



Metabolic Bone Disease

All reptiles can potentially be affected by Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD). Turtles and lizards are more commonly affected than snakes.

Poor or inadequate UV exposure can lead to calcium deficiency. Appropriate UV lighting is important for the absorption of calcium which plays an important part in bone and muscle development. The disease process is easily preventable with the correct husbandry but difficult to manage once occurs.

Common clinical signs include:

- Poor skeletal development
- Lethargy
- Poor appetite
- Fractures

Some of these husbandry changes and treatment commonly recommended include:

- Appropriate UVB lighting
- Calcium supplementation
- Proper diet
- Exposure to natural unfiltered sunlight if possible

Diagnosis requires a thorough examination of the husbandry, a full physical exam, and often radiographs (x-rays) to look at the bone density. Blood testing can also be useful in some cases.

Treatment depends on the severity of disease.

Pathological fractures (broken bones caused not by accident but because the bones are too weak) can occur. Treatment is often prolonged and sometimes they are unfortunately too sick to survive. Amputation or repair of the broken limbs is sometimes required. With less severe cases, making the appropriate husbandry changes and dietary supplementation often resolves the issue.

The prognosis depends on the severity of the disease. In some cases, the clinical signs can be reversed with treatment, we strongly advise you seek veterinary advice if any of the clinical signs listed are encountered or you are at all concerned.

