

Responsible Reptile Ownership



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Owning a reptile is a HUGE responsibility. The key to keeping your reptile healthy is to provide an environment close to that species' natural environment, including temperature range, humidity level, light cycle, and landscape. Proper nutrition is also essential. The resources in this handout can serve as a guide. As with all pets, reptiles should have annual evaluations by a veterinarian. The veterinary clinic is also your resource if you have any questions for your reptile.

Selecting a Healthy Reptile

- Buy from a reputable source, such as an established breeder or reptile shop.
- Only buy reptiles that were born in captivity.
- Do not buy hatchlings or very small babies. They are very delicate and difficult to care for properly.
- Choose a reptile that is active and alert.
- Watch the animal when fed. If that is not possible, ask to see its records to determine when the last feeding was and whether it is eating. Do not buy from a source where records are missing or if not allowed to observe feeding.
- Make sure the reptile had proper housing and fed a proper diet. A rough start in life can cause health problems later on. Reptiles can live for long periods under less than ideal conditions. Even if rehabilitated, renal failure, growth deformities or other ailments may arise later in life.

Preventing Disease Transmission to People (Zoonosis)

- Buy only captive bred reptiles & have regular veterinary exams
- Wash your hands with a disinfectant after handling a reptile
- Wear gloves and a mask when cleaning the cage or accessories
- Do not kiss a reptile or let it "kiss" you
- Do not eat or drink anything while handling reptiles
- Do not clean cage furnishings or prepare food in bathtub or kitchen sink
- If bitten or scratched by a reptile, thoroughly clean the affected area with a disinfectant and hot water and consult your Doctor

Environmental Guidelines for Common Reptile Species

Species	Optimal Temperature	Humidity	Natural Habitat
Green Iguana	88°- 98° F (31°- 37°C)	50% to 70%	Tropical Rain Forest, arboreal
Bearded Dragon	85° -95° F (29°- 35° C)	10% to 20%	Arid, Terrestrial
Leopard Gecko	85°- 95° F (29°- 35° C)	10% to 20%	Arid, Terrestrial
Corn Snake	75 - 85°F (24°- 29°C)	50% to 60%	Temperate Forest, terrestrial
Ball Python	80°- 85°F (27°- 29°C)	60% to 65%	Savannah, terrestrial
Boa Constrictor	80°- 85°F (27°- 29°C)	50% to 70%	Tropical Rain Forest, terrestrial
Blood Python	80°- 85°F (27°- 29°C)	70% to 75%	Tropical Rain Forest, terrestrial
Box Turtle	80°- 90°F (27°- 33° C)	50% to 60%	Temperate Forest, terrestrial
Yellow Footed Tortoise	80°- 85°F (27°- 29°C)	50% to 70%	Tropical Rain Forest, terrestrial

*** a basking spot should be provided that is 5°-10°F warmer
nighttime temperature should be 10°-15°F cooler**

Minimum Cage Size Requirements

Sizes listed are the minimum. Cages should be as large as possible

Lizards	Length: 3x snout to tail length Depth: 2x snout to tail length Height: (terrestrial): 1.5x snout to tail length Height: (arboreal): 3x snout to tail length
Snakes	Length: 1x adult snake's total length Depth: 2/3x adult snake's total length Height: (terrestrial): 3/4x adult snake's total length Height: (arboreal): 1x adult snake's total length
Aquatic & Semi Aquatic Turtles	Length: 5x carapace (shell) length for aquatic species (for semi-aquatic species, 1/3 of total cage length should be land) Depth: 3x carapace length Water Height: 2x carapace length Total Height: 2x carapace length plus 12 inches
Tortoises	Length: 5x carapace length Depth: 4x carapace length Height: 2x carapace length