

## What exactly is “Bobtail Flu”?

### Causative agent:

Recent research has determined the cause of Bobtail Flu to be a lizard-specific virus, Shingleback Nidovirus 1. It poses a threat to both wild and captive shingleback lizards in Western Australia (*Tiliqua rugosa rugosa*, *Tiliqua rugosa asper*, and *Tiliqua rugosa Konowi*). Shinglebacks infected with the virus also tend to become infected with secondary bacterial, fungal, or parasitic infections, which also may require treatment.



### How does the infection occur?

Bobtail flu is very contagious and easily spread between shingleback lizards. More research is necessary to determine if the virus can be spread to other types of reptiles as well; however, it is not known to infect humans.

### What are the symptoms to watch out for?

Most bobtails present with classic flu-like symptoms such as weepy eyes, nasal discharge, oral discharge, increased sneezing, lethargy, and weightloss. It is important to note; however, that some lizards have been found to carry and shed the virus without displaying any signs.

### Is it possible to test for the virus?

A new PCR test has been created which can detect Shingleback Nidovirus 1. It simply requires a swab of mucus from the lizard’s choana. Further tests may also be performed to detect other causes of respiratory disease in lizards including bacteria, fungus, parasites, allergies, neoplasia, and trauma.

### Is there a treatment for “Bobtail Flu”?

Unfortunately, there is no specific treatment for the virus; however, supportive care including anti-inflammatories, fluids, nebulization, and anti-bacterial agents for secondary infections may be warranted. Without supportive treatment, bobtail flu may result in death. On the contrary, with supportive care, success rates are up to 84%. If your lizard is displaying any flu-like symptoms, it is recommended to see your veterinarian to assess the severity of the disease.

