

Name: _____

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 archerfish 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 archerfish 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!

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1. List the three ways spit helps humans.

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

a. humans **b.** archerfish
c. spitting cobras **d.** llamas

3. Name two reasons a llama might choose to spit.

4. How does a spitting cobra use its spit to protect itself?

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

a. to tell funny stories about animals
b. to teach the reader how animals survive
c. to express opinions about animals
d. to show how animals are different

ANSWER KEY

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1. List the three ways spit helps humans.

Spit helps humans chew by softening our food. It also helps us talk and swallow.

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

a. humans **b. archerfish**
c. spitting cobras d. llamas

3. Name two reasons a llama might choose to spit.

A llama spits when it feels threatened or when it is trying to steal food.

4. How does a spitting cobra use its spit to protect itself?

A spitting cobra spits poisonous venom in the eyes of its predators so it has time to escape.

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

a. to tell funny stories about animals
b. to teach the reader how animals survive
c. to express opinions about animals
d. to show how animals are different