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REGURGITATION OF HAIR PELLETS IN WHITE LIPPED PYTHONS - *LIASIS ALBERTISII*

DAVID BLATCHFORD & STEPHEN WISEMAN

Regular regurgitation of undigested rodent hair has been recorded in two groups of unrelated, captive bred White lipped pythons (*Liasis albertisii*). This is not the consequence of a parasite burden and occurs approximately monthly in animals being fed to appetite with white laboratory rodents.

The pellets have a distinctive appearance being tapered at either end (see Plate 1) and are composed entirely of hair. They are virtually free of odour unlike the foul-smelling vomitus associated with, for example, protozoan infections.

The uniform, spindle shape and freedom from odour led us to speculate that they are formed, or stored, within an area of the digestive tract not associated with the gastric secretions. But the location of such a storage area or diverticulum was not found in a dissection. However the thick walled stomach has many folds and the shape of the empty stomach resembles that of the pellets (see Plate 2). We suggest that the hair is collected and retained within a fold of the stomach after the bulk of the meal has been digested and passed through the pyloric sphincter.

Plate 1. - Regurgitated pellet from *Liasis albertisii*

Plate 2. – Folds in the stomach wall

That mammals are the normal prey of this species in the wild was confirmed by McDowell (1979); in one specimen he reported finding rodent hair "within the intestine."

Regurgitation of the pellets has been witnessed. This curious behaviour has not been observed in other *Liasis* species.

Discussion with other herpetologists of this phenonema reveals that it had not been noticed in other collections holding this species.

REFERENCES

McDowell, S.B. (1979). A catalogue of the snakes of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands with special reference to those in the Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Part III Boinae and Acrochordoidea (Reptilia: serpents). *J. Herpetology* **13**: 1-92.