

The Role of Reptile Rescues

Emily Lilly

Blue Ridge Reptile Rescue

Virginia Military Institute



What we do

- **Help reptiles**

- Accept surrendered and stray reptiles
- Provide medical care and emergency services
- Place animals into safe pet homes

- **Protect the environment**

- Provide an alternative to release of unwanted pets
- Prevent instruction of diseases and habitat take-over

- Serve as an **educational resource** for the community

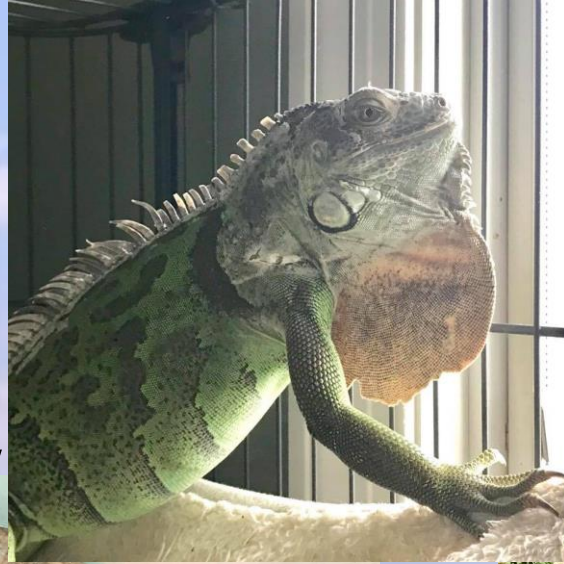
- Help current owners and potential adopters make educated reptile keepers
- Run programs for local children



But then it grew



es,



The turtle problem



- Baby turtles are often sold inexpensively or given away
- Turtles grow and require more care
- Rescues and shelters are overflowing with unwanted turtles
- In Virginia, it is **illegal to release** turtles that have been in captivity over 30 days



“Prize” pets

- Carnivals and festivals use live animals as prizes
- Turtles, iguanas, and fish
- Animals are usually in poor health from over crowding
- Little to no education is provided



Emergency care

Egg binding

Traumatic injury

Car accidents

Lawn mower
accidents

Failed veterinary care



Over-crowding and under-feeding

- Solitary animals can injure one another when housed together
- Lack of food or space can increase aggression



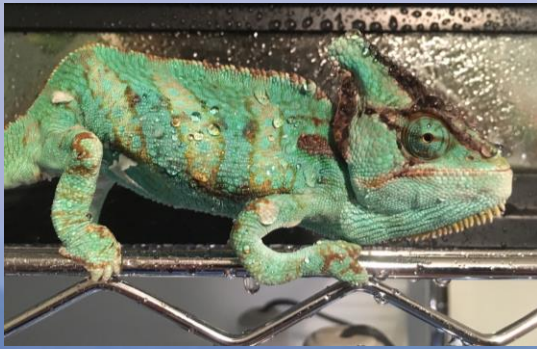
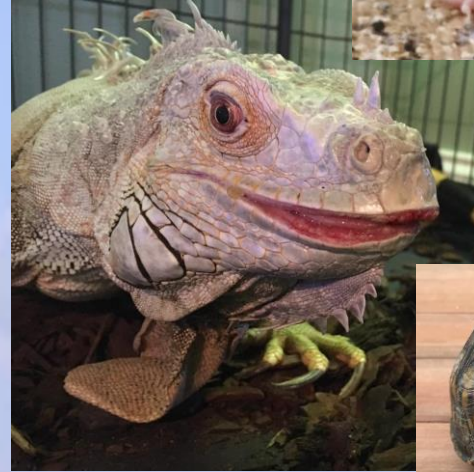
Metabolic Bone Disease

Captive reptiles require correct calcium : phosphorus ratio

UVB light is essential for calcium metabolism

Symptoms: bone deformity, muscle tremors and weakness, cardiac failure, nerve degradation, death

Preventable with education



Starvation

Animals kept for months with little to no food

Starving animals require specific metabolic support to prevent refeeding syndrome



Beak overgrowth

- Diets composed of only soft foods promote overgrowth
- Habitats with only soft substrate allow no animal filing
- Very easy to correct with manual or electronic filing



Yellow Fungus

Chrysosporium anamorph of *Nannizziopsis vriesii*, CANV

No cure: infection is terminal

Most common in bearded dragons

Also found in iguanas, uromastyx, water dragons, and chameleons

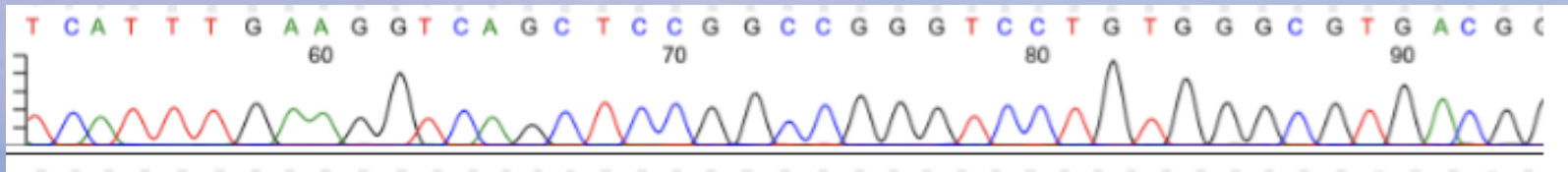
Spreads easily when husbandry is sub-optimal: crowding, poor nutrition, and other stress

