



# A VET'S PRACTICE FOR SPECIAL PATIENTS:

The Practice for Birds and Reptiles

## Contributing Authors:

Gerd Britsch  
Susanne Vorbrüggen  
Ruth Kothe

**I**n the southwest of Germany, in Karlsruhe, a highly specialized practice has been established during the last few years treating birds and reptiles only. Because of the many years of experience of the veterinarians, their assistants and the highly specialized equipment, this practice works as a referral practice for many partnering clinics. Many owners bring their animals for complex or chronic diseases as well as for routine health or purchase examination despite any increased travel distance because of the level of expertise in bird and reptile veterinary care. The practice treats about 500 to 600 patients per month.



The team consists of three vets, who specialized in bird physiology, diseases and nutrition. All of them gained experience not only at university, but also abroad and they are members of the EAAV (European Association of Avian Veterinarians) and the DGHT (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terraristik), a German association for reptile and amphibian specialists. The team is completed by three vet assistants, one office employee and two student veterinary assistants. Each team member has birds or reptiles at home and in the practice they realize their passion working with these exotics.

To facilitate access to the specialists, the practice also offers consultations in other clinics in Germany. Additionally, the vets make house calls across a wide geographic area/territory. For emergencies, they are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Diagnostic imaging, such as digital radiography, endoscopy and ultrasound, is provided just like a private laboratory for bacteriology, mycology, parasitology, cytology, hematology and blood chemistry. This in-house laboratory saves time in treatment especially for avian patients: blood chemistry results of the VetScan VS2 with the AVIAN/ REPTILIAN PROFILE PLUS and VetScan i-STAT 1 with the CHEM8+ Cartridge are performed within 14 minutes – also a great advantage for routine diagnostic like health checks for overwintering tortoises or turtles. The amount of blood (0,1ml) needed for the devices mentioned above is even small enough for the examination of budgerigars and small reptiles under 50 g of body weight. In birds over 50 g of body weight 25 G needles are used, in smaller birds (for example budgerigars) insulin syringes are preferable. Dependent on the size, 25 G to 21 G are used in reptiles. One percent of the body weight can be drawn without any complications in every patient.

In addition the VetScan i-STAT is often used for the determination of ionized calcium in Grey parrots presented with seizures due to calcium deficiency and for the determination of the partial pressure of oxygen in the blood of dyspneic patients to give a more precise prognosis.

Radiology highly contributes to the diagnosis by offering a quick overview of the case. Very often a diagnosis can be made without anaesthetizing the patient. If the cause of a disease is still unknown after X-ray and lab, endoscopy can be performed under general anaesthesia. Inhalation of Isofluran via tube or mask is a very safe procedure with low risk of losing a patient. Via endoscope, the air sacs, lungs, all visible organs, choana and trachea can be fully evaluated, granuloma e.g. aspergilloma can be removed and treated locally. Organ biopsies can be performed with minimal harm to soft tissue and examined cytologically in-house right away. Using a VetScan i- STAT for determining ionized Calcium and the partial pressure of oxygen minimizes the risk of adverse events during anesthesia.

The most common diseases in parrots are aspergillosis, infectious diseases of the intestinal system and nutritional hepatic problems. In the first two cases when first detected, the diagnosis relies on endoscopy and radiography respectively, microbiology, and the VetScan VS2 offers important information for the treatment regimen. With the results of the AVIAN/ REPTILIAN PROFILE PLUS, it can be decided which drug is tolerated the best and whether an animal needs supporting kidney or liver therapy. In cases of alimentary hepatic problems in birds, the VetScan VS2 is the diagnostic tool of first choice because it offers indispensable results. For hepatic diseases elevations



of AST and bile acid are diagnostic. Chronic nephroses, frequently occurring in reptiles, can be safely and quickly detected by the VetScan VS2 on the basis of elevated levels of uric acid and electrolyte shifts (Ca, P, K).

A normal health check is performed by a biochemical examination using the AVIAN/REPTILIAN PROFILE PLUS, a hematology, microbiological and radiographic examinations. In cases of doubt, endoscopies, virus and Chlamydia checks are added.

With these in-house tests, a diagnosis can also be made in complicated cases, usually within a day, and an appropriate therapy can be initiated as soon as possible. For particularly critical patients, the practice has an intensive care unit for close monitoring and intensive treatment. Each box is connected to a suction system and can be supplied with oxygen and drugs can be nebulised. Here birds and reptiles are weighed, handled several times, and supplied with i.v.- or intraosseus-catheters if necessary. Once our patients are stable enough, the owner can continue treatment at home. In case of (potentially) infectious patients, a quarantine station is provided and minimizes risk to other patients and clients as well as the staff.

If you want to know more about the practice, please visit [www.vogel-und-reptilien-tierarzt.de](http://www.vogel-und-reptilien-tierarzt.de) or contact [info@vogel-und-reptilien-tierarzt.de](mailto:info@vogel-und-reptilien-tierarzt.de).

