

REPTILE & AMPHIBIAN CARE

Having a reptile or amphibian as a pet requires serious commitment of time, space, and money. Reptiles include turtles, lizards, and snakes, and amphibians include frogs, salamanders, and caecilians. They can collectively be referred to as herpetiles.

Although reptiles and amphibians seem similar, there are special needs of each species that must be investigated before herpetile ownership is attempted. Owners should know as much as possible about the species to properly care for the animal. Variations in environment, diet, and behavior are important to understand and provide.



Environment

These animals have specific light, temperature, humidity and specific light/dark cycles (photoperiods). Backup power is necessary to keep a constant temperature in the event of a power failure.

Terrariums, aquariums, heat lamps, lighting sources, filters, pumps, timers, and temperature and humidity controllers should be provided as needed to assure the proper environment.

Reptiles from arid regions prefer it hot and dry needing constant heat and just enough water to drink or cool off in. Those reptiles that come from steaming jungles like it hot and muggy. Heat and humidity are a must for them. A mild climate is the is acceptable for most others.

Diet

Depending upon the herpetile, the diet will vary from live food to commercially available pelletized feed. Some animals may also need fresh vegetables and/or fruit in moderation.

Snakes

Depending on the variety, snakes can live for decades and grow to lengths in excess of 5 feet. They require at least a 30-gallon tank, frequent checkups, and care by a veterinarian who specializes in reptiles. Fresh water and a spotless environment must be provided at all times. Most snakes are carnivorous.

Turtles

A turtle's needs are very specific: thermostatically controlled temperatures, enough water to swim in, a large housing area, and a varied diet. The average lifespan of an aquatic turtle is 25 years, while a land tortoise live longer than a human

Lizards

Lizards require a specific amount of space to thrive and it's important to know the adult size of the lizard.



Frogs/Salamanders

These animals generally require a "watery/moist" environment with controlled humidity.

Veterinary Care

Not all veterinarians have experience treating reptiles and amphibians - especially where the number of species in the group is so large and varied. It is important to seek out a qualified veterinarian to assure the best possible care.

**Recommendations from
The Governor's Commission
on the Humane Treatment of Animals**



Special Considerations

There is a health risk associated with owning any reptile/amphibian as they can transmit a number of different illnesses. NH has regulations on the size of turtles that can be sold - the length of the top shell (carapace) must be at least 4" in length. (Agr 1705.01) This is for the protection of the public- especially

children. In addition, some animals may be prohibited or require a special permit due to federal or state regulations.



Possible Signs of Illness, Negligence or Intentional Cruelty

Appearance of the Animal

Skin problems and mites are common in reptiles. Sunken eyes is often a sign of dehydration. Lack of appetite and noticeable weight loss are signs of disease or improper care.

Housing Conditions

The types of environments and enclosures that herpitiles are kept require diligent cleaning. Dirty conditions cause stress and disease. Water must be changed often and kept clean. Uneaten food must be removed and replaced. Crowding is very stressful

Behavior

Each species has its own activity cycle and behavior characteristics. Lethargy and lack of interest are never normal during active periods of the day.

Reporting Animal Cruelty

Suspected animal cruelty should be reported to the police department of the town in which the cruel action or neglect occurred. Caller should leave name and contact information for a follow-up response.

Additional Resources

Care Sheets by Species

www.reptilesmagazine.com/Care-Sheets/

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/reptiles.html

Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians

arav.org

PetMD

www.petmd.com/centers/reptile



For more information about animal cruelty, visit
www.nh.gov/humane