AIR SAC TUBE PLACEMENT IN A BALL PYTHON (*Python regius*) TO TREAT RESPIRATORY OBSTRUCTION SECONDARY TO PNEUMONIA

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ABSTRACT

An adult male ball python (*Python regius*) presented for an episode of severe dyspnea characterized by open mouth breathing and neck stretching. The animal had copious purulent discharge, mucous and debris that was continually occluding the tracheal lumen. An air sac tube was placed to allow the animal to breathe while treatment was initiated. Under anesthesia, an incision was made at the caudal aspect of the lung field laterally. The skin and intercostal muscles were incised and a tube was placed in the air sac. The ball python’s dyspnea immediately improved and no open mouth breathing or discomfort was noted. Cytology and culture confirmed a bacterial respiratory infection with *Providencia rettgeri* that was susceptible to azithromycin. The tube was removed after thirteen days of treatment. Pulmonary endoscopy before closure showed minimal damage with a small amount of hemorrhage in the surrounding muscle tissue. Respiratory disease is common in captive snakes, and can be associated with significant morbidity and mortalities. Many captive animals have poor husbandry conditions that can lead to an immunocompromised state, resulting in clinical disease. An air sac tube is a relatively simple procedure that can alleviate tracheal narrowing or obstruction, similar to air sac cannulation in birds.

LITERATURE CITED