

Spitting to Survive

by Liana Mahoney

Spit keeps our mouths moist and softens our food when we chew. Without spit in our mouths, we would have a hard time talking. We would find it even harder to swallow. But for some animals, spit works better after it has left the mouth. Some animals are experts at surviving because they are expert spitters.

Llamas are animals often found in petting zoos and farms. These animals seem to like their personal space. A llama that feels threatened or annoyed will spit slimy gobs at you to get you to leave it alone. Sometimes llamas even spit on each other to steal food! This trick usually works, because llama spit includes food from the llama's stomach, and it can be quite smelly. When a llama spits on another animal, the animal usually loses its appetite and walks away, leaving its food behind.

The archer fish is a very skilled spitter. This fish is like a submarine with a loaded weapon. It takes aim and spits jets of water at insects and other small creatures to knock them into the water. Then it gulps them down quickly. To create such a forceful stream of water, an archer fish closes its gills, and uses its tongue to form a tube in its mouth. Then the fish sticks its snout out of the water and aims. Aim! Launch! Lunch!

Spitting cobras are also known for their expert aim. These snakes spray poisonous venom from their fangs to protect themselves. Scientists believe that these snakes actually aim for the eyes! When the cobra's venom gets into the eyes of an animal, the venom causes terrible pain, and even blindness. This gives the snake plenty of time to get away.

Spitting is considered to be rude behavior in people. But for some animals, spitting can be a smart way to get lunch—or a clever way to **avoid** becoming lunch!

1. How does spit help humans.

- a. It makes our feed moist and soft
- b. it makes swallowing and talking easier
- c. it helps us fight germs
- d. both a and b

2. Which detail is not true of Llama spit?

- a. Llamas spit includes food from the llamas stomach.
- b. Llamas use spit to make other animals lose their appetite.
- c. Llama spit contains germs that cause other animals to get sick.
- d. Llamas use spit to get people to leave them alone.

3. Which animal creates a forceful stream of water to capture insects?

- a. humans
- b. archer fish
- c. spitting cobras
- d. llamas

4. How does a spitting cobra use its spit?

- a. To annoy their enemies
- b. To catch prey
- c. To cause terrible pain and blindness
- d. To spray poisonous venom

5. What is the author's purpose for writing this passage?

- a. to entertain the reader with humorous stories about animals
- b. to teach the reader how some animals survive
- c. to express opinions about animal behavior
- d. to show how animals are different from each other

6. Which word best describes spit?

- a. Gross
- b. Beneficial
- c. slimy
- d. Dangerous

7. As used in this passage, the word **avoid** means_____.

- a. Unkind
- b. Dislike
- c. Fun
- d. Stay away from

8. How are archer fish and spitting cobras alike?

- a. They both have very good aim.
- b. They use spit to harm the eyes of their enemies.
- c. They both eat insects.
- d. They both use their tongue to spit.

9. What word best describes the llama?

- a. Lonely
- b. Unkind
- c. Smelly
- d. Private

10. Which of these phrases is a simile?

- a. Spitting is a rude behavior
- b. The archer fish is like a submarine
- c. Without spit, we would find it hard to swallow
- d. Llamas like their personal space