

Reptiles Checklist

A reptile can be a fascinating pet and a wonderful learning experience for people of all ages. A terrarium environment with reptile inhabitants is like a moving, living piece of nature right in one's own home. At Petland Discounts you can find a large selection of reptiles to choose from. Whether you prefer snakes, lizards or turtles, these long-lived pets can provide years of fascination, exhibiting much of the same behavior in your terrarium as they do in the wild.

Once you have chosen your pet in order for them to thrive in captivity it is important to reproduce the environmental conditions the reptile finds in nature.

Following is a list of suggested items for the care of your new pet.

Housing

When selecting a tank or a cage to house a reptile, it is very important to consider the needs and general habit of the animal. An enclosure destined to become a terrarium should not only be large enough to accommodate rocks, branches, water bowls and hiding caves, but should also provide a safe retreat for your pet herp. A terrarium should be well ventilated but securely closed with a metal screen and safety clips. This will ensure the reptile will stay inside and will be out of reach from other curious pets and small children.

When deciding on the size of the tank or cage to use consider the following:

- Very active reptiles may require larger space enclosures to roam around.
- Maximum size and speed of growth of the reptile.
- General disposition, as a rule aggressive and territorial reptiles may need larger enclosures, or may not be housed together.

Heating

All reptiles are cold-blooded animals, they require an external heat source in order to perform most bodily functions. Temperature requirements vary from species to species, and must be closely matched to guarantee their well-being. A large selection of heaters, lamps and thermometers is available at your local Petland Discounts to help you meet the specific requirements of your pet. The most common types of heaters are:

- Combination hoods. These are very effective in providing needed heat and UV rays. They have independently controlled sockets for day and night time heat bulbs, as well as a socket for a fluorescent UV bulb. Their metal construction and shape ensures maximum heat radiation.
- Incandescent day and night lamps. An economical alternative to providing heat. Should be used in conjunction with UV lamps with any diurnal reptile.

-Ceramic heat emitters. Very effective source of heat can be used day or night. These heaters do not emit light. Must be used in conjunction with UV lamps with any diurnal reptile.

-Heat pads. Very effective for creating warm spot in the bottom of a terrarium. Mostly recommended for burrowers or non-climbing reptiles. These adhere to the underside of terrarium thus avoiding electrical connections inside the enclosure.

-Heat rocks. Very hot emitters shaped as rocks or caves. These heaters are placed inside the terrarium. They are recommended for use only with species with high temperature tolerance.

A well-planned terrarium will have temperature variations in the optimal range required by the reptile; this allows the animal to find a comfortable zone on its own. Always monitor temperature in at least two areas of the tank.

□ Lighting

Under natural conditions, most reptiles are exposed to sunlight on regular basis. An invisible portion of the sun's spectrum reaching the reptiles, Ultra Violet B (UVB) light, is required by these animals to synthesize vitamin D3. In turn, this vitamin is responsible for the metabolic conversion of dietary calcium needed for growth and optimum health. Lack of exposure to beneficial UVB illumination causes Metabolic Bone Disease, which can lead to premature death.

In captivity, most reptiles require the exposure to the UVB light in order to develop normally, and in some cases help reverse the onset of Metabolic Bone Disease. Reptile specific fluorescent bulbs can provide UVB light. These bulbs should be placed directly on top of the reptile enclosure screen, as glass or plastic do not permit the passage of the UVB rays.

□ Bedding/Substrate

Bedding is an essential component of your terrarium as it helps to absorb products of waste from your pet as well as providing a natural walking and burrowing medium. There are many types of beddings available each with different characteristics to match specific environmental needs of the reptile. Final decision on the type of substrate to use will depend on actual habit and humidity requirements. Avoid the use of dirt and mulch that has not been specifically formulated for use in terrariums as these may contain parasites or pesticides that will harm your pet.

□ Décor

A terrarium should always be eye pleasing and should simulate the natural environment of your pet. There are climbing objects, hollow logs, plants and many other decorations that will compliment their new habitat. Reptiles will be more secure in their environment if adequate hiding places and branches to climb on are provided. A well-decorated terrarium can be a magnificent centerpiece for any room.

□ Food

Food selection varies by species. Some reptiles are carnivorous feeding mainly on insects, small rodents or fish, which are readily available at your local Petland Discounts store. Some others prefer fresh fruits and vegetables as part or the whole of their diet *. Whatever type of food your pet prefers, it is very important to supplement their diet with calcium and vitamins available specifically for reptiles. Some species will also accept prepared foods available at all Petland Discounts stores.

*insert button to take reader to Meeting dietary needs of vegetarian reptiles.

□ Filtration

Aquatic animals such as turtles and amphibians require significant bodies of water as part of their new habitat. This water must be maintained clean at all times to promote healthy growth and development of the animal. A filter is an important part of the aquatic reptile's vivarium. Petland Discounts carries a large variety of filters and other accessories for your pet's well-being and maintenance. Our associates can help you select a filter that will meet the needs of your pet.

□ Bowls

Bowls should be adequate for both drinking and soaking and heavy enough so that it cannot be easily overturned. Some bowls for use with reptile come in the shape of rocks or logs to match your set-up. Some reptiles require the use of drip systems, which are also available at Petland Discounts. Make sure your reptile has fresh water on a daily basis.

□ Books

A very important tool for every pet owner. Consult books written about your reptile pet to find out about its particular needs.

Did you know: Most snakes shed their outer layer of skin between 4 to 6 times a year. During the shedding process, which lasts 1-2 weeks, snakes will probably not eat, be less active and their eyes will have a milky haze to them.

Did you know: If you keep more than one snake in a cage, you should separate them for feedings to avoid having two animals fighting over the same prey. Do not leave live food in the tank unattended. The prey may turn on the snake and do great amount of damage.

Did you know: One major difference in boas and pythons is that boas are livebearers, while pythons lay eggs.

*Meeting dietary needs of vegetarian reptiles

While many green leafy vegetables are in fact a rich calcium source, many of them are not suitable to feed reptiles on prolonged basis. The main reason for this is that some vegetables are also rich in oxalic acid, a naturally occurring compound that prevents the absorption of dietary calcium from foodstuffs. Following is a list detailing the vegetables that should be used for feeding vegetarian and some of those that are not recommended.

Recommended

Dandelion greens
Mustard Greens
Collard Greens
Escarole
Water cress
Peas
Squash
Pumpkin
Fruit

Not Recommended

Lettuce
Spinach
Broccoli
Cauliflower
Kale
Cabbage
Bok choy
Brussel sprouts