space in which to place a microchip compared to our mammalian species. The most commonly used microchips in dogs and cats from large companies such as HomeAgain and Avid are about the size of a grain of rice which is an excessively large size in some of our small species and pediatric animals. Not to mention the fact that the larger the microchip, the larger the needle, and the more painful the procedure. However, there are new microchip companies emerging, such as Microchip ID Solutions Inc., which manufacture smaller microchips, such as the Atom Chip, only half the size of the typical dog or cat chip. These tiny microchips may be the solution, making the insertion procedure itself less painful and requiring considerably less subcutaneous space.



Microchip Next to Grain of Rice

Tips, Tricks, and Toys

Fiesty Scorpion Restraint

Every now and then a clinician will find themselves having to administer medications or draw off a sample from a scorpion.

If anesthesia isn't warranted or practical, physical restraint for minor procedures can be utilized. Wrapping gauze around a tongue depressor and then wrapping a self sticking bandage material (such as Pet Flex or Vet Wrap) around that will create a wide but cushioned restraint device.

Use one to gently hold down the front of the patient and one to hold the tail at bay gently.

Continued on the Next Page ...

Arguments against this newer technology however, exist as well. Will the standard microchip reader found in most veterinary clinics, shelters and rescues be able to detect the tiny microchip? Most facilities own scanners which can read at 125Hz, and if the smaller chips are not detectable at that level, microchipped animals might be incorrectly identified as homeless. We all remember the scandal with the Banfield microchips which were only readable at 134Hz. obviously some well-structured studies investigating scanning success with these *micro*-microchips will be necessary in the near future.

Health concerns have also been brought up on reptile discussion forums. Reptiles have longer lifespans than many other animal species and unique health concerns may arise over time in our microchipped reptiles. Scientific studies, using rat and mouse models, have shown a significant association between cancer development and microchip placement in rodent species. However, in canine and feline models, there are no confirmed cases of cancer development directly associated with microchip placement to date. Additionally, while cancer is common in our rodent species, especially those lab strains bred for cancer research, the development of cancer in reptiles is rare. The current consensus in the veterinary community is that the health risk of microchip placement in reptiles is minor.

Finally and most importantly, our reptiles are valuable whether they are rare and expensive or simply a treasured member of the family. They are capable of escaping, and reptile rescues and veterinary clinics may be presented with a lost reptile in search of a home. If they cannot be placed, they will often be euthanized. Theft is also a real concern, and debates on reptile ownership may be easily settled with proper microchip registration. We microchip our dogs and cats for the extra sense of security it brings, aren't our reptiles just as "valuable"?

Whether you are for or against microchipping your scaly friends, please seek out the advice and expertise of an exotic veterinarian who practices with reptiles. Each species of reptile requires a different microchip placement protocol and the procedure can be difficult and even deadly to the animal if performed incorrectly.

Marina McCarthy
University of Illinois 2015

Student Corner

Dr. Colin McDermott is busier than ever making all of the Student Chapters flow seamlessly and preparing for the poster contest at ARAV this year. If you have any questions or just want to touch base with him, e-mail him at cmcd.vmd@gmail.com. If you want to get his attention faster put a Simpsons quote in the subject!

ABVP Announcement!



For all of you interested in becoming boarded in Reptile and Amphibian medicine come visit the 19th Annual ABVP Symposium in Nashville, Tennessee October 30-November 2, 2014. Find out more information at www.abvp.com

Test Your Knowledge!

Thank you to the Academy of Veterinary Technicians in Clinical Practice (AVTCP) for providing us with some questions! With their conference having wrapped up and their technicians having taken the exam for their VTS in Avian and Exotic medicine, there will not be any quiz questions until the December issue.

Last months answers:

What does POTZ stand for?

Preferred Optimal Temperature Zone

ARAV Awesomeness!



The Official ARAV CafePress store is now open!! Don't be caught without your ARAV swag!

Visit us at: <http://www.cafepress.com/ARAVshop>

Mark Your Calendars ...

January 24, 2015: **Commemorative Symposium on Reptiles and Amphibians** at Birbeck College in London, England

April 18-23, 2015: **ICARE (International Conference on Avian Herpetological and Exotic Mammal Medicine)** will be held in Paris, France

Questions, Suggestions, or Articles can be Submitted to: e.medecvt@gmail.com