HOW TO MAKE A SNAKE EAT

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ABSTRACT

Inappetence in snakes is a frequent cause for consultation of a veterinarian, although most owners tolerate a long time of refusing prey animals in their pets. However, it is important to remember that anorexia is a symptom, not a disease.

There are many physiologic events that can cause a snake to refuse to eat, including pregnancy, breeding season, hibernation, ecdysis, or post- hatching in neonate snakes. Inappetence also occurs in ill snakes. In these animals etiology of disease must be identified in an attempt to reach a successful treatment. Anorexia may also be caused by inappropriate care, such as housing at below or above the POTZ. General husbandry should be managed and optimized for inappetent snakes, i.e., maintaining appropriate temperatures, providing appropriate prey animals (size and quantity), offering food during appropriate activity cycles (crepuscular/nocturnal/diurnal) and warming frozen prey animals before offering them to the snake.

In cases of inappetent animals that appear healthy with good husbandry, variations can be made in the offering of prey (different species/color, freshly killed/living, “braining”, “dipping”). Force feeding/assisted feeding and appropriate medical therapy can also increase appetite.

In neonate snakes some additional measures may be successful. Detailed information will be reviewed in the presentation.