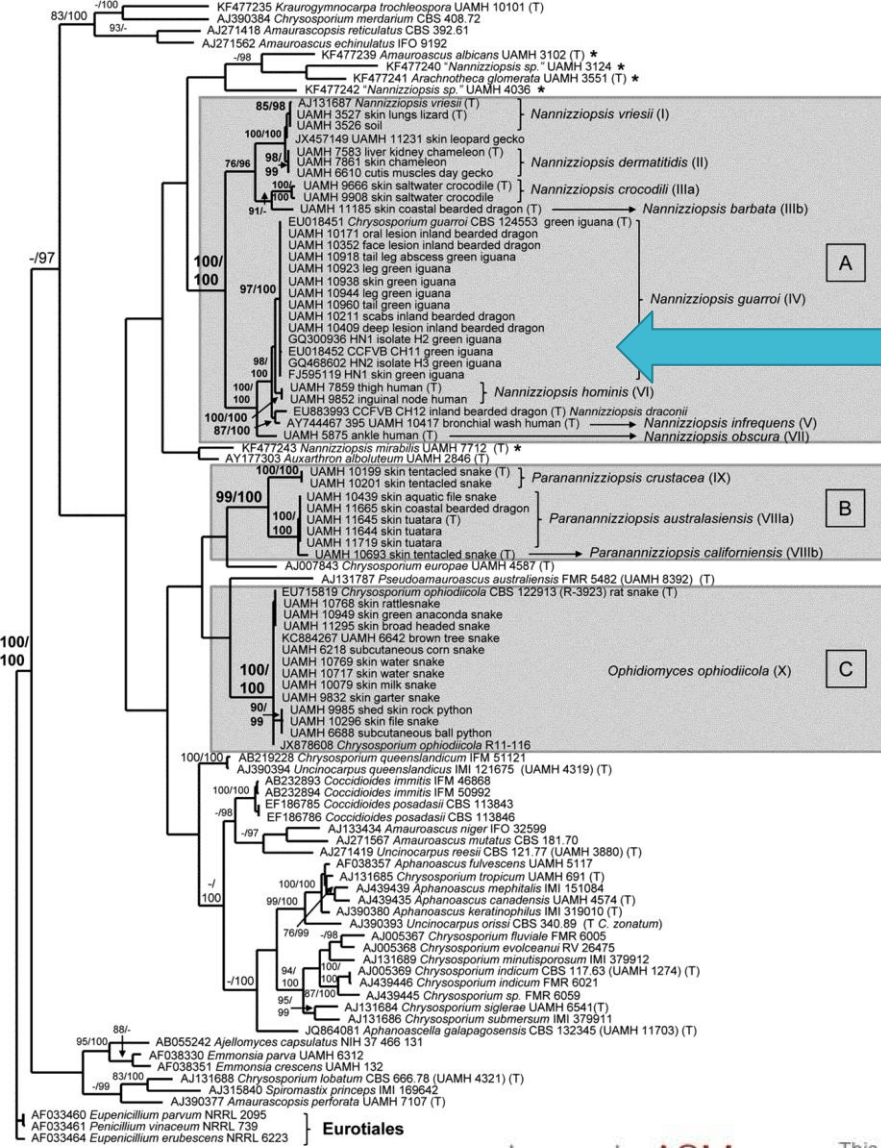
Highly **contagious**, potential risk for **wild populations**



BRRR and Yellow Fungus Research

- 13 animals have arrived at BRRR with yellow fungus in the last two years
- All animals were quarantined and given palliative care
- Euthanasia was performed when ulcerations occurred
- Tissue samples from lesions sent to laboratory at VMI for analysis
- DNA sequence analysis: *Nannizziopsis guarroi*





Our isolates from both bearded dragons and green iguanas fall in this clade of *Nannizziopsis guarroi*

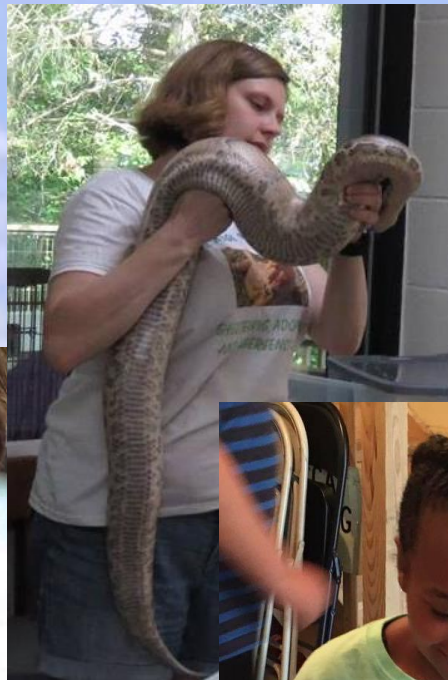
Lynne Sigler et al. J. Clin. Microbiol. 2013;
doi:10.1128/JCM.01465-13

Outreach

Educational programs for children
Classroom pet rescue or equipment
provision



Outreach



Facebook and Website

Provide suggestions and ideas for good reptile care

Answer questions from keepers regarding care and health issues





















